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MLA red meat industry professional development program review

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Abstract

The review of the red meat industry professional development program was conducted to test the assumption that the most appropriate focus for MLA's investment continue to be in attracting, developing and retaining professionals, and to review the professional development program.

The review found that the graduate program provides a vehicle for RMI companies to resource their programs to adopt MLA's R&D outputs whilst at the same time assisting companies with targeted succession planning to manage an ageing workforce. The upskilling scholarship program compliments the graduate program by providing an opportunity for RMI company personnel to upgrade their skills. The postgraduate research scholarship program is consistent with MLA's R&D charter and MLA is best positioned to manage this program. The undergraduate programs have been unsuccessful in retaining the students in the industry and should discontinue.

Executive summary

Background

The red meat industry (RMI) is a labour intensive industry competing for labour in a tight labour market with demand outstripping supply. RMI companies are generally located in regional areas where there is a limited pool of labour that is declining due to factors including the regional locations of RMI companies, urban migration and competition for labour.

The labour needs of the RMI may be broadly classified into:

- Skilled labour
- Professionals
- Middle managers
- Senior managers and leaders.

MLA's R&D charter includes facilitating the adoption of the results of R&D to improve the operation or efficiency of the industry. Consistent with this mandate, MLA has identified attraction, retention and building the capabilities of the RMI workforce as a priority and has instigated and supported programs in the area since its inception.

The MLA investment in meeting the RMI workforce needs, focuses on meeting the needs of RMI companies in each of the workforce categories. This includes providing support for MINTRAC since 1993 to develop a qualifications framework that provides a progression of training from entry level to senior management, and access significant government funding in the form of traineeships and other programs to upskill the RMI workforce. The main gaps in service provision lay in services to attract, retain and develop professionals and to develop senior managers.

This project is a review of the MLA RMI professional development program which focuses on attraction, recruitment, development and retention of professionals in the industry and includes the MLA undergraduate and graduate programs and the MINTRAC scholarship program.

Project purpose and process

The review seeks to determine two key aspects of MLA's investment in meeting industry workforce needs. They are:

- To test the assumption that the most appropriate focus for MLA's investment based on other stakeholder interests and MLA's charter, continues to be in recruiting, developing and retaining professionals
- Within the boundaries of MLA's charter, to review the existing professional development program and recommend modifications to more effectively deliver its objectives.

The review process was conducted through phone interviews and meetings with stakeholder groups and desktop audits of relevant materials.

Key findings

The review supports MLA's focus on developing and retaining professionals through the graduate program. This focus is consistent with MLA's R&D mandate, particularly relating to providing RMI companies with the resources they need to adopt the outputs of MLA's R&D practices and technological developments. It also assists companies with targeted succession planning as a strategy to manage an ageing workforce. Although in general the RMI does not regard the recruitment of professionals as a priority and only recruits very small numbers of professionals, it is essential that the professional capability of the industry be continually improved and expanded to ensure the industry remains profitable, sustainable and competitive on local and world markets.

The MINTRAC managed upskilling scholarship program compliments the MLA graduate program by providing an opportunity for RMI company personnel to upgrade their skills to take on professional or managerial positions. The RMI has a culture of promoting internally on the basis of technical expertise generally in production areas, and experience in the company. The upskilling scholarships provide an opportunity for RMI company personnel to gain the qualifications they need for career progression.

The undergraduate programs have generally not resulted in the students joining the industry on completion of their studies. The MLA undergraduate program, where students conduct a project in a RMI company in their vacation in their final year, has resulted in about 20% joining the industry on graduation. Similarly, the MINTRAC managed undergraduates scholarships have resulted in two from a total of twenty two students who have completed the program remaining in the industry. There are extremely low numbers of jobs for graduates offered in the industry and the companies report that there are suitable applicants for the positions they have.

The postgraduate research scholarships program is directly linked with MLA's charter to conduct R&D projects and train people to carry out R&D. This scholarship program is currently managed by MINTRAC however MLA is better positioned to directly manage this program.

The review of workforce needs and service providers identified development opportunities for senior managers as a gap area. In spite of their need to lead their companies into the future, including implementing MLA's innovation, science and technology programs, there are few opportunities for development for senior managers in the industry. There needs to be continuing MLA support for a RMI systematic progression of qualifications for senior managers including support for the Vocational Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma in Agribusiness. These options need to be marketed across the RMI and support provided for their delivery.

The need for more strategic HR management by companies in the RMI featured in all areas of the review. Companies need strategic HR systems in place to identify their workforce needs, manage their workforce and measure performance at an individual and company level in order to improve their ability to compete for a declining workforce, retain and develop their staff and plan for succession.

Recommendations

Recommendations of the review include:

- There is a continuing role for MLA in attracting, developing and retaining professionals in the RMI
- The graduate program continue in its current form with modifications focusing on improving the retention rate of graduates in the industry and broadening the number and types of companies participating in the program
- MLA commit a dedicated resource to coordinate the program
- The postgraduate research scholarship program continue and is managed by MLA
- The MLA undergraduate program discontinue as a program for attracting graduates to the industry
- The MINTRAC managed undergraduate scholarship program discontinue
- MLA continue to support the development of a systematic qualifications framework for senior managers
- MLA support the marketing and delivery of training for senior managers
- MLA support an annual CEO leadership forum

MLA supports the development of a RMI strategic HR management model and benchmarking process and case studies of implementation of the model.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The red meat industry (RMI) incorporates all the processes involved with the production of red meat from paddock to plate. This includes:

- The agricultural side of breeding, growing and finishing livestock
- Feedlotting
- Transportation of livestock and meat products
- Slaughtering and processing meat and production of meat products
- Manufacturers and suppliers of plant, machinery and equipment
- Value-adding of meat products
- Marketing
- Wholesaling and retailing meat products.

The RMI is a labour intensive industry with labour the second highest input cost behind the cost of livestock in the processing sector. The labour needs of the red meat industry can be broadly classified into:

- Skilled labour – in general companies in the RMI require large numbers of workers who are generally trained internally by company personnel and/or through traineeships. Companies also require other trades such as electricians, boiler makers, carpenters etc
- Professionals – companies in the industry require small numbers of qualified professionals to meet specific requirements such as finance, IT, engineering, environment, agricultural science, human resources (HR)
- Middle managers – supervisors and managers are generally appointed internally, having progressed within the companies as a result of their technical skills in production areas and experience
- Senior managers and leaders – senior managers and leaders are also generally appointed from within the industry also having progressed through companies as a result of their technical skills in production areas and experience.

Attracting, retaining and developing staff in each of these areas is critical to the sustainability and competitiveness of the industry on local and world markets.

As a research and development (R&D) corporation MLA's R&D charter is defined as:

'the systematic experimentation or analysis in any field of science, technology, economics or business (including the study of the social or environmental consequences of the adoption of new technology) carried out with the object of acquiring knowledge that may be of use in achieving or furthering an objective of the Industry, including knowledge that may be used for the purpose of improving any aspect of the production, processing, storage, transport or marketing of meat or livestock, or goods that are derived from them or applying such knowledge.'¹

This definition of R&D provides a mandate for MLA's activities in attracting retaining and developing the RMI workforce. MLA's mandate to conduct and support activities to help meet the

¹ R&D Commonwealth Matching Payments, Operational Compliance and Procedures framework, February 2008

RMI's workforce needs is reinforced by the examples of R&D activities as defined in Schedule 3 of MLA's Deed of Agreement with the Commonwealth of Australia which include:

- 'R&D activities
- The training of people to carry out industry R&D
- Facilitating the dissemination, adoption and commercialisation of the results of R&D or of practices or technological developments that have been designed or adapted to improve the operation or efficiency of the industry
- The development in the industry of an awareness of the contribution that can be made by R&D in improving its efficiency and competitiveness.'

Consistent with this mandate, MLA has identified attraction, retention and building the capabilities of the RMI workforce as a priority and has instigated and supported programs in the area since its inception.

1.2 The red meat industry workforce

1.2.1 Skilled labour

The RMI is competing for labour in a tight labour market with demand outstripping supply. The Australian Country Choice (ACC) paper² on attracting, retaining and developing people in the RMI describes the 'daily challenge of' manning the chain for each shift to keep their plants running effectively.' Further, RMI companies are generally located in regional areas where there is a limited pool of labour which is declining due to urban migration and strong competition from other industries for the declining workforce, in particular from the mining industry which has greater capacity to pay³. Other factors that impact on attraction and retention of staff include:

- The ageing workforce. The agriculture labour force is generally 'older' and its average age is increasing faster than that of the rest of the Australian working population⁴
- Economic climate
- Supply of labour slowing due to low fertility rates and ageing population⁵
- Increase in total number of jobs in agri-business (as indicated by increases in advertisements and surveys of organisations with 60.42% of organisations surveyed indicating they are likely to increase their workforce in the next 12 months)⁶
- Comparatively low wage rates⁷
- A perception of poor working conditions compared to other sectors⁸

In order to assist the industry to attract, retain and develop a skilled workforce MLA has provided support to MINTRAC to utilise the resources of the vocational education and training (VET) sector to enable the industry to build a qualifications framework and access funding to skill their workforce. The majority of the red meat processing, smallgoods and meat wholesaling and retail companies now skill their workforce through traineeships which lead to nationally recognised

² Australian Country Choice, Attracting, training and retaining young people in the red meat industry, 2009

³ Australian Farm Institute, Towards a better understanding of current and future human resource needs of Australian Agriculture, 2010

⁴ Australian Farm Institute, Towards a better understanding of current and future human resource needs of Australian Agriculture, 2010

⁵ Rimfire, Resources, HR review Agribusiness, 2010

⁷ Australian Farm Institute, , Towards a better understanding of current and future human resource needs of Australian Agriculture, 2010

⁸ Australian Farm Institute, , Towards a better understanding of current and future human resource needs of Australian Agriculture, 2010

qualifications. The opportunity to gain nationally recognised qualifications and progress along a training pathway that reflects a career path helps companies retain staff.

The RMI needs to continue to develop and implement strategies to compete for the diminishing workforce. These strategies include building a strategic approach to HR management that includes workforce analysis and planning (clearly defining workforce needs to meet business objectives), recruitment strategies, people and performance management.

1.2.2 Professionals

In the context of the MLA professional development program, professionals are defined as graduates of universities or other tertiary institutions. In general, companies contacted in the review don't recruit significant numbers of professionals other than for specific highly specialised purposes generally related to compliance with regulatory requirements, eg environment officer, accountant. The RMI has a strong culture of promoting internally on the basis of experience on the job, to meet its needs for professionals. This means that staff may not have the technical skills or qualifications for the positions they occupy, eg occupational health and safety (OHS), training and HR positions. There is a growing need for professionals to complement, mentor and develop the experienced staff to gain the technical skills for the area and form teams that embrace change and respond appropriately to challenges.

With its R&D mandate, MLA recognised the need for professionals in the industry in particular to facilitate the adoption of the results of R&D or of practices or technological developments that have been designed or adapted to improve the operation or efficiency of the industry. MLA has provided support for attracting, retaining and developing professionals to the industry since 2002.

