

Submission to the Green Paper on Agricultural Competitiveness

I write in particular to bring attention to **Section 7: Education, skills and training, and labour.**

The White Paper process has already identified issues within the agricultural industry with attracting both low and high skilled workers. There has been recognition that workers need to be fairly remunerated and that that jobs for Australians should be a first priority. The Government has acknowledged that job vacancies which have not been filled locally have been successfully fulfilled through visa programmes such as the Working Holiday Maker (417) or the Temporary Work (Skilled) (Subclass 457) visas.

I urge further consideration of how the agricultural industry can tap into local residents for their employment needs, seasonal or otherwise.

There is a sizable population located within regional and rural towns that has become disconnected from the local agricultural industry. This has happened due to a number of factors and will not be changed without significant effort from the industry.

Partnerships between agricultural enterprises and the local workforce should be facilitated through all means possible including schools, government and not for profit organisations such as the Clontarf Foundation. I would also encourage the peak industry bodies to take up this cause rather than taking the somewhat easier route of importing labour. This really should be used as a last resort whilst there are work capable people living in our regional areas.

There must be recognition that increasing employment of local people will provide many benefits to local towns that are reliant on the agricultural sector when all members of the community are involved and contributing.

I would also like to provide my support of correspondence received by the Minister, the Hon Barnaby Joyce MP, in favour of establishing more weather radar stations to service western New South Wales.

Additional weather radar services give more information to farmers and allow them to make better decisions.

Thank you for your consideration.



Mark Coulton MP
Federal Member for Parkes

12 December 2014

