final report

Project code: A.PIA.0095

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Date submitted: June 2009

PUBLISHED BY
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Attracting, training and retaining young people in the red meat industry

Abstract

This project is part of a series of linked reviews of the suite of professional development programs offered by MLA in conjunction with AMPC and industry members. The full review includes considering whether the various programs individually and collectively help to attract professionals to the immediate supply chain by raising graduates' awareness of the industry, and by assisting companies to utilise new graduates and providing them with appropriate supports to help them get through the critical first three years. The findings of these combined reviews will contribute to the development of an integrated, whole of industry approach to professional development.

This project operated at both a strategic and an operational level. Meetings with representatives of industry peak bodies identified industry trends and issues and perceptions of professional development needs, while a case study focusing specifically on the operation of the various professional development programs in one company provided insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current offerings in this context. The company studied- Australian Country Choice- was selected because it has been involved in the Undergraduate, Scholarship and post graduate programs since their inception, has had some input into their design.

Key outcomes included identification of benefits arising from the programs, critical issues to be addressed and recommendations on ways of developing a more integrated approach to the attraction, retention and development of young professionals. The project also contributed to the development of a draft blueprint for Professional Development, and several frameworks that have application in the design and evaluation of future professional development programs.

Executive summary

Over the last seven years, Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA), and the Australian Meat Processors Association (AMPC) have implemented three programs designed to attract promising young people from the university sector to the red meat industry, develop their skills and provide them with attractive career paths. The Undergraduate, Undergraduate Scholarship and Graduate programs have operated largely independently of each and have been evolving over time. MLA is currently reviewing the programs with the aim of developing an integrated, whole of industry approach.

This project focuses around a case study of the programs in operation at Australian Country Choice (ACC). This company has been involved in all programs since their inception, and has placed participants across the full supply chain from paddock to processing plant. It thus provides an ideal context within which to explore the impact of the programs under review.

The project is part of a broader suite of reviews and aims to:
- identify the benefits of the programs to individual participants
- provide ACC with specific information that they may use to further improve their use of the program and to promote their company
- provide MLA with information on how they might build on current strengths and address weaknesses and gaps
- identify where possible ways of monitoring and measuring the cost: benefits of industry participation in these programs
- identify information that MLA/ACC may use to promote the program

This study involved three major aspects:
- Understanding of the broader industry context and strategic intent of the programs
- Identification of program evaluation criteria through a literature review and consultation process
- Identification of program strengths, weaknesses and impacts through consultation with participants, company personnel and AMPC/MLA staff and review of documentation

Drawing on a literature review and input from key stakeholders, factors of program effectiveness were identified. These were combined in a set of frameworks against which to measure the impact of the programs from three perspectives:
- on learning and development
- on leveraging change
- on meeting the goals and priorities of stakeholders.

Key findings
The industry-sponsored programs have had a significant impact on the development of an internal program at Australian Country Choice that brings promising young University trained people into the industry. The ACC PD Scheme would not have been established when it was, or taken on the shape it has, without the impetus of the MLA/AMPC sponsored industry programs. However, it has been a symbiotic relationship. ACC has been happy to share its experiences with others, and has provided extensive feedback and new ideas to MLA that are reflected in changes to the industry program over time. The industry programs have acted as catalysts, suggesting possibilities that might not otherwise have been recognised, and reducing the company's risk when it came to putting new ideas into practice. The sponsorship has provided a degree of scaffolding to a company that likes to innovate but also welcomes ways of reducing risk.

A key outcome of the ACC experience has been the development of one overarching internal program that provides insights into how a broader more integrated program might also work at an industry level. Although the connections between each aspect are still fairly loose, it is possible to see how this program could provide a pathway for young professionals with multiple entry and exit points, coordinated content, synergies between elements and networking between participants.

This approach works well from a participant perspective of participants, with almost all of those interviewed being highly positive about their experiences, and keen to continue their association with the company, and with the red meat industry. However, there have been some internal communication and logistical issues within the company that have highlighted problems that might occur at other companies, and a range of issues with the external MLA run parts of the program that also need to be addressed.

Conclusions

While the three programs have had a positive impact at ACC, this has been largely due to the vision, commitment and investment of members of the senior management team. The company has used the industry sponsored programs to move in the direction it had already envisaged. It cannot be assumed that others with necessarily do the same.

There are a number of areas in which the current programs could be improved. ACC should consider ways of directly involving the middle managers who supervise participants in the planning and reviewing of the program. There are also operational and financial issues between business units that were still to be resolved at the time of the interviews. As they seek to continue the program, they may also wish to revisit their appointment of a number of cadets in the farm/feedlot area and consider ways of expanding the number of cadets taken on in the processing area.

MLA and AMPC have done well to envisage and implement the programs, but the programs are unlikely to be able to continue successfully in their current format, and with current resources. It is time to consider what has been learnt from their rather ad hoc evolution, and to seek wider support for a reconceptualised approach, not only from within MLA and AMPC but from key industry stakeholders. The plans to involve industry members in a review of PD/skills development provide the ideal context for this to occur, and the findings of the ACC case study could be used to promote the potential of the young professionals programs as catalysts for innovation.