Increasingly companies need to have highly skilled, specialised, professionals to manage the complexities and technical requirements placed on them with the increasing demands from regulators, clients, customers and the whole of the supply chain, in addition to keeping up with new technologies such as automation and robotics, to run their businesses more effectively and efficiently.

1.2.3 Middle managers

Supervisors and middle managers in the RMI are predominantly recruited internally on the basis of their technical expertise and experience on the job. They generally don't have formal training or qualifications in leadership or management.

1.2.4 Senior managers and leaders

Senior managers and leaders in the RMI are predominantly recruited internally on the basis of experience in the company and may not have formal qualifications or any formal training in management and leadership. They may have progressed to senior management within one company in the industry. Older senior managers and leaders generally don't have formal qualifications in technical areas or management and leadership. Younger senior managers may have formal qualifications in the area of their technical expertise. A minority have qualifications in management. This qualification may be the Diploma in Meat Management.

Senior managers are the critical decision-makers to adopt MLA's R&D outputs. They are responsible for creating an environment of innovation, learning and development, accountability and respect for their workforce that is conducive to the uptake of R&D outputs. Senior managers need to lead and manage their companies to sustain their operations, remain competitive and improve their positions on local and world markets. This role includes evaluating MLA's

technological developments to improve the operation and efficiency of their businesses and incorporate the new technologies into their own companies where appropriate. This includes assessing workforce needs to incorporate new technologies, meet regulatory requirements and operate more efficiently and effectively and manage their workforce so that their personnel are working to their full potential to make their contribution to the business and achieve their own objectives for their careers in the industry.

1.2.5 The ageing workforce

Research findings report⁹ that, like most developed nations, Australia is experiencing a rapid ageing of the population. This is most acutely evident in an ageing workforce. Over the next twenty years the 'Baby Boomers' (people born between 1946 – 1964) will reach retirement age and exit from the workforce leaving a significant labour and management void. By 2051 the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) projects that the population over 65 years will double from 14% to more than 28% in 2051. In a growing economy there is a need to both fill the ongoing labour demands as well as replace retiring or downshifting staff. There is a need to ensure that the knowledge and leadership of the Baby Boomers is transferred to the emerging Generation X (people born between 1965 – 1979) managers and the commencing Generation Y (people born between 1980 – 1994) employees.

In the past, the mix of generations has been stratified with the older people in the senior management positions. However the new reality is one where all generations mix in the workforce at all levels. With all the generations mixing in the workforce there is a need to understand the generational differences and get the most from the generational diversity.

2 MLA's professional development program

2.1 Introduction

MLA's professional development program is made up of two components:

- A scholarship program managed by MINTRAC (and funded by MLA)
- A professional development program run directly by MLA.

2.2 The scholarship program managed by MINTRAC

2.2.1 Introduction to the scholarship program

MINTRAC has managed a meat industry scholarship program since 2000. The program consists of three different types of scholarships including:

- Postgraduate research scholarships
- Undergraduate scholarships for students undertaking studies for the first time in disciplines relevant to the industry
- Upskilling scholarships for existing workers.

⁹ McCrindle M, *New Generations at Work: Attracting, Recruiting, Retraining & Training Generation Y*, 2008

2.2.2 The postgraduate research scholarship program

The postgraduate research scholarships are offered to support research in areas that are a priority for the RMI as identified by MLA and consistent with MLA's strategic priorities. Scholarships are available to students who are undertaking a doctorate, masters or honours research degrees in an area of importance to the meat industry. The program supports research in the meat industry and encourages qualified people to join the industry.

2.2.3 The undergraduate scholarship program

The undergraduate scholarships offered by MINTRAC are available to students undertaking tertiary qualifications for the first time who are studying a discipline relevant to the RMI and interested in seeking a career in the industry. Students need to find a sponsor company and develop a career progression plan with the sponsor company. The sponsor company agrees to provide six weeks paid work for the student each year in an area relevant to the student's area of study.

The scholarship provides \$5000 per semester (\$10,000 per year) that can be used for course fees, including HECS, travel and accommodation for students needing to live away from home and equipment costs, such as computers, printers, textbooks etc. The student is offered a bonus \$200 for a final report at the end of the scholarship.

2.2.4 The upskilling scholarships program

The upskilling scholarships offered by MINTRAC support existing meat industry employees to study for higher qualifications (ranging from diploma to masters qualifications) to help them better meet the needs of their current roles and to prepare them for promotion.

Meat industry employees must have worked for a red meat levy paying company for a minimum of two years before they are eligible. They must have support from their company (demonstrated by the company providing 30% of the cost of the fees) and provide a career progression plan to show how the training is relevant to their career in the meat industry. It is the student's responsibility to recoup the 30% cost of the fees from the company.

The scholarships provide 70% of course fees (including HECS, HELP and university/RTO enrolment fees). There is no maximum figure, but each application is assessed on a case-by-case basis, with the benefit to industry being one of the major factors for supporting the application.

2.3 The professional development program managed by MLA

2.3.1 Outline of the professional development program managed by MLA

The Red Meat Industry Professional Development Program has been in operation since 2002 and is co-funded with participating enterprises via the MLA Donor Company (MDC). Other donors such as the AMPC provide financial support for levy paying meat processing companies.

The program targets tertiary qualified professionals to take up positions in the processing sector and more recently has extended its focus to include feedlot and on-farm participants. The programs have been designed to attract promising young people in the university sector to the RMI, develop their skills and provide them with attractive career paths.

The undergraduate program

The undergraduate program is the longest running program, commencing in 2002, and providing support for undergraduates to conduct three-month projects at participating companies during university summer vacation. The elements of the program include:

- **Induction** - The program begins with a one week induction with MLA in late November each year.
- **On-site** - Undergraduates complete project work on-site under the supervision of a site champion, and with the assistance and advice of an industry mentor.
- **Off site preparation of final reports and presentation** - In mid-February, the undergraduates spend another week with MLA finalising their reports and preparing their presentations.
- **Presentation and final report** - At the end of the program, each student presents their findings to the company's senior management, and prepares and submits a comprehensive report with clear recommendations.

Historically, in any one year up to 250 expressions of interest are received from undergraduate students, with up to 25 project opportunities offered by processors, feedlots and other red meat companies. Project topics have included:

- Technology development and commercialisation
- Food safety
- Product development
- Health and safety/ergonomics
- Supply chain management
- Information technology
- Environmental management
- Process optimisation
- Human relations
- Education and training
- Microbiological research.

The graduate program

The graduate program was developed in mid 2005 to provide support, networking and development opportunities for graduates during their first three years of employment in the RMI. Elements of the program include:

- Salary subsidies
- Mentoring through the provision of an external technical mentor and an MLA staff member
- Professional development workshops (two/annum) that provide:
 - Networking opportunities
 - Interaction with graduates from the whole of the red meat supply chain
 - Training and development in management leading to a formal qualification at diploma level
- Research projects
- Financial support for other training and development opportunities such as attendance at conferences, and other training in line with requirements for their jobs as agreed and approved by MLA

These programs have been introduced independently of each other, and have evolved over time.

3 The review

3.1 Objectives of the review

The review seeks to determine two key aspects of MLA's investment in meeting industry workforce needs. They are:

- To test the assumption that the most appropriate focus for MLA's investment based on other stakeholder interests and MLA's charter, continue to be in recruiting, developing and retaining professionals
- Within the boundaries of MLA's charter, to review the existing professional development program and recommend modifications to more effectively deliver its objectives.

The review is made up of:

- An evaluation of the wider industry's workforce needs and how they are currently being met
- An evaluation of the current professional development program and its effectiveness in providing professionals to the industry, and/or its impact on other areas of workforce needs
- Recommendations on future directions of MLA's investment in workforce attraction, development and retention program.

3.2 Objectives of the review within the context of industry's workforce needs

The first component of the review aims to place the current program within the broader context of the industry's workforce needs by:

- Identifying the industry's workforce needs
- Identifying how these needs are being met
- Identifying gaps in meeting the industry workforce needs and who is responsible for filling those gaps and what help they may need to fill the gaps
- Identifying possible roles for MLA in filling gaps in meeting the industry workforce needs
- Examining the place of the current MLA professional development program within the framework of meeting industry workforce needs
- Putting forward options for future directions for the professional development program within the framework of filling gaps and assisting the industry to meet its workforce needs.

Notwithstanding the outcomes of the review of MLA's focus for investment in the wider industry workforce, the second key component of the review aims to evaluate the current MLA professional development program to:

- Evaluate how successful the program is in meeting its objectives and outcomes
- Identify the strengths, weaknesses, and impacts of the program
- Consider whether the program is being delivered in the most effective and efficient manner
- Consider whether the program meets industry needs in the area and/or whether with modification the program could have an indirect impact on other workforce areas
- Consider whether the current program remains a priority for the industry and how companies are currently addressing the need if they aren't accessing the MLA program

- Provide information on how to build on current strengths and address weaknesses and gaps
- Make recommendations about future directions for the program.

4 Methodology of the review

4.1 Review the program in the context of industry's workforce needs

The methodology for reviewing the program in the context of the industry's workforce needs has been conducted through:

- Phone interviews and/or meetings with personnel working in the RMI ¹⁰
- Literature review and desktop audits of relevant documents and material
- Feedback from industry stakeholder meetings.

¹⁰ 24 companies in the RMI were contacted and 16 participated in the interview. The companies included meat processors, boning rooms, smallgoods manufacturers, feedlot, and leather factory. The interview followed a structured format.

4.2 Methodology to review MLA’s professional development program

Objective and coverage	Methodology	Tools
To assess how successful the current program is	Desk audit of results and costs of current program. Input and feedback from users including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Companies (who have used the program and companies who haven’t used the program (small, medium and large) • Graduates (in the program, dropped out of program, completed the program, in employment in the industry, left the industry) • Undergraduates (joined the industry, haven’t joined) 	Desk audit of results of undergrads & grad programs – results of grads & undergrads completed program and employed in industry and costs of programs. Input from meeting of RMI companies participating in programs Phone contact with sample of small, medium and large non-user companies Meet with grads at professional development week Phone contact with graduates dropped out, completed program and not employed, completed program and employed in industry, and left industry Phone contact with undergraduates who’ve joined industry and who haven’t joined industry
To assess whether the program is being delivered in the most effective and efficient manner	Results of desk audits Interviews with users of the program including companies, graduates and undergraduates	Desk audit of program Interviews with companies, graduates and undergraduates
To assess whether the MLA program meets industry needs in the area	Phone interview companies Identification of industry workforce needs, need for professionals, how they are meeting the need for professionals, whether they know about and use the program, their opinion of program and what other ideas they have to meet their needs	Phone interview of companies (small, medium and large) to identify their workforce needs etc Input from meeting of RMI companies participating in programs
To assess whether the current program remains a priority for the RMI and how they are addressing the need	Phone interviews with companies to identify their workforce needs, where the need for professionals fits in their workforce plan and how they’re addressing the need	Phone interview of small, medium and large companies to identify their workforce needs etc Input from meeting of RMI companies participating in programs
To make recommendations about future directions	Seek recommendations from all stakeholders in providing input into the review Desktop review of literature and audit of program	Phone interviews, meetings with all stakeholders Desktop review Desktop audit of program

4.3 Sources of data

Sources of data for the study included:

- A meeting with representatives of companies who participated in the graduate program
- A meeting with graduates currently enrolled in the graduate program
- Interviews with several graduates currently participating in the program
- Phone contact with several graduates who have dropped out of the program
- Phone contact with several undergraduates who had participated in the undergraduate program
- Phone interviews with companies in the red meat industry (some of whom participated in the MLA professional development program and others who hadn't participated in the program)
- Discussion with MLA staff
- Phone contact with MINTRAC
- Literature review

Phone interviews with companies in the red meat industry included representatives from HW Greenham and Sons, T&R Pastoral, V&V Walsh Meat Processors and Exporters, Primo Quality Meats (Scone), Dardanup Butchering Company, Fletcher International Exports, Southern Meats, Teys Bros (feedlot, leather, meat processing), M C Herd, JBS Australia, Primo Quality Meats (Port Wakefield), Northern Cooperative Meat Company.

