

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## FARMERS AND MINERS JOIN FORCES TO TACKLE SKILLS SHORTAGES IN PORT AUGUSTA



**Australian Government**

Skills shortages in the mining and agriculture industries were tackled head on today at the launch of a pilot project directed at building the pool of skilled workers available to both industries in the Upper Spencer Gulf Region of South Australia.

The pilot project is one of three to be implemented under the Australian Regional Agriculture and Mining Skills (ARAMS) Project, which arose from a Memorandum of Understanding between the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA), the National Farmers Federation (NFF) and the Australian Government. The Memorandum of Understanding facilitates collaboration between the minerals and agriculture industries to build a pool of skilled workers capable of meeting the needs of both industries throughout regional Australia. The Dubbo Region of New South Wales and the Townsville Region of Queensland have been identified as the other two pilot sites under the ARAMS Project.



The ARAMS Taskforce, which comprises representatives of the MCA, the NFF and the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), hosted a meeting of mining and agriculture employers and representatives of agencies in Port Augusta today to introduce the project, and to seek interest in participation in a local Steering Committee. The Local Steering committee will provide advice and guidance on the development and implementation of the pilot project for their Region.

ARAMS Taskforce Chair, MCA Executive Director, Mr Chris Fraser, said, 'This project offers a unique opportunity for the mining and agriculture sectors to work together to grow the pool of skilled labour and develop regional and rural Australia. The Upper Spencer Gulf pilot is the first attempt to explore this collaborative approach'.

Taskforce Deputy Chair, Ms Denita Wawn of the NFF said, 'This pilot project will focus on implementing short to long-term strategies to address the critical shortage of skilled workers in the two sectors. The Taskforce has no preconceptions about the solutions that this region will identify. We believe that it is imperative that it is local industry and employer driven – they will identify the issues and the possible solutions that will form the basis of the pilot project. It will be our job to assist them to make the linkages with employment and training providers and others who will bring their expertise to the implementation phase of the pilot project'.

The Taskforce has engaged Mr Tim Wilson, of the Resources and Engineering Skills Alliance (RESA), as the pilot project's Local Coordinator. Mr Wilson, a long-time resident of Port Augusta, will work with ARAMS Project Manager, Mr Dennis Hoiberg of Rimfire Resources, who has extensive experience working with rural industries across the nation.

'It is expected that the collaborative nature of the project will build the capacity of the Upper Spencer Gulf region and create employment opportunities for a highly skilled, regionally located workforce to support the growth of these industries and their surrounding communities', Mr Fraser concluded.

The ARAMS Project is funded by the Australian Government under the National Skills Shortages Strategy.

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