The Blueprint for industry professional development and the model for an integrated young professionals program developed for this project could provide a useful way of engaging industry members in setting goals and identifying priorities for action.
Recommendations

For ACC
- Clarify a range of issues, internal expectations and arrangements with particular attention to clarification of the roles and responsibilities of individual business units and ways to better involve middle managers
- Revisit and clarify beliefs about asking for a commitment from young people and the need for a probation system in order to design an effective company wide selection and placement system
- Identify the best ways to ensure that participants in each part of the ACC PD Scheme have appropriate levels of challenge built into their programs

- Collaborate with MLA and other industry members in the development of a streamlined, integrated industry program with clear goals and appropriate external program components

For MLA/AMPC
- Facilitate the development of an integrated program incorporating the Undergraduate, Scholarship and Graduate programs, with the potential for individuals to enter and exit at various points, and to move between companies where appropriate.
- Seek support for this approach from industry leaders as part of the proposed forum to develop a shared vision and agreed priorities for industry capacity building
- Within the context of this shared vision, revisit the arrangements for off site support of the elements of the program in light of the issues raised at ACC:
    - o Refocus the content of the off site program to support the development of participants' broad understanding of the whole supply chain, and of the industry at a strategic level,
    - o Refocus the major elements of skills development on leader and leadership development.
    - o Develop a more targeted approach to the selection and oversight of mentors
    - o Clarify the mentoring role in different parts of the program, and consider the potential to involve industry members, particularly strong established leaders, in the mentoring of the next generation of young leaders
    - o Consider the need to introduce coaches into the graduate program
- Develop a formal process to assist companies wishing to move beyond the hosting of an individual student towards a strategic capacity building process. Depending on a company's starting point, this might include:
    - o advice on how to identify clear program goals aligned with the company's strategic direction
    - o processes to ensure that senior and middle managers have agreed understandings about how the program will operate
    - o a checklist of logistical issues and ideas on how this might be addressed.
- Seek input from industry leaders on the value of introducing a formal Leadership program for current middle and senior managers, who in turn may become mentors or coaches of the next generation.

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The programs

Over the last seven years, Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA), and the Australian Meat Processors Association (AMPC) have developed three programs designed to attract promising young people in the university sector to the red meat industry, develop their skills and provide them with attractive career paths.

- The *Undergraduate Program* is the longest running program, and provides support for undergraduates to conduct 3 month projects at participating companies during university summer vacation. As part of this program, MLA also runs off site training sessions and provides an external project mentor.
- *Undergraduate Scholarships* are offered in conjunction with participating companies, and are available for students from the first year of university onwards. Scholarship holders spend their holidays working for the company, often conducting projects, and may also be involved in some activities held in conjunction with the Undergraduate Program.
- *The Graduate Program* is offered in conjunction with participating companies. Selected young people are employed by a company in specific roles. They also conduct negotiated projects within the company with the support of an external mentor and attend an off-site professional development program run by MLA/AMPC.

These programs have been introduced independently of each other, and have evolved over time. Each has developed a relatively high profile within some faculties of some universities and within the red meat industry.

MLA is currently reviewing the programs with the aim of developing an integrated, whole of industry approach. The review will involve:

- Revisiting program objectives to address a market failure in attracting professionals to the immediate supply chain
- Considering whether the programs are raising graduates' awareness of the industry, and assisting companies to utilise new graduates and provide them with appropriate supports to help them get through the critical first three years
- Considering the programs within the broader context of other similar industry initiatives.

1.1.2 The case study

Australian Country Choice (ACC) has been involved in all three MLA/AMPC programs since their inception, and has placed undergraduates and graduates across the full supply chain from paddock to processing plant. It thus provides an ideal context within which to explore the impact of the programs under review.

Whilst care must be taken in extrapolating from a single case study, an exploration of the ACC experience provides an opportunity to evaluate the impact of the individual and collective initiatives upon one company, and on program participants within the same context. While some factors influencing outcomes may be contextualised, there is still much to be learned that may be of value to other companies thinking of joining the programs, and to MLA/AMPC as they seek to focus and streamline their approach

1.1.3 The broader context

While the ACC case study is major focus of this review, the investigation also involved consultation with industry members and drew on information, issues and ideas identified as part of parallel projects being conducted by Kate Perkins for MLA /AMPC (namely the reviews of the Intercollegiate Meat Judging Competition and the Engineering Network and Technical Tour programs).

1.2 Aims

- To identify the benefits of the programs to individual participants
- To provide ACC with specific information that they may use to further improve their use of the program and to promote their company
- To provide MLA with information on how they might build on current strengths and address weaknesses and gaps
- To identify where possible ways of monitoring and measuring the cost: benefits of industry participation in these programs
- To identify information that MLA/ACC may use to promote the program.

1.3 Scope

This study involved three major aspects:
- Understanding of the broader industry context and strategic intent of the programs
- Identification of program evaluation criteria through a literature review and consultation process
- Identification of program strengths and weaknesses and impacts through consultation with participants, company personnel and AMPC/MLA staff and review of documentation.

The focus was on the operation of the industry programs within ACC rather than on the operation of the programs across a range of companies.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Understanding the Big Picture

Appreciation of the broad context within which the case study sits involved developing an understanding of:
- Where the industry wants to head, and the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding how the program suite contributes/should contribute
- Where ACC is heading, and how the program suite with corporate strategy
- Company structures and systems and program logistics
- MLA/company interface and MLA support structure.

1.4.2 Developing evaluation criteria

- The programs have been reviewed against:
- Indicators of effectiveness of PD programs in general, programs for young professionals and Leadership Development programs developed on the basis of a review of literature
- Stated goals (ACC and MLA/AMPC) and Indicators of success identified by stakeholders (See section 2).

1.4.3 Identification of program strengths, weaknesses and impacts

13 individual participants (past and current) were interviewed face to face or by telephone to ascertain:

- Their knowledge/perceptions of the red meat industry
- Impact of program participation on career choices
- Learning highlights
- Any issues/negative impacts and proposals for improvement.

Several MLA/AMPC personnel involved with the programs were also interviewed.
It was originally planned to conduct an in-depth study of the 15 past ACC based participants of the Undergraduate program. However, it proved to be too difficult to make contact with the majority, because most had left university and were no longer using the contact details they had originally provided.

Company managers' perceptions of the program were gained through semi -structured interviews with 5 identified personnel including the CEO, Division Executives, Group Services Manager and HR Manager.

Where available, documented evidence of impacts was also identified and analysed. This included all available reports from undergraduate and graduate projects conducted at ACC. Information was evaluated against the identified criteria.

