



**Grains Industry Training Network Inc** A0044484K

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May 17th, 2005

Mr Ian Dundas  
Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ian

I have worked as the Executive Officer for GITN since its inception in 1996. GITN has been funded from many sources to enable it to focus on identifying the training needs for the grains industry and making them happen. The role is one of a learning broker. Over the years Sue Kilpatrick, University of Tasmania has undertaken a number of interviews and reported positively on the role of GITN as a learning broker, however the importance of the learning broker role does not seem to have been one that is generally accepted, valued or funded.

The producer members of GITN contribute significantly to directing the activities of and running the organisation. It is due to the direct contact industry and the wide industry linkages the members have that GITN has been so successful. Over the years a number of programs and methods of delivery have been introduced and positively received. GITN had never been involved in replicating a program, which is in existence, or working successfully. GITN has a 'can do mentality'; find out what is needed, and determine whom can do it and provide it so that it meets industry needs.

For example GITN introduced Farmer Updates into Victoria and developed a range of Workshops such as Financial Analysis, Succession Planning, Snail Management, Share Farming and Leasing. GITN was responsible for the first Company Directors Course to be delivered outside the metropolitan area. It initiated and delivered the very successful Women in Grains project, which encouraged women to be involved in skill development at a level which addressed their needs. The

success of this program was such at Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) initiated a national program Partners in Grain based on the principles of Women in Grains.

GITN has worked tirelessly to gain cooperation between the service providers to ensure what is needed is provided. The outcomes from this are that the most appropriate trainers are accessed, programs are delivered that meet identified needs. However what is happening is almost insignificant in what is going on as a whole. There are a plethora of organisations supplying the industry and there is so much duplication without cooperation and coordination.

The grains industry is facing significant changes and producers must be able to drive the training agenda and ensure that the programs meet their needs. The need to be competitive on an international level and yet to maintain their productivity, profitability and sustainability given the context in which they work is really challenging.

As Executive Officer it is of concern to me that the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Providers are not flexible and do not adequately involve or respond to industry. (This will be denied as they may have a Committee that meets two or three times throughout the year and is not given any real say in the development of relevant programs. They seem to be called in where there is a crisis.)

I understand that there are many issues facing TAFE providers, including funding, a thin market, access to state of the art equipment and expertise. However I consider that there are a number of actions which providers could be taking which would enable them to be more responsive to market needs.

After research conducted by GITN in 2003 that identified some areas where training was needed, not one TAFE provider took up the opportunity to develop a program. GITN developed and delivered a Course in Header Operations, using VET Competencies, accessing state of the art equipment through an agreement with CASE IH and employing a person with considerable expertise to deliver the industry training. The program was delivered and auspiced by TAFE Provider so ensure the young people were awarded a Statement of Attainment. Twenty-four young people completed that program and GITN has again sought funding to deliver the program in 2005.

The keys to the success of the programs were –

- its development was driven by industry
- it was developed in response to an identified industry skill shortage
- it was put in place within six months
- it was a short course 240 hours in total covering on the job and off the job training
- it was aligned with the National Competencies
- it gave people an employable skill
- it used state of the art equipment and a person with industry expertise
- it was delivered at a time and in a method that suited the students and the trainer.

In 2005 GITN developed the Spray Management Program. The first pilot was delivered in April in St Arnaud that was well received and it will be delivered in various locations throughout Victoria.

There also appears to be significant duplication of services and a lack of cooperation between the Department of Agriculture (DPI) and the other providers. The services from DPI must also be responsive to the needs of industry. It is understood that DPI have a role in implementing government policy, however programs often seem to be driven from the government policy point of view rather than from the industry perspective. There are little or no linkages between the DPI and the VET sectors.

In my experience there seems to be considerable time, effort and funding spent on researching what is needed, this is particularly so in DPI and yet there are not good linkages with industry or the training sector. There seems to be an attitude of let's develop or do it from scratch rather than work cooperatively and work together. As one GITN Committee Member said *'how do we get rid of the egos and get them listening to our needs?'*

It was of considerable concern to me to learn at a recent GITN Workshop that AWB was developing its own training and competencies, rather than working with the existing training packages. There is a clear need for the Agrifoods Skills Council to involve the agriculture and agribusiness sectors in the training sector. Given that there are many areas in capacity building in the production sector and the agribusiness sector which overlap combining students would help to address the issue of a thin market. This would give economies of scale and the sharing of expertise.

The need for short, sharp skill development programs with clear entry and exit points whether they are at the VET or HE level is vital to the industry. The need for consistency in delivery across states and accreditation are important to the industry.

The changes in business size, technology, production and management means that there will continue to be an increasing need for training. The increase in the outsourcing of services to contractors, consultants will require increased level of expertise in these areas. Agronomy is one area that has been clearly identified.

There is within the farming sector people who are at the cutting edge – the early adopters, they are at the cutting edge. It is essential that they are involved in delivery as well. Thus the system must be flexible enough to involve them and to pay for accessing their services.

I believe that it is essential at this time to take a new look at how education, training, extension and linkages to research are provided and eliminate or at least substantially reduce the duplication that there will be a far more efficient and effective delivery.

You will see from the recommendations from the GITN Search Conference that the participants recommended the setting up of a Learning Hub or a National Centre for Excellence, where the issues could be addressed on a national, not just a state basis. I want to commend this concept, as it is time to make savings in dollars, time and energy and come up with a more relevant and useable capacity building product for the grains industry.

I also want to commend the Committee for establishing this review and I look forward to some really positive outcomes.

I would be willing to contribute in any way that would assist this process.

Nickie Berrisford  
Executive Officer GITN  
Coordinator Partners in Grain

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION HELD BY THE COMMITTEE**

**ATTACHMENT TO SUBMISSION NO. 42**

ATTACHMENTS, APPENDICES AND PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED WITH SUBMISSIONS ARE HELD IN THE COMMITTEE OFFICE