5 Results and discussion

5.1 Defining the RMI's workforce needs

The labour needs of the red meat industry can be broadly classified into:

- Skilled labour
- Professionals
- Middle managers
- Senior managers and leaders.

Attracting, retaining and developing staff in each of these areas is critical to the profitability, sustainability and competitiveness of the industry and has instigated and supported programs in the area since the 1990s.

5.2 Service providers meeting industry workforce needs

The major groups assisting the RMI to meet its workforce needs for a skilled workforce are:

- MLA and AMPC
- Companies in the RMI
- Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) providing training for formal qualifications or single units of training or training in skill sets
- The Federal or State Government providing funding for training in the form of traineeships or other programs such as the Productivity Places Program

- The National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council (trading as MINTRAC)
- Agrifood Skills Australia which is the training body for the agriculture and food industries.

The following table identifies the services provided by each of the groups to help meet the industry's workforce needs.

Groups addressing industry workforce needs

Workforce needs	Stakeholder	Activities	Target audience
Awareness raising	MLA	Farm day	Community
	MLA	Virtual farm program	Community
	MLA	Media activities	Community
	MLA	Royal Agricultural Shows	Community
	MLA	PIEF	Community
	MINTRAC	Skills development marketing materials	Community
	Companies	School careers expos, sponsorship of local events, company websites	
Attraction	MLA	Intercollegiate Meat Judging Competition	High schools & universities
	MLA	Undergrad final year projects	Universities
	MINTRAC	Undergraduate scholarships	Universities
	Companies	School-based traineeships, company websites, sponsorship of local events	Community
Retention and development	MINTRAC	The formal qualifications framework promotes retention of staff through formal qualifications through career paths	Companies
	State Training Authorities and DEEWR	Fund progressive training qualifications along career paths helping to promote retention	Companies
	RTOs	Deliver training along career paths that promote retention	Companies
Skilled labour	MINTRAC and Agrifood Skills Australia	Developing and updating the meat industry's qualifications framework and training resources so that qualifications are recognised nationally and are eligible for government funding such as traineeships	RMI companies
	State Training Authorities (STAs)	Provide funding for traineeships and other training initiatives	Companies
	RTOs	Deliver training	Companies
	DEEWR	Provision of funding for training initiatives	Companies
	Company RTOs	Some companies are RTOs in their own right and access funding for traineeships and train their workforce	Companies
	Companies	Upgrade the skills of their workforce	Companies
	MINTRAC	Meat wholesale preparation scholarship	Processing
Professionals	MINTRAC	Undergraduate scholarships	Companies
	MLA	Scholarships (masters and doctorates)	Universities
	MLA	Graduate professional development	RM supply chain
	MLA	Undergraduate projects	Processing

	AMPC	Technology committee	Processing
	AMPC	Environment committee	Processing
	MINTRAC	Professional development workshops	Processing
	MINTRAC	Meat safety & QA managers network	Processing
	MINTRAC	Environment network	Processing
	MINTRAC	Training network	Processing
	Companies	Attract, select and train professionals or upskill their workforce to professional roles	Companies
Middle management	Companies	Attract, select and train middle managers or upskill their workforce to middle managers roles	Companies
	MLA	Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP)	Livestock & feedlot
	MLA	Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarships	Livestock
	MLA, AMPC	Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Meat Processing	Companies
	MLA	Diploma in Management	Graduates program & companies
	STAs	Certificate IV Frontline Management	Companies, RTOs
	MINTRAC, STA	Certificate IV Meat Processing (Leadership)	
Senior management	MINTRAC	Vocational Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma in Agri-business	Companies
	MLA	Executive leadership program (University of Melbourne)	Companies
	Companies	May support individuals to gain qualifications	Companies
	Individuals	May gain qualifications of their own initiative	Individuals in companies

5.3 MLA's investment in meeting the RMI's workforce needs

5.3.1 Overview of MLA's general investment focus in meeting workforce needs

As reflected in the table above, MLA supports programs that impact on most areas to assist the industry to meet its workforce needs. MLA supports programs:

- That raise awareness about the RMI to encourage new entrants to the RMI
- To attract new entrants to the RMI
- That help attract, retain and develop the skilled labour workforce
- That help attract, retain and develop professionals
- That help retain and develop middle and senior managers in the RMI.

MLA also supports programs to meet the workforce needs in each of the workforce categories.

Skilled labour

The majority of the red meat processing, smallgoods manufacturing, meat wholesaling and retail companies now skill their workforce through traineeships that lead to nationally recognised qualifications. This opportunity to gain nationally recognised qualifications and progress along a training pathway that reflects a career path helps companies retain staff.

Since 1993 MLA has made substantial commitment to support the National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council (trading as MINTRAC). MINTRAC is an industry owned and funded body, recognised by government as representing the meat industry on training matters. MINTRAC utilises the resources of the vocational education and training (VET) sector to enable the industry to build a qualifications framework and access government funding in the form of traineeships (and other programs) to skill their workforce from entry level to senior management. Through MINTRAC the industry has been able to drive its own training agenda and take responsibility for the development and implementation of the training it needs to skill its workforce.

The RMI needs to continue to develop and implement strategies to compete for the diminishing workforce. These strategies include building a strategic approach to HR management that includes workforce analysis and planning, recruitment strategies, people and performance management.

Professionals

MLA's investment in attracting, retaining and developing professionals includes:

- Providing funding to MINTRAC to support meat processing networks for training, environment, meat safety and QA managers
- Providing support to MINTRAC to manage the scholarship program
- MLA's professional development undergraduate and graduate programs

The MINTRAC managed upskilling scholarship program provides opportunities for staff in the RMI to gain qualifications in areas that they are working in or areas that they are progressing towards.

The RMI Professional Development Program has been in operation since 2002. The program targets tertiary qualified professional to take up positions in the RMI.

Middle managers

Development opportunities are available for supervisors through the Certificate IV in Frontline Management or the Certificate IV Meat Processing (Leadership). Funding may be available from the government (through programs such as the Productivity Places Program) for the delivery of the qualifications. Some of the larger companies in the RMI provide this training for their supervisors. Other companies may provide one or more units from the qualification for their supervisors where they identify a high priority need for that training. They may for example offer the OHS unit in the qualification. They may also receive government funding for individual units.

Development opportunities are available for middle managers through the Diploma and Advanced Diplomas in Meat Processing and programs such as the Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP). Some financial support is available for these programs through MINTRAC, MLA and the Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC). A small number of companies in the RMI industry offer this training to middle managers, generally for those they are grooming for more senior positions.

Senior managers

In the early 1990s MLA provided support for senior managers in the form of a senior management and leadership group. The MLA support for this group ended in about 1995. MLA supports an executive leadership program conducted by the University of Melbourne. This program does not lead to a qualification. MLA is also supporting the development of a Vocational Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma in Agri-business. A systematic approach needs to be

taken to providing development opportunities for senior managers to equip them with the skills they need to take the industry into the future.

5.3.2 The gaps in meeting the RMI's workforce needs

5.3.2.1 Skilled labour

Attracting skilled labour remains the biggest workforce issue reported by companies in the review. Although MLA, MINTRAC and individual companies conduct and support a range of activities to attract labour to the industry, there is no systematic industry approach to attracting labour to the industry.

Companies contacted in the review identified attraction and retention of labour as their biggest issue but few companies were taking a strategic approach to analysing their workforce needs and developing and implementing recruitment strategies (such as school-based traineeships) to target specific groups to meet their needs.

Similarly few companies are taking a systematic, strategic approach to their HR management to analyse their workforce to identify the factors that contribute to high staff turnover and implement programs to impact on those factors. For example, few companies had effective performance management systems that included work planning and appraisal with regular meetings to review performance against key performance indicators.

The literature ¹¹ suggests that differentiating avoidable and unavoidable turnover can help organisations to understand and manage their voluntary turnover. Avoidable reasons may include employees leaving for better pay or working conditions elsewhere, problems with management or leaving for better career prospects.

5.3.2.2 Professionals

The audit of service provision to meet workforce needs identified gaps in the areas of professionals and senior management. There are a number of service providers providing networking and ad hoc development opportunities for professionals, however the MLA graduates/professional program is the only program providing a systematic approach to the retention and development of professionals in the RMI.

5.3.2.3 Middle managers

There is a systematic progression of qualifications available to meet the workforce needs of supervisors and middle managers through the Certificate IV in Meat Processing (Leadership) and the Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Meat Management. Similarly, more general qualifications are available for the other sectors of the RMI through the Certificate IV in Frontline Management and the Diploma in Management. Funding is available for the Certificate IV, the Diploma program and participation in the Australian Rural Leadership Program and the Nuffield Australian Farming Scholarships.

5.3.2.4 Senior managers

There is a gap in the provision of development opportunities for senior managers. Senior managers and leaders are most in need of professional development opportunities to equip them to manage their companies into the future and lead their teams to create an environment of innovation and development and value and respect for their people to enable them to operate effectively in a rapidly changing environment, meet production targets, deliver their business

¹¹ Abelson M A, Examination of avoidable and unavoidable turnover, Journal of Applied Psychology, volume 72(3) pp 382 – 386, 1987

objectives and respond to technological developments to improve their efficiency and competitiveness on local and world markets.

It is difficult for senior managers without qualifications to obtain entry and commence tertiary qualifications that meet their needs and are provided in a format and location that they are able to participate in.

MLA supports an executive leadership program conducted through the University of Melbourne and the development of a Vocational Graduate Certificate and Diploma in Agri-business. These programs need to be promoted and senior management given support to participate in the programs.

5.3.3 Proposals for MLA's investment in meeting workforce needs

This review focuses on MLA's RMI professional development program. There are two components of this program. One component is the MINTRAC managed scholarship scheme and the other component is the MLA managed graduate and undergraduate programs.