1.5 Sources of information

Information was obtained from:

- Relevant program documentation, including undergraduate and graduate projects
- A series of semi-structured interviews with industry and company decision makers, and program organisers and participants
- Two workshops involving industry peak body and ACC representatives.

1.6 Report structure

- Section 1 sets the scene, providing an overview of the project aims, scope and methodology
- Section 2 The Big Picture places the three programs in context through the identification of areas identified by industry members as priorities for future workforce development and an outline of the program evaluation criteria developed on the basis of the Literature review and consultations with key stakeholders
- Section 3 provides a case study of the three industry programs in operation at Australian Country Choice
- Section 4 evaluates the programs, considering impact on learning and development, achievement of goals and priorities and potential to leverage change
- Section 5 identifies lessons learnt and discusses possible future directions
- Section 6 presents conclusions and recommendations.

2 How should the programs be judged?

Developing evaluation criteria

In developing criteria for evaluating the three programs, three areas were considered:
- How well they are designed to attract, and support the development of, young people with the appropriate skills and attributes to meet industry needs
- How well they reflect the factors that facilitate effective learning and career development for young people
- How well they met the goals, expectations and priorities of the stakeholders i.e. the company, MLA/AMPC and the participants themselves.

This section provides an overview of the findings from an industry consultation regarding future skills needs, interviews with MLA/AMPC and ACC members regarding program goals and priorities and a literature review. These are used to inform the development of the evaluation criteria.

2.1 Are the programs aligned to industry skill needs?

It was beyond the scope of this project to conduct major research in this area. However, although the trends and issues outlined below may not be all-encompassing, they do provide some insight into the challenges facing industry members in the years to come, and give an indication of the skills and knowledge the industry will need if it is to be sustainable.

2.1.1 Critical issues

There were strong common threads running through the feedback from different members of the industry sector. They observed that red meat processors face the daily challenge of keeping their plants running effectively. Downtime and on-going maintenance can impose heavy costs on an industry that already operates on low profit margins, and this is particularly evident in ageing plants. They reported that industry also faces challenges such as labour shortages, water and energy costs, availability and environmental impacts, and increasing legislative requirements in regard to environmental practices and food safety. Community values and perceptions in regard to food safety and quality are also changing, with an increasing emphasis on what constitutes a healthy diet and an emerging ethical focus on what foods should be eaten and how food should be produced.

Labour supply and skills shortages
Attracting and retaining people in the industry has been an issue for many years, and this is predicted to continue. While the focus has been more on attracting unskilled labour and providing appropriate training to develop skilled process workers, there is now an increasing realisation that the industry needs to attract graduates in a range of fields, and to get better at identifying and developing its internal talent, for example by offering technical and university training to process workers with the interest and potential.

Companies and industry peak bodies are addressing labour/skills issues on a number of fronts e.g.
- Employment of overseas workers
- Development of scholarship programs for school/university students and process workers
- Undergraduate and post-graduate programs within individual companies and through MLA
- Increasing emphasis on automation, including a focus on the use of robots

- Redesigning processing plants and work processes to make them more worker friendly.

Environment
The state of the environment is a major global issue, with community and government expectations reflected in increasing regulation, supply chain expectations, the increasing influence of green groups and increasingly informed (and some might argue misinformed) consumers. This is driving increasing attention to ways of reducing the use of water and fossil fuels and reducing carbon emissions and waste generally. It also highlights issues about the best use of land that are closely linked to questions about the 'best' kinds of food, food miles etc. Several company owners/senior managers talked of over regulation. As one observed, 'we're looking after the rest of the world but it's killing us. It's adding costs, but not value."
Perceptions of red meat

There are indications of a rejection of red meat by some consumers on one or more grounds, including the perception that eating a lot of red meat is not healthy, or that eating any red meat is bad for your health, animal welfare issues and environmental issues around cows and green house gas production, and questions about where society wants to get best value from its resources.

Food quality and safety
For those who do eat read meat particularly overseas consumers, recent health scares have increased the emphasis on monitoring and guaranteeing food safety as well as quality from paddock to plate. Quality assurance requirements will continue to loom large for both export and domestic processors, and impact on everything from branding to traceability systems.
Industry structures

While it appeared that the trend for companies to develop a fully integrated supply chain may be over, indications were that arrangements with external suppliers and customers may be increasingly managed through supply chain assurance schemes. If this follows overseas trends, it would mean increasing influence on meat company internal processes by domestic supermarkets and international buyers. Although those interviewed felt it was too early to call, they wondered if recent changes to company ownership might affect decision making across the industry as a whole, including decisions made by peak bodies in regard to priorities.

Critical issues identified included the need:
- For general modernisation, including increased automation
- To anticipate and respond to increasing regulation
- To manage an increasingly multi-cultural workforce
- For new marketing approaches
- To invest in on-going training.

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. Companies have always operated on narrow margins, and the recent global downturn is increasing the pressure. High costs and delayed return on investment may make it harder to get companies interested in innovation. Increasing resentment of regulation that brings high costs, but is not perceived to add value, may also limit developments in the environmental arena if they are not driven by legislative requirement.

2.1.2 What knowledge and skills will the industry need?

In line with other Australian industries, there is a general recognition of the need for higher level skill sets. While the industry (supported by MINTRAC) has done considerable work over many years to develop and update the industry Training Package to capture the skill sets needed by process workers at various stages of their careers, there has not yet been a similar focus on the needs of middle and senior managers, or on those in specific positions, such as plant engineers and environmental and food safety personnel. However, the recently established national Leadership program is a step in the right direction.

Those consulted on skills sets for future leaders and managers identified the following as critical:

- **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

2.2 Are the programs designed to leverage change?

If we are interested in creating enduring change, Kim (2001, p.83) argues that:
We need to take a systemic view of the larger change process, and cultivate both a wide and a deep understanding of where we want to go (desired future reality) and be able to talk honestly about where we are (current reality).

