

THE FUTURE OF MEAT INSPECTION



Full project name: Meat Inspection Training for University Students

Lead organisation: MINTRAC

Collaborators: South West Institute of TAFE, Federation University, Meat Inspectors Pty Ltd

Completion date: December

WHAT'S THE WICKED PROBLEM – THE CONTEXT

The growing shortage of meat safety and quality assurance personnel is a threat to the sustainability of the meat industry, a major regional employer. More complex regulatory and commercial requirements are exacerbating the problem. The situation is critical and well-educated workers are urgently needed to manage ever-more sophisticated QA systems and supply chains.

WHY DON'T WE ... – THE INNOVATION

- The project flips the traditional training pathway in the meat industry. It integrates a VET qualification, the Cert III in Meat Processing, into the University curriculum. South West TAFE is the training provider and MINTRAC, which represents the meat industry on training matters, is leading the project.
- The project targets students in at least their second year of agricultural and animal-science related degrees, who will bring high-level analytical and research skills into the industry.
- It includes structured industry mentoring through work placements, so students are job-ready when they complete the program.
- The course uses distance education, some online delivery and an "action learning" approach.

'I KNEW THIS COURSE WOULD OFFER A CAREER PATHWAY'

Student case study – Isobel Dorsman



I'm from a small town in Gippsland called Maffra – dairy and beef country! We love to farm. I've gone back to Uni in my second trimester of life to study food and nutrition.

I knew this course with MINTRAC, South West TAFE and Fed Uni would assist in not only my understanding of the food industry, but also as a career pathway into food inspection and safety.

I've been offered a position as a meat inspector in the industry, which I intend to pursue. I have learnt that it takes a team to ensure food is safe, not only for our consumption in Australia but also for the importance of our export market.

The relationship between the farmer and the consumer relies on the fabulous people who work in the meat industry, ensuring future job prospects and good health and nutrition for Australia for decades to come.

(Unfortunately, Isobel later had to withdraw from the program for personal reasons)

JOBS ON OFFER – THE OUTCOMES

A pilot group of 16 Federation University students began the program in late 2018. These students are finalising their placement hours and completing their elective units before graduation in November. Despite the fact the course is not even over yet, two of the students have been offered jobs in the meat industry. One of these offers has been accepted but the other was declined due to unforeseen personal circumstances.

VALUABLE LESSONS LEARNED

- There were more female students than male on the course, which is perhaps evidence of a continuing shift away from perceptions of the industry as being male-dominated.
- Two students found they were uncomfortable working in an industry where animals are slaughtered and processed, and left the course. A series of induction videos that give an insight into the reality of the industry will now be shown to prospective students to tackle this problem.
- Placement sites should be assessed in advance to make sure student travel and accommodation costs are minimised.
- MINTRAC says the pilot project has taught it valuable lessons about the administration and delivery of the course. For example, it plans to devote extra time to the orientation period to cover administration requirements.

A BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS – WHAT'S NEXT

The pilot project will conclude in late December. Students, the workplaces, project partners and the wider industry have all given positive feedback. All of the project stakeholders are eager to continue the program, with the steering committee planning to develop a future progression strategy at its next meeting.

Founded in 2017, the Workforce Training Innovation Fund (WTIF) is a targeted *Skills First* funding stream. WTIF creates opportunities for partnerships between industry and the TAFE and training system and encourages them to explore bold, innovative approaches that challenge existing practices in skills development and training methods.

Ultimately, these new ideas and solutions aim to enhance workplace productivity, particularly in Victorian Government priority sectors. More than \$90 million of funding has been committed to date.

The next round of WTIF funding is now open for applications.

To find out more visit www.education.vic.gov.au/training/providers/funding/Pages/wtif.aspx or email the WTIF team at wtif@edumail.vic.gov.au