The graduate/professional program is strongly linked with MLA's R&D charter in that the program can provide resources to companies in the RMI to facilitate the adoption of the results of R&D. MLA investment in the graduate program helps ensure industry capability to take up R&D in line with its charter.

With its focus on 'graduates,' MLA is promoting the generational transition succession from the Baby Boomers to Generations X & Y.

Companies are operating in a rapidly changing and increasingly more complex and competitive environment that places demands on staff that require constant learning and development and updating their skills and knowledge base.

The MINTRAC managed upskilling scholarship program complements the MLA graduate program by developing staff in RMI companies to equip them for the uptake of R&D outputs and provide them with the technical or managerial skills they need to complement their experience in the companies.

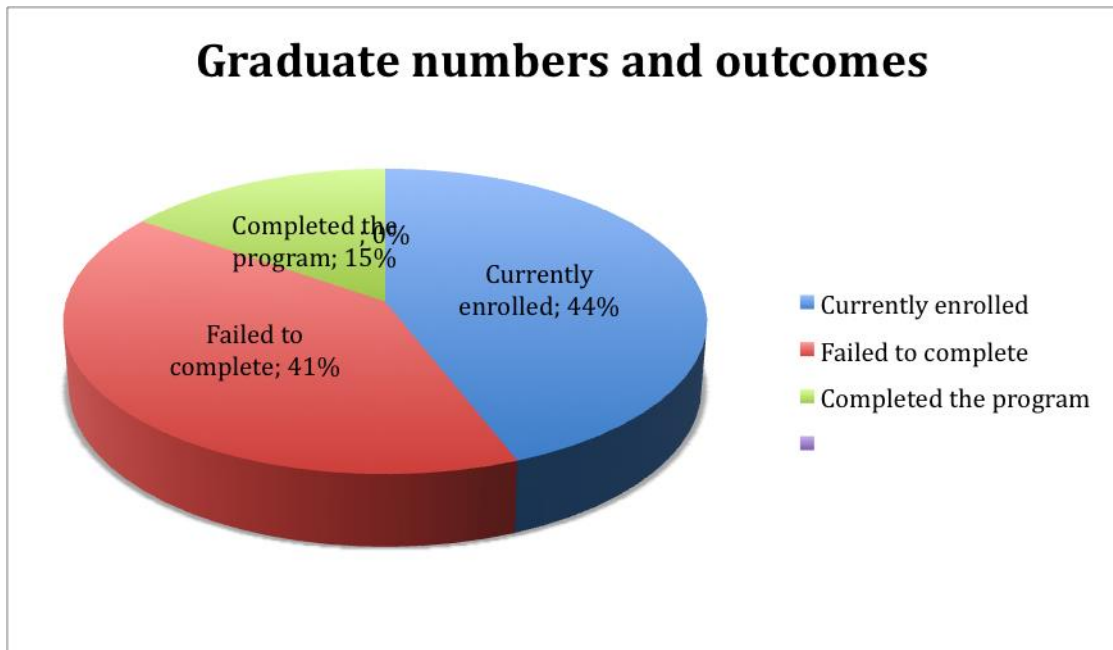
Senior management was an area identified in the review of services meeting workforce needs, as having limited opportunities for development.

5.4 Results and analysis of the professional development program

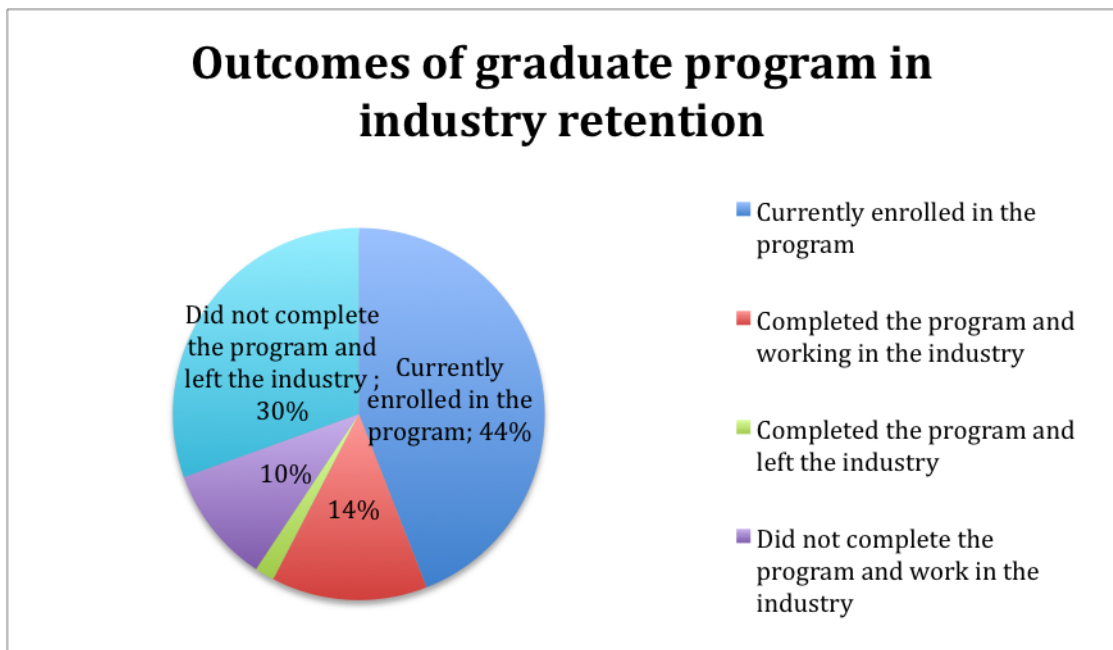
5.4.1 Results and analysis of the graduate program

5.4.1.1 Outcomes of the graduate program

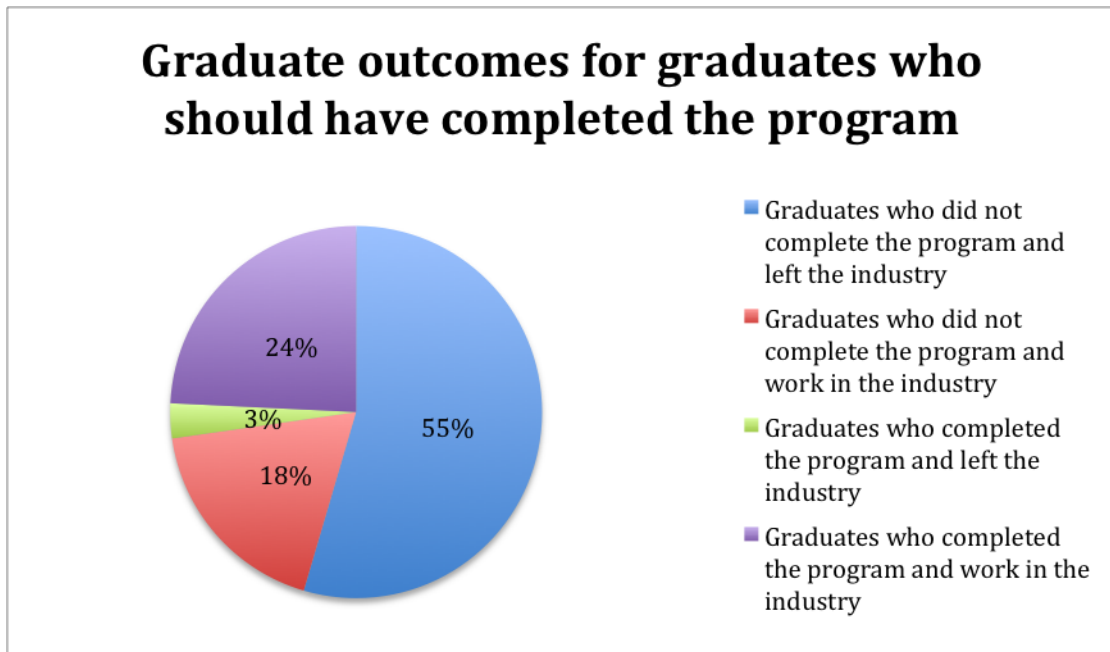
In the five years that the graduate program has been conducted 21 companies have utilised the program to employ 59 graduates. Twenty six graduates are currently enrolled in the program. Twenty four graduates did not complete the program and nine graduates completed the program.



Considering all 59 graduates who have been enrolled in the graduate program the results are as follows:



Removing the graduates currently enrolled in the program and focusing on the remaining 33 graduates, 42% (14 graduates) continue to hold positions within the industry. However it should also be noted that of those 42% who remain in the industry just under half of them failed to complete the whole graduate program (ie dropped out of the program before completion) but still remained in the industry. Reasons given for dropping out of the program generally related to being too busy to attend the professional development workshops and do the projects.



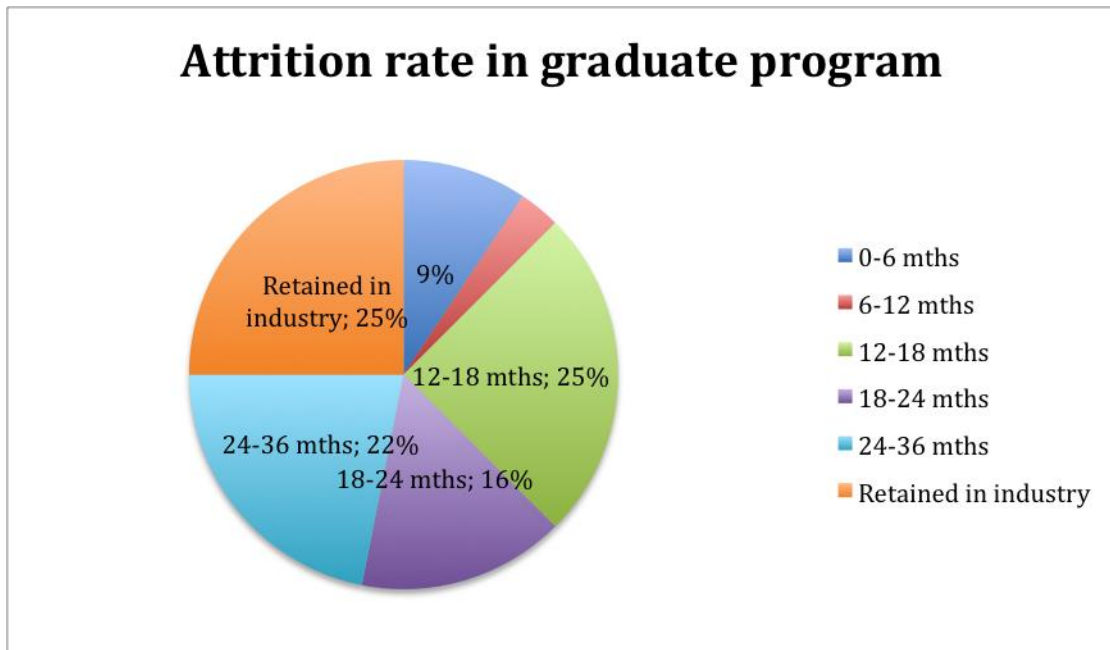
The graduate program is a three year program. The attrition rate for the duration of the program is set out below:

Length of time in the program	Numbers dropping out of program
0 – 6 months	3
6 – 12 months	1
12 – 18 months	8
18 – 24 months	5
24 – 36 months	7
Completed the program	9

Considering that ‘generation Xers change jobs as often as every eighteen months’¹² (and the average tenure across all ages and industries is just over 4 years’¹³.) the attrition rates outlined above are better than may have been expected. Of the twenty four graduates who failed to complete the program half of them were retained in the industry for more then eighteen months. Slightly more then half of all the graduates in the program have been retained in the industry for more than eighteen months.