In order to better understand the current reality and identify strategies that will move a complex system towards a desired future reality, Kim (2001) suggests viewing the aspects of the system from each of five different levels of perspective:

- Vision (a shared picture of where you want to go)
- Mental models (values, beliefs, assumptions that drive behaviour)
- Systemic structures (e.g policies, processes, programs, organisational structures)
- Patterns of behaviour (such as those identified by research)
- Events ('one off' actions and activities that provide examples of desired or undesired behaviour).

Kim (1995, p.3) argues that the key to successful large scale change is to be able to view any system from, and act at, all levels simultaneously. However, our ability to influence what actually happens in the future increases as we move from the level of *events* to the *vision.* While this does not mean that high-leverage actions can only be found at the higher levels, these actions are more likely to have for greater leverage over time. (See Fig 2.1)

Strategies aimed at a *shared vision* have the highest leverage for long term change

Strategies should reinforce *values and beliefs* (mental models) that align with the Vision and find ways of addressing those that may undermine effectiveness

Strategies should focus on *structures, systems and processes* that make it easy to work towards the vision. These can be used to change patterns of behaviour

Identifying *patterns of behaviour* can indicate where action might be taken. Reacting to patterns of behaviour without targeting systemic structures or mental models will take a lot of energy but make little real difference

Getting involved in *events* ('one off' activities with no follow-up) is resource-intensive but unlikely to change the future

Degree of leverage

Fig 2.1 The Levels of Perspective (Kim 1995).

This model has implications for decisions made by Australian Country Choice and MLA/AMPC in regard to the Young Professionals' programs - and in any plans related to building industry capacity over time.

Implications for this study

To determine stakeholders' concepts of a desired future reality they were asked questions such as:

- What is your vision for the industry? Where does it need to go and what skills and knowledge will be needed? How far is this vision shared by others in the company/the peak body/the industry?
- What is driving you to make this happen?
- What structures and processes need to be in place to achieve your vision?
- What Patterns of Behaviour will you see that will tell you the vision has become a reality?

The model was also used to identify features of the current reality, considering questions such as:

- How do the current programs and supporting structures align with this vision?
- What current Patterns of Behaviour and Events can be used as indicators that the programs are or are not achieving what they set out to achieve?

2.3   Do the programs facilitate learning for young professionals?

The three MLA/AMPC sponsored programs aim to attract and develop young professionals from a variety of disciplines, with the intention of not only keeping them within the industry, but of assisting them to become some of the industry's future managers and leaders. These programs aim to change the way the industry thinks about university educated people, and to influence the way it develops promising young people. Thus the literature review considered a range of related topics including:

- What makes formal PD effective

- The key characteristics of leader and leadership development programs
- The characteristics of effective development programs for young professionals.

The review provided the basis for the development of criteria for considering the design of the current programs and provided ideas on how these might be made more effective. This section summarises findings. Appendix 1 contains more detailed information.

The factors likely to influence learning and development of young professionals were identified from the literature. These were used to develop the learning and development evaluation framework, which is based on the assumption that a program that, for example, provides opportunities for stretch and challenge, with the appropriate support and encourages participants to reflect on their behaviour, is likely to produce better learning outcomes more consistently. The framework is summarised in Table 2.1

Appendix 1 contains the detailed review of research that was used to develop a framework

Focus areas	Factors that promote or undermine learning
Novice to Expert	Where on the continuum for each context (technical. industry, workplace) Provision of appropriate rules, support, opportunities
Job assignment	Matching process Developmental- stretch component Degree of challenge, support, assessment Job rotation
Projects	Selection/ Matching process Alignment of project goals to meaningful individual goals Involvement of others
Reflective practice	Strategies Opportunity Support
Mentoring	Formal/informal Matching process With whom? (Senior manager/Technical expert etc) Mentoring skills Management of unintended side effects eg peer resentment, over-dependence
Coaching	With whom? Matching process When? Coaching skills?
Feedback	Quality Frequency Support structures etc
Networking	Peers External industry players
Formal PD	Content selection/relevance (eg Recognition of prior knowledge Methodology (Degree of interactivity, knowledge sharing, Encouragement of inquiry & deep reflection, sustained focus over time Involvement of experts as appropriate Accessibility Follow up
Leadership development	Focus on individual development – Intrapersonal skills (self awareness, self regulation, self motivation intrapersonal skills) Focus on relationships-Interpersonal skills (social awareness, social skills)
Organisational climate	Developmental or productivity focus (eg acceptance of failure, measurements of success) Alignment to broader organisational vision & strategy Alignment to industry needs, current and future

Table 2.1. Developing young professionals- evaluation framework

2.4   Do the programs achieve their goals and priorities?

A second framework based on input from a number of stakeholders captures the goals for each MLA/AMPC program and describes those indicators that would tell a participant, a company or the industry peak bodies that the programs are having the desired impact. They acknowledged that they could not necessarily expect a young person to stay with ACC, but would still judge the program a success if a participant stayed within the industry. They even saw some value in a participant moving to another company, citing the benefits of gaining experience in more than one place.

2.4.1 Looking behind the KPIs

There was strong agreement about most KPIs. However, while the ACC senior managers agreed that the major priority of the cadetship was to attract and retain promising young professionals, there were some interesting observations made about what length of retention could be considered a success. The attempt to pin down a KPI surfaced some important values and beliefs.

One suggested two to three years within ACC, but would prefer five. Others felt five years at ACC was a minimum. They acknowledged that they could not necessarily expect a young person to stay with ACC, but would still judge the program a success if a participant stayed within the industry. They even saw some value in a participant moving to another company, citing the benefits of gaining experience in more than one place. One manager suggested that the aim should be to keep a participant within the industry for ten years - because by that time it would be what they knew, they would be highly trained- and they would be unlikely to ever leave.

