



MEDIA RELEASE

MINERALS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

Agriculture & Minerals Industries join Government on Regional Skills Shortages

The Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) has entered into an Agreement with the National Farmers Federation (NFF) and the Australian Government to collaboratively establish the basis to build a pool of skilled workers capable of meeting the needs of both industries throughout regional Australia.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the MCA, NFF and the Australian Government was today signed by The Hon Andrew Robb MP, Minister for Vocational and Technical Education, Mr Simon Ramsay, representing the NFF, and Mr Owen Hegarty, Vice Chairman, MCA.

MCA Chief Executive, Mitchell H Hooke, said, "we see great complementarity between these two primary industries in education and training and employment opportunities. In pooling our resources and those of the Government, there is far greater potential for synergies in attracting, training and retaining skilled workers in the regional communities in which we operate.

"Our endeavour is to build critical mass in education and training institutions, interchangeable employment opportunities, recognition of skills across our industries, and greater vibrancy and vigour in the regional communities in which we are such a central part of the economic and social fabric.

"Initially we will give effect to the MOU in three pilot sites identified for co-location of agriculture and minerals industry enterprise, the presence of an Australian Technical College (ATC), and a strong regional community. These three initial pilot sites are:

- Townsville region of Queensland;
- Port Augusta region of South Australia; and
- Dubbo region of NSW

"Under the MOU, parties to the Agreement will trial different ways of coordinating existing activities, facilitate improved engagement with the National Vocational Education and Training (VET) system, specifically the Australian Technical Colleges, and establish direct linkages to on-the-job training and subsequently, employment in agriculture and mining.

"The MOU establishes a sequence of priorities on a short to longer term focus emphasizing initially upskilling the existing workforce and then increasing engagement with the National Training System and demand for ATC graduates in our respective industries.

"This is another critical initiative in our suite of activities to address the chronic skills and labour shortages that are significantly restricting the ability of the industry and the communities in which we operate to fully benefit from the strongest global market growth in a generation.

"We have for some time identified that we need at least 70,000 more people in the next decade. This is an increase of around 75 percent on current employment levels. The NFF estimates that there will be a need for an additional 50,000 workers.

"If the MOU is successful, we can expect that there will be great complementarity in building the institutional capacity and to create the employment opportunities for a highly skilled, mobile, regionally located workforce to support the growth of these industries and their surrounding communities", Mr Hooke concluded.

Media Contact:

Director Public Affairs Louise Dodson

T: 02 6233 0600

M: 0418 160 089

E: media@minerals.org.au

W: www.minerals.org.au

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