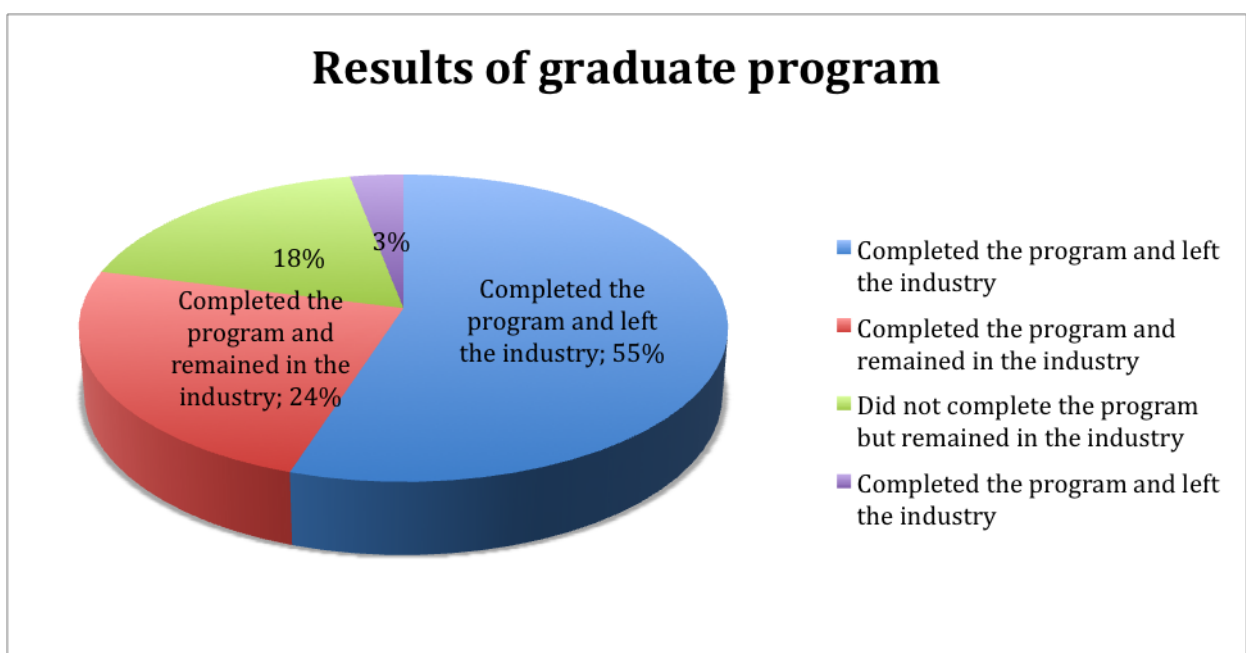
¹² Bogdanowicz, Maureen S. and Elaine K. Bailey. 2002. The value of knowledge and the values of the new knowledge worker: Generation X in the new economy. Journal of European Industrial Training 26:125-129. g40

¹³ McCrindle M, New Generations at Work: Attracting, Recruiting, Retraining & Training Generation Y, 2008



Factors that were cited by graduates contacted in the study for leaving the program included:

- Poor or no workforce planning so that there is no on-going position for the graduate
- Poor people management practices including no support or regular meetings, planning or appraisal of their work
- Poor performance management practices
- Some companies drawn to the program by the wage subsidies and lacking 'real' jobs for graduates
- Mismatch between the graduate and the company
- Graduates leaving for personal reasons.



Over the five years the program has been conducted, twenty one companies have participated in the program (although two companies have subsequently been taken over by other participating companies).

Company types	Company numbers
Livestock, feedlot, marketing	1
Breeding	1
Genetics provider	1
Feedlot	2
Feedlot, marketing	1
Processing	5
Feedlot, processing, marketing	6
Livestock, feedlot, processing	1
Machinery and robotics	2
Marketing	1
Totals	21

The companies participating in the graduate professional development program represent the whole of the red meat supply chain. However they are dominated by large meat processing companies. The processing companies account for approximately 75% of all graduates who have participated in the program (39 graduates). They also have the largest number of graduates/company averaging approximately three graduates/company.

The number of graduates/company since the commencement of the program in 2005 is set out below.

Number of companies	Number of graduates
9 companies	1 graduate
4 companies	2 graduates
2 companies	3 graduates
1 company	4 graduates
1 company	5 graduates
1 company	8 graduates
1 company	More than 10 graduates
Total 19 (2 companies taken over by other companies)	

Feedback from red meat industry companies (via the stakeholder meeting and phone interviews) and from the graduates participating in the program strongly supports representation in the program from the whole of the red meat supply chain. The graduates participating in the program felt that this was one of the main strengths of the program. In order to achieve this, quotas may need to be determined to ensure representation from the whole supply chain, depending on the amount of funding available for the program.

Contact with non-participating meat processing companies of different sizes indicated that a number did not know about the program. These results support the need to market the program more effectively to small, medium and large companies across the whole supply chain.

The MLA criteria for accepting disciplines relates to the R&D focus and taking the companies into new areas. The stakeholder meeting endorsed MLA's need to link disciplines with R&D.

Disciplines of the graduates in the program include:

Work area	Number of graduates
Feedlot	15
Engineering	12
Customer service	3
Environment	8
Finance, accounting	3
Value add	1
Marketing and sales	3
Food technology	2
Human resources	4
Processing	4
Livestock buyer	1
Breeding society	1
Nutrition	1
Project coordinator	1
Total	59

There is general support for only accepting disciplines related to the R&D focus and taking companies into new areas, at the discretion of MLA.

5.4.1.2 Elements of the current program

The elements of the current program include:

- Salary subsidies
- Mentoring through the provision of an external technical mentor and an MLA staff member
- Professional development workshops (2/annum) that provide:
 - Networking opportunities
 - Interaction with graduates from the whole of the red meat supply chain
 - Training and development in management leading to a formal qualification at diploma level
- Research projects
- Financial support for other training and development opportunities such as attendance at conferences, and other training in line with requirements for their jobs as agreed and approved by MLA

Salary subsidies

At approximately \$60,000/graduate (45% of the cost) the salary subsidies are the largest single direct cost in the graduate program. This cost is even higher considering that more than half the graduates fail to complete the program and don't stay in the industry. Some companies currently participating in the program have indicated that they would not participate in the program without the salary subsidies and would be less likely to employ graduates without the subsidy and would be more likely to promote employees from within the company.

Consideration needs to be given by MLA to the amount of MLA's contribution to subsidise salaries, the number of years that MLA will provide salary subsidies, and a ceiling placed on the salary level that MLA will base its contribution on, ie companies can choose the salary they wish to pay their graduate but MLA will only pay their salary contribution to a maximum salary level determined by MLA from time to time.

Mentoring

The mentoring program covers the costs of an external technical mentor. In general the graduates value the technical mentor. This is consistent with research findings that identify 'on the job coaching/mentoring' .. 'as one of their preferred methods of training.'¹⁴

Although the graduates generally value the mentor, feedback from some graduates indicates a need for more clarification of the mentor role and definition of expectations. Comments on the value of the mentors include the mentors providing a source of information on an area that is new to the company and no one else in the company can provide that information and that company personnel are too busy to provide the support needed, and the mentor is paid to provide that support. On the other hand the comments have been made that the mentor is not aligned with company culture and may cause potential conflict and the recommendation that the mentor be contracted on a yearly basis so that the results can be evaluated each year.

Overall it appears that the external technical mentor is valued and is a source of information that broadens the input beyond the company and provides expertise that may not be available in the company. There will be an allowance of \$6,000/annum to pay the mentor. The role and expectations of the mentor will be defined in their contract. The contract will be renewed annually provided the role and expectations have been met.

Professional development workshops

Two professional development workshops are held each year for the three year duration of the program.

The ACC paper¹⁵ reviewing MLA's professional development program identifies the following criteria as critical skill sets for future leaders and managers:

- 'A 'Big Picture' perspective. Leaders and managers cannot make decisions in isolation. They need to keep up to date with what is happening across the industry
- Strong networks. Being well connected across the industry makes a significant difference to the ability to keep up to date and to make things happen
- Know-how. Leaders and managers need the knowledge and technical skills specific to a role to be able to do the job effectively, or enough understanding to provide the leadership for specialists to design and implement innovations.
- Confidence - Leaders and managers need the knowledge and associated confidence to be able to hold their ground with regulators.'

The professional development workshops aim to provide the graduates with these critical skills. The workshops expose the graduates to the 'big picture' perspective through external case studies from different areas of the supply chain as well as the project presentations from each of the graduates participating in the program providing perspectives of different parts of the supply chain. The graduates build networks across the whole supply chain through the professional development program. The graduates are provided with 'know-how' through the Diploma in Management.

Research findings indicate that lifelong learning is important to Generation Y. The findings also indicate that the preferred area of training for Gen Y is the 'soft skills' area (presentation skills, management and communications skills etc). With Gen Y changing jobs and careers frequently equipping them with people skills is transferable and lifelong.¹⁶

¹⁴ ¹⁴ McCrindle M, New Generations at Work: Attracting, Recruiting, Retraining & Training Generation Y, 2008

¹⁵ ACC, Attracting, training and retaining young people in the red meat industry (2009)

¹⁶ ¹⁶ McCrindle M, New Generations at Work: Attracting, Recruiting, Retraining & Training Generation Y, 2008

The graduates and the companies generally value the professional development workshops. Some graduates cited difficulty getting time off to attend the workshops and some resentment from other employees not on the program. These graduates felt that the project they conducted as part of the graduate program and which they presented to their company helped other employees to see the outcomes of the graduate program.

In view of the companies valuing the workshops it is proposed to make the workshops available for a limited number of additional company personnel outside those participating in the graduate program (at the discretion of MLA).

The cost of the workshops will be \$6,000/year with the company paying this cost (50% of the cost will be refunded for RMI levy payers via the AMPC PIP program). The company will pay expenses.

Research projects

Each graduate in the program conducts a research project each year of the program. The projects aim to provide the graduate with research and project management skills. This goal is consistent with MLA's R&D mandate and it is important for companies to have staff with some research skills and experience to be able to utilise MLA's R&D initiatives and take up the outcomes of R&D.