Several said they would be sorry if someone left ACC at all unless they were taking up a promotion opportunity, but others recognised that young people also needed a range of experiences, including a trip overseas, and should not feel tied down. They also recognised that ACC might not be able to support some participants for an extended period, either because the company could not provide the level of challenge some participants would need or because it might be difficult to maintain some positions in a time of economic downturn.

Whatever happened, they should think well of their time at ACC.
If they do leave we want them to be advertisements for the company and ambassadors for the industry.

While senior managers also wanted scholarship holders to stay in the industry, some were also uncomfortable about expecting a young person to make such a commitment. This was why they did not place any form of bond on a scholarship recipient. They recognised that many young people wanted to travel after university, but hoped that a recipient would return to the industry, and potentially to ACC at a later date.   Indicators of success therefore also included a scholarship holder speaking well of the company and promoting the industry as a career destination to others.

Those interviewed believed that the potential for undergraduate program participants to 'stay on' was quite low, but saw indicators of success in this program being a participant with increased understanding of the red meat industry, and an appreciation of the career opportunities. Even if this person did not enter the industry themselves, they should also think well of it, and promote it to others as a career destination. The program also provided an opportunity to see some young people in action- and for them to see the company- and this might help identify those who could be invited to stay on in some capacity.

The senior managers made it clear that they did not expect, or plan for, their participation in any of the MLA/AMPC sponsored programs to provide a financial return. If a project saved them money, or identified opportunities that might make them money, well and good, but this was not seen as a KPI.

While MLA stakeholders feedback on KPIs within the programs was similar, they also felt an indicator of success of the programs would be that a participating company set up its own processes and stopped drawing on industry funds to support it.

MLA/AMPC sponsored program			
	Undergraduate	**Scholarship**	**Cadetship**
Goals	Raise awareness of the possibilities of the industry for those who might not have seen it as a career destination. Contribute to a participant's personal and professional development Provide practical, useful project outcomes for the participating company Identify potential candidates for scholarship/cadetships	Interest promising young people in the industry Identify potential candidates for cadetships	Provide promising young people with company /industry knowledge and experience Learning & growth aligned with the red meat industry, builds long term interest & commitment Help develop next generation of effective managers and leaders
KPIs for the individual	Vacation pay in a meaningful job CV entry Industry experience Training in project design, report writing etc Meet new people, have new experiences	No HECS fees Vacation pay in a meaningful job CV entry Industry experience- for self and CV Opportunity to try new things with support	Meaningful employment with prospects Feels valued and supported by the company Accepts need to learn about all aspects of the company from the bottom up /prepared to take sideways steps in order to learn more Sees a future in the company/industry and is taking steps to secure this
Company KPIs	Project that is valuable to the company – e.g. saves time and/or money, identifies useful information, develops a new idea Identifies a person with potential for the scholarship or cadetship program	Seeing someone learn & grow over time Projects valuable to company Want to join ACC after university	Seeing someone learn & grow over time Takes opportunities, accepts and copes with new challenge and Opportunity to trial new roles Stay at ACC for minimum of 3 years. Take on middle management roles
KPIs for the industry	Identifies a person with potential for the scholarship or cadetship program Raises awareness of industry opportunities Participant chooses red meat career Participant speaks highly of red met industry and promotes as a career to others	Stays with the industry after graduation or associated in some way (eg goes onto do research associated with the industry, joins MLA etc)	Stays in the industry long term Takes promotion positions Emerges as an industry leader

Table 2.2. Stakeholder perceptions of goals and KPIs for the three programs

3 The programs in action at ACC

3.1 Company background

Australian Country Choice Pty Ltd (ACC) is one of Australian's leading agribusinesses supply chain enterprises and one of Queensland's largest privately owned companies. ACC's group operations include cattle production properties, feedlots, and a 'single roof solution' beef processing facility. The company is a dedicated supplier and processor of beef to Coles Group Ltd with an integrated supply chain incorporating livestock breeding, backgrounding, feedlotting, primary processing, value adding and retail ready packing.

ACC has recognised that those starting, or in the early stages of their careers, do not see agribusiness as offering attractive career paths. However, the company still needs people - it has medium to long-term requirements for high quality, skilled staff who will be critical to on going business success and sustainability. ACC therefore places a high strategic priority on attracting, recruiting and fostering the development of young professionals across its supply chain operations, with a particular focus on environmental stewardship, beef and crop production, feedlot productivity, food safety and technology and engineering. (Australian Country Choice 2007, Application for Radobank Red Meat Innovation Award 2007, p1).

3.2 The ACC Professional Development Scheme

3.2.1 Overview

ACC has a comprehensive Staff Management Program (SMP) integrated with quality, HACCP, OH&S and environment management systems under the company's Total Integrated Management policy. The SMP aims to deliver, 'strategic and practical mechanisms for staff recruitment, development, management and retention'. (ibid)

As part of the SMP, ACC has established an internal Professionals Development (ACC PD Scheme). Its stated aim is, 'to develop young business professionals for the future in a commercial environment'. It is anticipated that these young people will have the skills and training to become tomorrow's industry leaders, and that their skills and knowledge will 'facilitate rapid adoption of sophisticated science and technologies, assist implementation of advanced manufacturing practices and contribute to the sustainability of the industry in a competitive global marketplace'. (ACC Submission for Agribusiness Employer of Choice Awards 2007, p.4)

The Scheme is an integral part of the company's succession planning, designed to develop capable young professionals in areas of company needs within five years. The company estimates that this is about half the time it might usually be expected to take within this industry. Senior managers believes the program will deliver vital skills for ACC over the next 5 to 10 years, by developing 'people who can think and act strategically, manage change and delegate'.

We need to grab people young and hang on to them- it's important for us and for the industry. They don't have to come from a university background but I see the graduate focus as part of the strategy.

The evolution of the ACC PD scheme over the past four years has been strongly influenced by the availability of young people through the MLA/AMPC subsidised programs – and has also influenced the shape of the industry programs since their inception by providing feedback on issues as they arise, and ideas for improvement.

3.2.2 Participation in the Scheme

Between 2003 and 2007, 30 tertiary students were taken on in varying capacities throughout ACC's vertically integrated supply chain – on farm, feedlot and factory.

- 13 involved in 3 month undergraduate projects
- 7 awarded undergraduate scholarships
- 8 employed through graduate cadetships (including 2 terminated).

At the time of this study in 2008, there were 3 scholarship holders working at ACC during vacations and 4 graduate cadets employed full time. A further 3 cadets were signed during the study. (See Attachment 1 for a company overview of the program)

There has been a 'flow-on' effect between the three programs:

- Two students who undertook undergraduate projects were subsequently offered scholarships
- Another who completed an undergraduate placement was employed after graduation and later offered a place in the graduate program (called a 'cadetship' within the company)
- One student who had come into contact with ACC while conducting an undergraduate project for another company was later offered a scholarship at ACC.

3.2.3 Program components

The Professional Development Scheme provides a structured professional development program for each participant, tailored to individual and company need, and incorporating a selection of components including:

- Company orientation
- Participation in MLA external training where applicable
- On the job training and mentoring
- Participation in external short courses, identified in negotiation with the HR and manager and line managers
- The conduct of specific projects/company practicals
- Short term transfers to other business units

3.2.4 Monitoring and evaluation

ACC has not formally identified criteria to judge the effectiveness of the participation in individual MLA/AMPC programs, or to monitor the impact of its own PD Scheme. However, when interviewed for this project, company executives were largely in agreement about the indicators for success.

They believed that the major aim of the PD Scheme was to attract people with the right knowledge base, interests and attitude to work for the company, and to help them to grow and learn in ways that would ultimately benefit the individual, the company and the industry. The MLA/AMPC sponsored programs were integral to achieving this.

They identified a range of potential benefits from the ACC PD Scheme (See Table 3.1).

Benefits	For participants	For ACC	For the red meat industry
Short term	Vacation employment Paid university Job challenges Dynamic, integrated structured training program	Identify & trial young people with potential Maintain or expand staff/skills in areas of need. Test viability of new roles	Attract highly educated, motivated young people who might otherwise have gone elsewhere – get them in the door

	Secure income/prospects for fixed term		
Medium term	Fast tracked career opportunities	Rapid development of qualified middle managers with extensive industry/supply chain understanding	Ensure participants stay in the industry Increase succession capability
Long term	Ongoing employment, extension and challenge High profile management roles	Influence development of next generation of ACC leaders	Influence development of next generation of industry leaders /company managers with the skills & knowledge needed

Table 3.1 Desired outcomes of the ACC PD Scheme

- **Key Performance Indicators**

There were some differences in the measures of success the senior managers identified for the undergraduate, scholarship and cadetship programs.

Proposed KPIs included:

- Participants' knowledge understanding and appreciation of the red meat industry enhanced
- Participants promote the company and red meat industry to others as a career destination
- Someone with potential for a scholarship or cadetship identified and a strong relationship built
- Evidence that a participant has learnt and grown over time
- A new role successfully introduced into the company
- A project with valued outcomes for the company (not necessarily in financial terms)
- A participant takes on higher duties
- A participant stays in the company and/or in the industry for a period of time.

3.3   The Undergraduate program in action

ACC has hosted 13 Undergraduate program students since 2003. Although the Undergraduate Program was initially targeted at engineering students, ACC saw its potential in other areas, and in the first year of the program, took on an engineering student and student in the food safety area. This broad focus has continued since then, with the company employing students from eight different disciplines and six different institutions to conduct a variety of projects. Although these have been spread across the supply chain, the majority have been in the processing arena. (See Table 3.2)

Recognising the importance of peer networking, the company always takes on several students per year, but not always in the same part of the plant or area of the supply chain. Each business unit is responsible for identifying a potential project and budgeting for it. The company assists participants with finding accommodation where this is required, and appoints a senior manager to take responsibility for the project. The HR Manager also plays a key role, coordinating the whole program and liaising directly with MLA, and acting as a supervisor and mentor to each student.

Students attend an MLA run Induction program and two other off site MLA program meetings during the three-month period. It is a requirement of the program that they present their project findings to company representatives and receive feedback, as well as lodging a final report with the host company and with MLA.

Focus area	Project focus	Student numbers	Undergraduate disciplines	Universities
Farm	Land management	2	2 Natural resources	QUT
Food technology	Food standards Quality/process systems Product shelf life/eating quality Eating quality benchmark	1 1 1 1	3 Food Technology 1 Rural Science	UQ UNE
Environmental management	Water management Power/water efficiency Waste recycling	1 1 1	1 Chemical Engineering 1 Mechanical engineering 1 Environmental Health	Adelaide UQ Griffith
Processing	Carcass chilling Super stretch effect on beef quality Specialty co-products assessment	1 1 1	1 Chemical engineering 1 Rural Science 1 Ag Science	UQ UNE UNE
OH&S	Workplace safety competency	1	1 Applied Science OHS	RMIT

Table 3.2. Undergraduate program: Participant background and projects

3.3.1 Management perspectives

ACC has put a lot of effort into making the Undergraduate program work, learning from their experiences and gradually tightening and focusing their internal organization and the support structures they have put in place for students.

While one of the first projects did not go as planned and caused some headaches, several in the early years were highly successful and this seems to have set the tone for the company to continue investing their time and energy and to take continue to take on several students per year.

One of the projects that was highlighted was conducted by two natural science students who created property maps of assessable vegetation that were required to ensure compliance with new laws in Qld.

With our first project out here we had to work out what the kids would be good at that could be done in 12 weeks. The tree project they did turned out to be really good. We got a lot out of it and used it. The government used it too!

Another involved water use, and is till being used five years on- Indeed, it has become an integral part of company operations.

C's 2003 project on water has become a bit of a bible for us. The timing was perfect, because it was in front of the drought and set the benchmarks, so it was innovative for us. As the drought affected our business we used it more and more and we still use it for water estimates. It is one of the few reports that is still regularly reviewed and used.