Some graduates interviewed in the review found it difficult to get the time they need to conduct the projects in working hours and generally conducted the project in their own time. Some also cited difficulty getting the input they needed from other staff for their projects although they did work with their mentors on the project.

Financial support for training and development

Financial support is currently available for training and development. The training and development needs to be built into the graduates' work plans as part of their performance planning and appraisal process. Provision of performance plans that include training and development needs to be conditional for the provision of financial support for training and development.

Research findings support the role of lifelong learning for generation Y. Continuing learning and development is not just about productivity for Generation Y, it is about retention. One study identified that '89.6% of Generation Y agreed that if they received regular training from their employer it would motivate them to stay longer with the company.'¹⁷

It is therefore proposed that training is mandatory in the graduate program and the company must submit an annual work plan that includes a learning and development plan. There will be a maximum of \$6,000/annum available for learning and development aligned with the work plan and mutually agreed and approved by MLA.

¹⁷ ¹⁷ McCrindle M, *New Generations at Work: Attracting, Recruiting, Retraining & Training Generation Y*, 2008

5.4.1.3 Objectives of the graduate program

Clarification of aims of program

The ACC review of the MLA professional development program¹⁸ 'highlighted the need for greater clarification of the aims of the program. The ACC review identified the key questions as:

- 'What should this PD program be aiming to achieve?
- What should the priorities be, and
- What are the best ways to achieve these?

This would help to resolve the issues that have been raised about mentors and coaches, the need for and nature of projects and the focus of the off site MLA program.'

What has the program aimed to achieve?

The objectives of MLA's current professional development program have been described in a variety of publications as:

- Raising industry awareness of the importance of attracting and retaining a pool of tertiary qualified professionals
- Assisting companies in engaging, developing and retaining university graduates
- Attracting and developing young professionals from a variety of disciplines, to not only keep them in the industry, but to assist them to become future managers and leaders
- Helping create an industry-wide culture of innovation and increased professionalism to ensure the long term sustainability and profitability of the industry
- Assisting the industry to fill innovation related capability gaps in the future, particularly in science and technology areas
- Helping create an industry wide culture of innovation and increased professionalism to ensure the long term sustainability and profitability of the industry.

The primary goal the graduate program is meeting is assisting companies to develop university graduates (and in so doing assisting them to retain their graduates). The program achieves this with the support and development opportunities it provides the graduates. Even with this support and development only 42% of graduates in the program have been retained in the industry. This retention rate is consistent with general retention rates for young people across all industries.

The program not only aims to keep the graduates in the industry but it also aims to provide them with skills to become future leaders and managers in the industry. The program aims to achieve this through the professional development workshops that provide the graduates with the Diploma in Management.

By restricting support to innovation related capability gaps the program aims to encourage a culture of innovation and increased professionalism. The focus on innovation related capabilities is also consistent with MLA's R&D charter and aims to complement uptake of other MLA related technologies. The limited financial resources for the program and the aim to include representatives from the whole of the supply chain reinforce the focus on restricting participation to innovation related capabilities.

The program also aims to help create an industry wide culture of innovation and increased professionalism. However with only 21 companies participating across the whole supply chain

¹⁸ ACC, Attracting, training and retaining young people in the red meat industry (2009)

and 14 of 57 graduates retained in the industry the program may not have had an industry-wide impact. At a cost of somewhere between \$127,500 and \$300,000 to retain a graduate in the industry there may be other ways to achieve similar goals more effectively.

Another objective is raising industry awareness of the importance of attracting tertiary qualified professionals. The program provides incentives that encourage companies to appoint professionals. Companies contacted in the review cited the salary subsidies as the most important incentive for joining the program. Very few companies contacted in the review employed significant numbers of professionals outside the graduate program beyond single specialist positions generally to meet regulatory requirements.

In its current form the program is achieving the following aims:

- Supporting and developing university graduates in order to retain them in the industry
- Encouraging innovation in companies by supporting graduates with innovation related capabilities
- Raising awareness in graduates of the whole of the supply chain
- Providing training for graduates in management.

The program has supported and developed a number of graduates employed by companies. In general the disciplines supported have been innovation related. The graduates have had the opportunity to network with other graduates from the whole of the supply chain and for exposure to whole of supply chain at the professional development workshops. Graduates in the program have the opportunity to gain the Diploma in Management.

5.4.1.4 Focus and targets of the graduate program

The focus of the program is recent graduates. By focusing on recent graduates the program is supporting generational change by recruiting and developing the next generation to replace the ageing Baby Boomers who will all exit the workforce in the next twenty years. A number of companies participating in the program have recognised this opportunity and appreciate the objective is not only about placing professionals in specialised positions but also about attracting university qualified younger people into the industry, giving them exposure to a range of areas in the companies and grooming them for technical or managerial positions in the future. The program is about succession planning, grooming the next generation of technical and managerial positions in the company.

There is strong agreement from all stakeholders that the focus on targeting graduates from the whole of the supply chain should be retained. There is also general agreement with MLA's focus on 'assisting the industry to fill innovation related capability gaps in the future, particularly in science and technology areas.' The focus on innovation is also reinforced in the ACC review of the MLA professional development program¹⁹

'Interviewees and focus group members observed that there was an overriding need for new ways of doing things in every facet of the business, and felt that much of the innovation needed to be 'radical' or 'transformational' rather than incremental. Those interviewed believed that only a small number of companies are currently operating in the 'mature and sophisticated' fashion required to manage the identified trends and issues effectively. They observed that some are prepared to consider incremental change, but others are openly resistant, believing that the old 'seat of the pants' approach will suffice.'

¹⁹ ACC, Attracting, training and retaining young people in the red meat industry (2009)

5.4.1.5 Contractual arrangements, responsibilities and accountabilities

Contractual arrangements

The contractual arrangements are between MLA and the company. The company submits a plan for the graduate. Some components of the program are mandatory and others flexible. The company determines the salary of the graduate. The salary support is generally a declining scale of support over the three years from 50:50 to the company contributing 70% by the third year. The salary-on-costs are submitted by the company and range from 12 – 30%. The professional development workshops are mandatory but the training opportunities are determined by the company and submitted to MLA for approval. The mentor is not mandatory and is an external technical expert.

Feedback received in the review has identified the need for defining the roles of each stakeholder in the contract and for holding the company more accountable for meeting their responsibilities. Feedback from the graduates raised issues about poor management practices from some companies including being unclear about their responsibilities, receiving little support from their managers and no performance reviews. There was also feedback that MLA did not communicate often enough with the graduates or their managers and that communication from MLA was frequently with the HR manager rather than the graduate or their managers. There was also feedback from participating companies that they didn't want a 'one size fits all approach.' It is therefore proposed to set out the responsibilities of the graduates, the company and MLA in a standardised contract but also discuss these responsibilities with the parties to customise them to the specific needs of each graduate and company.

Company responsibilities defined in the contract would include:

- Appointing a supervisor of the graduate
- Developing a job description for the graduate and discussing the job description with the graduate
- The supervisor working with the graduate to outline a work plan (that includes a training plan) for the graduate setting out the main deliverables and KPIs for the ensuing year
- The supervisor meeting with the graduate on a quarterly basis (as a minimum) to review progress, give feedback, revise the work and training plans, identify and address areas that need strengthening
- The supervisor supporting the graduate with their projects
- Ensuring the graduate attends the professional development workshops
- Submitting quarterly reports with each invoice that provide evidence that the company is meeting their responsibilities including quarterly performance reviews, progress towards deliverables, training plan etc.

Graduate responsibilities include:

- Participating in planning and performance review sessions with supervisor
- Participating in professional development workshops
- Completing projects
- Submitting quarterly reports.

MLA responsibilities would include:

- Phone contact with the graduate and their supervisor on a regular basis to review progress and identify and discuss any issues raised
- Identifying any issues and working with stakeholders to resolve them in a timely fashion

- Organising and conducting professional development workshops
- Organising and monitoring the graduate's progress with their projects
- Processing company's quarterly reports and approving payments in accordance with meeting reporting requirements.

Reporting requirements

MLA pays payments to the company quarterly on submission of an invoice. There are no KPIs for the company linked to the payments. In fact the graduates are required to submit quarterly reports and undertake projects as part of the program but there are no reporting requirements on the company in the contract.

In response to feedback from some graduates (that they are unclear about their roles, priorities and performance) and one company participating in the program it is proposed to hold companies accountable for meeting their responsibilities to the graduates by submitting with their invoices the quarterly performance reviews that they've conducted with their graduates. This helps focus on building company's capabilities to be a better employer of graduates and supports good people management practices.

5.4.1.6 MLA's role

MLA needs to commit a dedicated resource to manage the graduate program. MLA's responsibilities need to be clearly defined in the contractual agreement with the companies.

The responsibilities of the MLA coordinator of the program would include:

- Marketing the program broadly across the RMI companies to encourage broader participation across the supply chain and including small, medium and large companies and companies who have not previously participated in the program
- Processing applications and selecting participants in line with applications meeting conditions, disciplines aligning with MLA charter, broad representation from whole of supply chain, representation from small and medium sized companies as well as large companies, consideration of the number of graduates from the one company, consideration of the number of years that the company has participated, the amount of funding available etc
- Working with the successful companies to finalise contracts
- Working with the companies to identify suitable mentors and entering into contracts with the mentors
- Monitoring mentor performance and processing annual reports and renewal of contracts
- Regular phone contact with the graduates and their supervisors to review progress and identify and discuss any issues raised
- Identifying any issues and working with stakeholders to resolve them in a timely fashion
- Organising and conducting professional development workshops
- Organising and monitoring the graduate's progress with their projects
- Processing company's quarterly reports and approving payments in accordance with meeting reporting requirements
- Managing the budget for the program
- Compiling data to review the program and presenting the data for review and modification of the program.

5.4.2 Results and analysis of the undergraduate program

5.4.2.1 Outcomes

MLA's undergraduate program was initiated in response to the need to attract graduates to the industry by exposing them to the opportunities offered in the industry through completing a project in a company over the summer vacation. The program has been successful in exposing undergraduates to the industry. However, follow-up of undergraduates who participated in the program (who could be contacted) identified approximately 20% working in the RMI. MLA also contacted the undergraduates on graduation to assist them to find positions in the industry but there were very few jobs for graduates available in the industry. The small number of companies who do offer positions for graduates/professionals stated that they were able to fill the positions with suitable graduates/professionals. There does not appear to be a problem recruiting graduates/professionals into the positions available.

The companies generally regard the undergraduate program as an opportunity to obtain a subsidised, dedicated resource to complete a small body of work and there is generally no on-going position linked with the project. Similarly, a number of the undergraduates contacted in the review regarded the program as vacation employment rather than a future career option.

The program has been highly successful in terms of the return on investment to companies if they implement the outcomes of the projects. MLA conducted a cost benefit analysis based on the savings identified in the undergraduate project reports between 2004 - 2009 if the companies implemented their projects. The analysis identified potential savings to companies if they implemented the projects of approximately \$7 million/annum. Considering the program costs of \$2.33 million over the period this represents a potential savings to industry over the five years of approximately \$35 million if the companies implemented the projects.