Despite these particular examples, senior managers are realistic about what can be achieved in 1 12 week period. They recognise that the undergraduates are still novices, and do not expect their work to break new ground.

P's project was of general interest. It showed where energy was spilt across the site. It confirmed what we 'knew' and confirmed industry benchmarks. It was still good to have the proof.

A further impact of the Undergraduate program has been that it has given ACC the opportunity to watch young people perform over a reasonable period of time, and to build a strong positive relationship with them. It is in effect a probation program. Several participants have been offered and have accepted scholarships and subsequent employment.

X came into the Undergraduate program as a green young girl- very intelligent but very quiet. The one year scholarship in her final year gave her a chance to get to know us and vice versa and now she's employed with us and has been a big success for the business.
The undergrad program has yielded several who've gone onto scholarships or cadetships. We get to see how they perform and they get to see us - warts and all!

Another benefit identified by one senior manager was that the Undergraduate program brings a number of people in the plant into contact with a new generation
It fits with what we are doing generally and our involvement helps us to think differently and not see Gen Y as a threat! We need to learn how to deal with them.

While senior managers generally spoke well of the program overall, several reported that their experience over time had taught them that establishing and overseeing a student's 12 week project was highly intensive – and there was potential to reach burn out. One manager had decided not to take another student for the time being for this reason. Several commented on the challenge involved in identifying a suitable project topic – that is, one that was achievable in the short timeframe, and manageable by a relative novice with limited or non- existent industry knowledge.

I support the projects but it is a LOT of work. It is a huge challenge to make sure a project is productive. The student is new to the site, and has to get his head around something like the water or the power on a big site. It takes several hours every day for 2 weeks to get them started. It leaves you drained.

The company's internal organisational arrangements meant that each business unit had to budget well in advance if they wanted to take a student, and the HR manager found it frustrating that some areas tended not to think about what was involved until it was virtually too late. This, combined with the burn-out factor, had contributed to the fact that no undergraduates had been taken on in the preceding year. Indeed the HR manager had reached a point where he was questioning the value of the projects. He felt they were 'a bit hit it and run', and relatively high cost in terms of time and energy for a less than guaranteed return. He also expressed some concerns about the selection process, feeling that he would prefer greater involvement from the beginning.

3.3.2 Participants' experiences

The majority of the Undergraduate program participants were reported to have little background in the meat industry, and this applied also to 3 of the 5 participants interviewed.
They had found their way in to the Undergraduate program by different routes.
My lecturer recommended it to me.

I had applied to a lot of other industries for a vacation placement before I tried the MLA program
I needed to do 20 weeks of work placement. I got a job at ACC. I didn't care that it was in the meat industry, it was my first job and I was happy to have it. Once I started, I found out about the Undergraduate program, which was not advertised well at uni. I asked if I could join it.

All but one of the participants interviewed saw their placement at ACC as a positive experience. Like those interviewed for an earlier report (Perkins 2004), they welcomed the paid employment opportunity, appreciated the quality of support provided by the company and the off site experience at MLA, where they learnt more about the industry, improved their report writing and presentation skills and enjoyed mixing with others in the program.

Some reported that the experience had got them thinking about the industry.
I'd certainly consider it. There's definitely a place for chemical engineering especially in water management. It's not an industry you'd apply for if you hadn't experienced it.

For others, it was a worthwhile experience, but not one likely to lead them to a career in the industry.

The two lads left with a cheque. They were good kids but not likely to go on in this industry.
For two of the ACC Undergraduates interviewed, the experience did in fact lead to further involvement in the industry, as they were invited to continue with the company, one on a scholarship that has since led to employment, and the other in employment that has since led to involvement in the cadetship program.

The program reinforced my interest in the meat industry and forged my link with ACC.
After university I applied to several companies and got offered positions, but I chose ACC because of the undergrad program connection. I didn't have to learn about a whole new company!

A third student whose Undergraduate project at another company brought him into contact with ACC, the experience opened up a whole new career. ACC recognised his potential and approached him to take up a scholarship. The project he completed broke new ground (to which he still has the IP), and kick-started a career that is going from strength to strength. Although currently in the mining industry, he speaks highly of his time at ACC and of the met industry in general and still does some consulting to ACC and other meat companies. He has not ruled out a return to the industry in the future.

3.4   The Scholarships in action

3.4.1 Overview

Seven scholarships have been awarded at ACC since their inception in 2006, for periods of one to four years. They span the supply chain, with two in food technology, one in electronic engineering/information technology and four in farm/feedlotting.

Four students were identified through advertisements promoted through University of New England's Rural Science faculty. Three were participants in the MLA/AMPC undergraduate program, two at ACC itself, and, as discussed above, one at another company that brought him into contact with ACC.

The Scholarship covers a recipient's HECS fees and provides some allowances. The recipient is expected to work for ACC for 16 weeks per year during vacations. This work is paid and travel and accommodation costs covered. There is no bond, and although students are expected and encouraged to go onto Honours, this is not stipulated as a requirement.

3.4.2 Selection

The HR manager reports that he prefers to recruit young people who have been boarders during their school years, because they come from a rural background and are used to 'a structured disciplined existence'. However, several of the scholarship holders do not come from this background.

Students are often identified by the HR Manager's University contacts. He has been painstakingly building these relationships for a number of years.
The Universities keep an eye out for us and alert us to the good ones.
However, this is not possible in the case of First Year students, who have been identified through internal university advertisements. The lecturers remain involved in the selection process.
The Universities do the first cut and then we conduct joint interviews- it's a win-in situation.
The university and the company then jointly manage the selected students.

Although one senior executive said, 'Picking the right person is not easy. We need some form of trial period', the selection process to date appears to have paid dividends. Managers reported favourably on all scholarship holders – although in several cases, their potential was not immediately obvious to all.