MLA, AMPC and the Australian Lot Feeders Association (ALFA) financially support the program. The cost to companies of the program is \$17,900 except in the case of red meat levy paying companies where the companies pay \$8,950 and this amount is matched by AMPC out of the company R&D allocations associated with the Plant Initiated Projects (PIP).

MLA covers the costs of:

- Q fever vaccinations
- Mentor allocation (a technical professional for up to 6 days)
- Payment of salary and on costs (workers compensation, OHS, super)
- Travel and Christmas travel (if required)
- Induction week – including travel, accommodation, site tours and project development
- Ensuring a final report and presentation is delivered at the conclusion of the program

Although hundreds of applications are received from undergraduates to participate in the program in each intake, there were insufficient projects identified by the companies in each intake to be able to run the program at full capacity. If the program is to be effective there needs to be better marketing to the industry to gain company involvement. There also needs to be more of a partnership between the student and the company, with the company involved with the selection of their student and taking more responsibility for working with the students throughout the projects. There was feedback from some undergraduates that company personnel were too busy to spend time with them and the company personnel left it to the mentors to work with them. They felt that because they didn't work closely with company personnel they were sometimes unclear about their projects, there was little ownership of the outcomes of the project by company

personnel and the projects were unlikely to be implemented. In fact many felt that no one would read the reports of their projects let alone implement them.

There was general support from the companies and the undergraduates for all components of the program. Students learnt from the 'on the job experience' and the off site training and mentoring enabled them to get much more from the onsite experience. An important component was the structuring of formal opportunities for students to reflect on how they were handling both their task and the building of professional relationships. This encouragement of reflective practice is the key to learning on the job, and lays the foundation for the transfer of learning from one situation to another. It is the factor that most clearly distinguishes the MLA undergraduate program from 'work experience'.

5.4.3 Results and analysis of the MINTRAC managed scholarship program

5.4.3.1 The postgraduate research scholarship program

Considering MLA's R&D mandate and Australia's position as one of the largest exporters on the world market it is important for the industry to support research in meat science. The program directly links with MLA's R&D charter which includes:

'R&D activities and the training of people to carry out industry research and development'²⁰.

To date the program has been managed by MINTRAC with research topics reflecting MLA's priorities, and student applications vetted by MLA personnel with expertise in the research area identified. As the topics for research are aligned with MLA priorities and MLA approves the topics MLA is better positioned to manage the program directly.

5.4.3.2 The undergraduate scholarship program

Thirty four scholarships have been provided in the undergraduate scholarship scheme (as at Dec 2009). Of these:

- 22 students have completed their studies and of these two have remained in the industry (though it isn't known how long)
- Five students have not yet completed their studies
- Seven students have withdrawn from the program because
 - They weren't happy in the industry
 - They changed courses, and career directions
 - They withdrew from their studies.

Although the industry retention rate has been low the strength of the undergraduate scholarship program has been that it focuses on a partnership between the scholarship holder and a RMI company with the company commitment making a commitment to the student in the form of an agreement to provide suitable employment during university vacations.

As with the MLA undergraduate program the low rate of undergraduates joining the RMI on completion of their studies may be partly due to the small number of graduate positions available in the industry.

5.4.3.3 The upskilling scholarships program

The upskilling scholarship program provides an opportunity for staff to gain the technical skills needed when they are promoted into managerial positions on the basis of their technical

²⁰ Operational Compliance and Procedures Framework, February 2008

experience on the job but have no formal skills in leadership or management. Accordingly, the upskilling scholarships program has funded a broad range of programs at a variety of different levels including Masters of Business Administration, OHS, training and HR.

Seventy two scholarships have been funded through this program (as at Dec 2009) with the following outcomes:

- 24 students have completed their qualifications
- 18 students are continuing their studies
- 30 students have withdrawn from the program
 - 12 students withdrew because they left the industry
 - 18 students withdrew due to the demands of the study.

The upskilling scholarship program complements the MLA graduate program in that it provides opportunities for employees in the RMI to gain tertiary qualifications and improve their career options within the industry.

6 Key findings

6.1 Industry's workforce priorities

6.1.1 Skilled labour

Although companies identified attraction and retention of their skilled workforce. Although the companies identified attraction and retention of unskilled and skilled labour as their area of greatest need they take responsibility for this area themselves and feel there are service providers such as MINTRAC, state training authorities and RTOs covering the areas. They did not identify an additional role for MLA in the area beyond supporting MINTRAC.

A number of companies identified high turnover of staff (with a particularly high turnover of young people entering the industry) as a problem in the industry. They described young people leaving in their first week of employment not wanting to work in the industry and others receiving more attractive offers from other industries.

Companies need to take a more strategic approach to HR management to analyse their workforce situation and plan strategically to meet their specific workforce needs to attract, retain and develop their workforce.

There was support for an industry-wide approach to marketing and promoting career opportunities in the RMI in the form of a website that also includes employment vacancies as this is the method most frequently used in particular by young people to search for job vacancies.

6.1.2 Professionals

The focus of the MLA professional development program has been on attracting, retaining and developing professionals in the RMI, with professionals defined as tertiary qualified personnel, and the MLA program focusing on recent graduates of universities.

In general, companies in the RMI promote technical and management positions internally and hire professionals externally when specific expertise or qualifications are required for regulatory compliance or to implement new technologies. The professionals who have been recruited are single specialist positions such as a nurse, a laboratory technician, a food technologist, an environment officer or an administration position such as a finance or IT officer or manager.

The implications of the RMI culture of internal promotion have resulted in some personnel holding positions in which they don't have qualifications, eg OHS, training, HR. The MINTRAC managed upskilling scholarships complement the MLA graduate program by offering scholarships to upgrade the skills of personnel working in the industry enabling personnel to gain the qualifications they need for their positions or provide a career pathway for them to these positions.

Several companies in the review identified the ageing workforce as a priority workforce issue. These companies cited critical areas of their business including middle and senior managers and professionals as reaching retirement age. Professionals included their maintenance/engineering staff, meat safety and quality assurance personnel. These companies recognised the need for workforce planning including succession planning but in general did not have the time or the expertise (particularly in the small to medium sized companies) to manage HR strategically. There is a need for companies to develop and implement workforce and succession plans, recruitment and development strategies for replacing personnel, strategies such as 'buddying' to upgrade the skills of potential replacements and introducing flexible work arrangements such as part-time or casual work and job sharing for retirement planning.

Several of the companies participating in the MLA graduate program have been using the graduate program as a workforce planning strategy for succession planning, providing an opportunity to recruit the next generation of technical experts and managers and groom them for critical positions.

Companies also need to manage generational diversity to meet the needs of each of the generational groups in the workforce and gain the best outcomes from the generational diversity.

Companies are operating in a continuously changing and more complex environment and are likely to need to recruit more professionals in the future to bring technical expertise and new ideas into the RMI and assist the companies to respond to change, complexity and meet the highly specialised requirements of new technologies to remain profitable, sustainable, competitive and improve their positions on local and global markets.

6.1.3 Managers

The RMI is operating in an increasingly more competitive and complex environment where companies need to constantly re-assess and respond to new regulatory requirements, new ways of running their business and new technologies.

Senior managers need development opportunities that assist them to manage strategically to respond appropriately to new threats and opportunities in line with their business planning, and to lead their companies and their people to foster and develop an environment of learning, development, innovation and respect for their workforce.

There isn't yet a RMI systematic progression of qualifications for senior managers but there are a number of options available for senior managers. These options include the MLA supported executive leadership development program offered by the University of Melbourne and the Vocational Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma in Agribusiness currently being developed through MINTRAC and the University of NSW. These options need to be marketed across the RMI and support provided for their delivery.

6.2 MLA's role in assisting companies meet their workforce needs

6.2.1 The graduate program

The review supported MLA's focus on assisting the industry with the attraction, retention and development of professionals through the graduate program. There is in general a gap in the provision of services in this area in the industry and a need to assist the industry with generational change.

Companies in the RMI need professionals to position themselves to respond to the increasingly complex and competitive environment in which they operate. They also need professionals to adopt the results of MLA's R&D programs including technological developments to improve the operation and efficiency of their businesses. The graduate program can also assist companies with targeted succession planning as a strategy to manage an ageing workforce.

Successful outcomes of the program include:

- Providing companies with a succession planning opportunity to recruit graduates for development into critical technical and management positions
- Providing companies with resources for the implementation of MLA's R&D strategies such as the CIS program
- Helping companies resource critical specialised positions required for new technologies and regulatory compliance
- Increasing the number of graduates/professionals in the industry
- Helping companies meet their future workforce needs for professionals
- Providing graduates with a whole of supply chain perspective of the industry that helps equip them to work in the rapidly changing industry environment
- Providing graduates with technical and management development opportunities to accelerate their effectiveness and career progression in their companies.

While the graduate program has increased the number of graduates/professionals recruited into the industry, and helped companies with succession planning, the retention rate of the graduates in the industry has been low with 42% of graduates in the program remaining in the industry after the three year program. However, bearing in mind that generation Xers change their jobs as often as every 18 months and the average tenure for all age groups is four years, the retention rates are consistent with these findings. Factors that were cited by graduates for leaving include:

- Poor or no workforce planning so that there is no on-going position for the graduate
- Poor people management practices
- Poor performance management practices
- Some companies drawn to the program by the wage subsidies and lacking 'real' jobs for graduates
- Mismatch between the graduate and the company
- Graduates leaving for personal reasons.

The direct costs of the current graduate program are estimated at \$127,500/graduate and the cost of retaining a graduate in the industry is estimated at \$300,000/graduate (considering that only 42% of graduates are retained in the industry). It is proposed to implement strategies in the graduate program to help improve retention including holding companies accountable (through the contractual arrangements between MLA and the company) for managing their graduates and establishing 'real' jobs with career progression into the future.

The single largest cost in the program is the salary subsidies. Companies participating in the program indicated the salary subsidies are important to their participation in the program. Consideration needs to be given by MLA to the amount of MLA's contribution to subsidise salaries, the number of years that MLA will provide salary subsidies, and a ceiling placed on the salary level that MLA will base its contribution on, ie companies can choose the salary they wish to pay their graduate but MLA will only pay their salary contribution to a maximum salary level determined by MLA from time to time.

Recommendations to strengthen the graduate program and improve graduate retention rates (and indirectly to build company capabilities in strategic HR management and integrate uptake of MLA's other programs) include:

- Holding the participating companies directly accountable for managing their graduates through the contractual arrangements with MLA linking payments with performance
- Ensuring that companies have 'real' jobs and 'real' roles for graduates that assist the company to meet their business objectives (including uptake of other MLA programs) and that they are held accountable for the ongoing support, development and career planning of their graduate(s) during and beyond the graduate program
- Encouraging companies to link the graduate program with implementation of other MLA programs such as the Collaborative Innovation Strategy (CIS) program by helping the companies to meet the workforce implications of implementation of the strategy.
- Making changes to the components of the program in response to feedback from stakeholders
- MLA committing a dedicated resource to the co-ordination of the program

Companies seeking support for graduates through the MLA program will be required to submit a proposal that demonstrates the need for the graduate(s) as reflected in a 5 year projection of the company workforce needs (as evidenced in workforce planning) to meet the objectives in their business plan (which may also include meeting the workforce needs of implementation of the CIS program or implement other MLA programs). Companies will also be required to submit their performance management system that includes developing and regularly reviewing a work plan with a learning and development plan aligned with it and regular meetings to review performance.

The responsibilities and accountabilities of all stakeholders will be clearly identified in the contract between MLA and the company. Companies will be held accountable for meeting contract milestones linked with their quarterly payments for maintaining effective people and performance management practices associated with supporting and developing their graduates, conducting regular performance planning and reviews. There will also be clearly defined MLA roles and responsibilities in the contract and a dedicated MLA coordinator is needed to manage the program. The MLA coordinator will work more closely with the companies to encourage them to mentor and develop their graduates removing the need for MLA subsidised company coordinators for the program.

The duration of the program will remain at three years to embed the graduates in the companies and provide support for graduates who in some cases (such as environment) may be the only person in the company working in the area. Although the duration of the program should remain at three years, MLA should consider whether the salary subsidies continue for the three year duration of the program or tailor off after two years.

The numbers of graduates participating in the program will be linked with availability of funding but is likely to be similar to current numbers of approximately 25. There is strong support for

participants from the whole of the supply chain. Quotas will not be applied for numbers of participants from the one company although companies (or sites) will only be able to participate in the program for a limited number of years that gives the company the opportunity to embed the program in their own company and then take ownership of the program themselves (consistent with MLA's R&D focus on providing seeding funding). The selection of participants will be linked with the company's submissions of their workforce plans to demonstrate their need for the graduates, their career plan for the graduate and evidence of their people and performance management strategies to support and develop the graduate. Not all applications may be successful, due to the focus on having graduates from the whole of the supply chain, priority being given to companies submitting graduates for the first time for some places in the program and priority to meet workforce needs for linkages with other MLA programs. Disciplines will be restricted to, and aligned with MLA's R&D mandate, at the discretion of MLA.

The components of the graduate program will remain with some refinements:

- **Salary subsidies** on a declining scale determined by MLA. The salaries will be determined by the companies but MLA will only provide subsidies up to a ceiling level determined by MLA on a regular basis
- **Professional development workshops** are mandatory for the duration of the program. The two workshops per year will continue. The workshops aim to provide networking opportunities, give participants a perspective of the whole of supply chain through participant project presentations, case studies and visits, and provide development opportunities with units leading to the Diploma in Management after three years. The workshops will also be available for a limited number of additional company personnel outside those participating in the graduate program (at the discretion of MLA). The cost of the workshops will be \$6,000/year with the company paying this cost (50% of the cost will be refunded for RMI levy payers via the PIP program). The company will pay expenses.
- **Mentors** will be optional except where the graduate has no other technical expert in their discipline in the company in which case a mentor is mandatory. The mentors will be external technical mentors mutually agreed by MLA and the company. There will be an allowance of \$6,000/annum to pay the mentor. The role and expectations of the mentor will be defined in their contract. The contract will be renewed annually provided the role and expectations have been met.
- **Training** is mandatory. The company must submit an annual work plan that includes a learning and development plan. There will be a maximum of \$6,000/annum available for learning and development aligned with the work plan and mutually agreed and approved by MLA.
- **Graduate projects.** The projects will remain as compulsory. They provide an opportunity to learn project management skills, work with managers and make presentations.

6.2.2 Upskilling scholarships

The MINTRAC managed upskilling scholarship program compliments the MLA graduate program in that it provides an opportunity for RMI company personnel to upgrade their skills to take on professional or managerial positions. The RMI has a culture of promoting internally on the basis of technical expertise generally in production areas, and experience in the company. The upskilling scholarships provide an opportunity for RMI company personnel to gain the qualifications they need for career progression. This may be to gain technical skills such as OHS, HR, training, meat safety, quality assurance and environment or managerial skills.

MINTRAC has managed the upskilling scholarships program since its inception. MINTRAC is well positioned to continue to manage the program as they are familiar with funding that is

available for training and can utilise the most appropriate funding needed by applicants. For example, upskilling funding such as the productivity places program may be available through state or federal government, thus leveraging the MLA funding.

6.2.3 Postgraduate research scholarship program

The postgraduate scholarships program is directly linked with MLA's charter to conduct R&D projects and train people to carry out R&D. The scholarships are generally offered in MLA's priority research areas and the proposals approved by MLA personnel with expertise in the area. The postgraduate scholarship program is currently managed by MINTRAC however MLA is better positioned to directly manage these scholarships.

6.2.4 The undergraduate program

6.2.4.1 MLA's undergraduate program

MLA's undergraduate program aimed to attract graduates to the industry by exposing them to opportunities in the industry whilst completing a project in a company. The program has been successful in exposing undergraduates to the industry and has generated some interest in the undergraduates joining the industry on graduation but there have been very few suitable positions available for them. Follow-up of the undergraduates who participated in the program (who could be contacted) identified approximately 20% working in the RMI. The companies generally regard the undergraduate program as an opportunity to obtain a subsidised, dedicated resource to complete a small body of work for them and there is generally no on-going position linked with the project. In spite of the opportunity to gain a dedicated resource for a project, companies did not generate enough projects for the program to operate at full capacity. The program was strongly supported by undergraduate applicants each year but the program was restricted by insufficient company projects. Some undergraduates reported that they regarded the program as vacation employment and were not interested in a career in the industry.

Companies who offer positions for graduates stated that they were able to fill the positions with suitable graduates. Currently, there does not appear to be a problem attracting suitable graduates to the industry, considering the small number of suitable positions available in the industry.

The undergraduate program has been highly successful in terms of the return on investment to companies if they implement the outcomes of the projects. MLA conducted a cost benefit analysis based on the savings identified in the undergraduate projects reports on their projects from 2004 - 2009 if the companies implemented their projects. The analysis identified savings to companies if they implemented the projects of approximately \$7 million/annum. Considering the program costs of \$2.33 million over the period this represents a potential savings to industry over the five years of approximately \$35 million if the companies implemented the projects.

Considering the objective of the undergraduate program has been to attract graduates to the industry, the program has only been successful in employing approximately 20% in the industry. This is largely due to the small number of suitable positions available in the industry. The companies have indicated that they receive suitable applicants for the graduate positions available. Considering these findings it is recommended to discontinue the undergraduate program as a program for attracting graduates to the industry.

6.2.4.2 The undergraduate scholarship program

The undergraduate scholarship program managed by MINTRAC has been unsuccessful in retaining the students in the industry once they've graduated with two out of twenty two students who have completed the program remaining in the industry. The small number of jobs offered in

the industry to graduates may have contributed to this low retention rate. In line with the MLA managed undergraduate program it is recommended to discontinue the undergraduate scholarship program as a program for attracting graduates to the industry.

6.3 Management development

Senior managers were identified as key players in responding to the increasingly complex and competitive environment in which the RMI operates. In spite of their need to lead their companies into the future, including implementing MLA's innovation, science and technology programs, there are few opportunities for development for senior managers in the industry. There needs to be continuing MLA support for a RMI systematic progression of qualifications for senior managers including support for the Vocational Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma in Agribusiness currently being developed through MINTRAC and the University of NSW. These options need to be marketed across the RMI and support provided for their delivery.

An annual CEO leadership forum may also provide an opportunity to keep the RMI CEOs abreast of the outputs of MLA's R&D strategies and the opportunities provided by these strategies for RMI companies. The forum may also focus on leading the industry into the future, providing exposure to other industry highly successful CEOs, case studies and discussion on significant leadership and management issues, exposure to MLA's programs and what is required to access them and industry case studies of successful leadership and management strategies.

6.4 Strategic HR management

Companies in the RMI are competing for a declining workforce. They need to be strategic about how they compete for that workforce. They also need to understand their workforce to appreciate the reasons for workforce turnover and take strategic actions to retain and develop their existing workforce. They need strategic HR systems in place to identify their workforce needs, manage their workforce and measure performance at an individual and company level. Inadequate or absent systems to manage people and performance contribute to high turnover rates and poor retention. Companies recognise the need to:

- Improve their HR systems to manage strategically and report HR performance (such as staff turnover, characteristics of the workforce, absenteeism etc)
- Integrate HR with their business planning to ensure the future workforce needs are identified and met to be able to deliver on the objectives in the business plan
- Develop HR strategic plans that identify the specific HR needs of the company and the strategies to enable the company to deliver on the business plan
- Identify performance indicators that enable key stakeholders to be held accountable through the performance management system for meeting workforce needs and managing people and performance
- Develop and implement HR systems to manage people and performance
- Train and support key stakeholder groups in the workforce to be able to meet their HR responsibilities
- Develop succession plans and link them with learning and development plans incorporated in the performance management system so that the workforce has career development opportunities.

The recommendations of this review link the graduate program with the company's HR systems and hold the companies directly accountable for managing the graduates through effective people and performance management practices.

Many of the HR managers interviewed in the review described the daily challenge of 'manning the chain for each shift to keep their plants running effectively, with a constant reactive focus rather than being able to manage proactively. They recognise their need to manage strategically and focus on managing people and performance to attract, retain and develop the workforce the industry needs for the operational sustainability of businesses in the RMI. This includes the need to manage generational diversity to achieve the best outcomes for the individuals and the company.

The business model sponsored by MLA to manage OHS is a very successful model for assisting RMI companies to manage an area of their business strategically. This model provided the companies with tools to manage OHS effectively in the form of the 'OH&S Reference Guide.' The model also provided companies with a framework for benchmarking their OHS performance in the form of the 'OHS management systems benchmarking process.' This model could be replicated to assist companies to manage their HR function more effectively with MLA sponsoring the development of a strategic HR management reference guide and benchmarking process. This model could be supported with case studies of strategic HR management that would potentially have more general applicability to other companies in the industry. The strategy will assist companies to respond effectively to the changing and increasingly complex environment by meeting workforce needs and also complement the implementation of MLA programs.

7 Recommendations

Recommendations of the review include:

- There is a continuing role for MLA in attracting, developing and retaining professionals in the RMI
- The focus of the MLA professional development program is the graduate program
- The graduate program continue in its current form with some modifications focusing on improving the retention rate of graduates in the industry and broadening the number of companies participating in the program
- MLA commit a dedicated resource to coordinate the program
- The postgraduate research scholarship program continue in its current form and is managed by MLA
- The MLA undergraduate program discontinue as a program for attracting graduates to the industry
- The MINTRAC managed undergraduate scholarship program discontinue as a program for attracting graduates to the industry
- MLA continue to support the development of a systematic qualifications framework for senior managers
- MLA support the marketing and delivery of training for senior managers
- MLA support an annual CEO leadership forum
- MLA supports the development of a RMI strategic HR management model and benchmarking process and case studies of implementation of the model.

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