Three years ago I though B wouldn't work out, but now I think she's terrific! She has really blossomed.
L had absolutely no idea how to work with people. She fell in a hole but we built on her strengths and educated her. She needed feedback sessions. She's come a long way
He's very serious, very focused.
The Scholarships work well. We take them as babies and they become part of the family.

3.4.3 Tailored training and development

The HR Manager works with each Scholarship holder and their manager to design a relevant program. The students have some say in what they want to do.
Paul's very focused on PD I can ask him for what I need and he's very open-minded.
Some people are moving about, but I have liked going back to the same place. I feel comfortable with everyone there and I still get variety. I've been out to the stations twice. I'll probably go into Brisbane for the processing, but not yet.

I've been to most of the ACC properties. The rotation is a good idea and see have a new spreadsheet to use to monitor what we do. I take it wherever I go and that makes it easier to keep track.

A major component of each program is a formal project. Although there were some logistical/organisational issues associated with these, students felt they were beneficial.
I really enjoyed learning the ropes over Christmas, but the project was short and rushed. It was disappointing because there was no structure and no support. I didn't know what I was meant to do. The report went to Paul but I don't know what happened to it. I didn't get any feedback from MLA.

I didn't have much background but the project was relevant and enjoyable. I looked at the whole factory system, it wasn't just lab based.
The summer project was not well planned. I would have liked to finish it over the vacation period but it is ongoing.

The first project I did was rushed and a bit disappointing but things are sorted out better now and I can see I've achieved something

One project in particular has had a very high impact at ACC and elsewhere.
F's work on Scada was heavily used. Even though people were sceptical at the start and it took a long time to see the results, towards the end it was fantastic to see the system come on line. I was on the Industry tour in Victoria but I could go online and see water being used in different parts of the plant in Qld. This work he did had a big bearing on site services. There are still things we want to do to enhance it further. He is a very smart guy and presented his work to the Engineering Network. It was good stuff!

Other projects have been designed as developmental- to help the particular student learn new skills and broaden their understanding of an area and learn new skills.

3.4.4 Student support

- **Feedback**

All those interviewed were keen to learn as much as they could, and identified feedback as a critical component of their work experience. They generally felt satisfied with the feedback they received from their immediate manager and from the HR Manager, but were less happy with their contact – or lack of contact- with MLA.

I want feedback you can grow on, that tells you where to improve and what you are doing well.
I get feedback from X on a day to day basis and feel comfortable with him- he's a good boss. It's useful to know what you are doing well and how things are going.
I get feedback from my mentor at ACC, and I got very positive feedback from ACC people about my project, but I never got anything specific from MLA.
I want regular feedback that is useful and constructive so I can take a more active professional role. I get this from production.

I get feedback on the spot and it's very specific. They suggest ways I could do things better.
You won't know if they don't tell you so I think it's all very constructive.
I got feedback for my project presentation. They already had a fundamental understanding of what I was studying, so most of what I was doing was really about putting it down on paper. They knew most of it already but they still listened and told me where I could improve.

- **Mentoring**

All students are assigned mentors. While they spoke highly of their ACC appointed mentors, there were some discrepancies between the official line on the mentoring aspects of the program and the reality.

 At the beginning we were told we'd have three mentors- work /uni and MLA. My work mentor is very good, and it's also good talking to Paul. I know my uni mentor really well but we don't have any formal interaction. He just asks me how things are going, but I know I could go to him if I needed help. I never got an MLA mentor.

There was a mix up about my mentor for the project. Others had one assigned but I was given one from a list. He teaches this subject, and visited several times and gave me some guidance.

- **Student connection with MLA**

The scholarship holders have had little or no contact with MLA. It appears that the company promotes MLA's role at the beginning, but that lack of follow-through has led the students to wonder about the nature of the relationship.

I thought I'd have some contact with MLA but I don't. It doesn't really matter as I am still getting things done, but it would be good if they contacted me.

I don't necessarily want to be involved in a whole formal program but I did want to go to Sydney for an Undergrad meeting and industry tours. I'd like to do it just once.
It would be useful to meet people and talk about the scope of the project.
I've had little contact with MLA. I was told they would be helping me to go to meeting days (in Sydney) but that hasn't happened. I realise I actually don't know if they even provide any money for the scholarship.

3.4.5 Program logistics

Students were generally happy with the way the program was organised, although those who had to travel had had some problems with short notice.
Communication is a bit lacking, but it's a large company and this is a new program. They organise the placements only a few weeks but so there isn't much time for forward planning for travel, but this is getting better.
The only real issue raised concerned working in the holidays. While all students accepted and indeed enjoyed this, those who were also boarding at university were sorry that their ACC commitments significantly reduced the time they could spend with their families.
The only down side is fitting in time to see my family.
Mum came to visit me and that was really good, but not being able to go home is a bit annoying.

3.4.6 Participants' perceptions of benefits

Five of the seven students who hold, or have held ACC scholarships since they were instituted in 2006, were interviewed for this report. They were unanimous in their praise of the program. All saw the scholarship as their passport into the industry. They believed that the experience they gained would definitely put them ahead of other graduates.
I saw it as an opportunity, as a way to get into the industry.
This is opening up pathways and giving me a lot more opportunities than my friends.
I saw it as an opportunity. I signed for 4 years. The HR Manager went through what the commitment meant. It 's fine with me.
I was invited to apply for the scholarship and I did because I saw it as useful for covering my fees and it gave me an opportunity to continue working with the company. Also it looks good on a resume! I'm glad I took it. I have no regrets
I am extremely happy with everything.
I have a big advantage over other students with experience on my resume and experience in interviews and getting feedback.
Don't change it! The whole scheme is very generous.
It gets you into the industry in a huge way!
I appreciated the financial support to do my degree.
We get paid really well.
It's OK to work in the holidays. It pays the rent and I don't have to get a job at Woolies!
A useful outcome is the potential to use their time at ACC to meet course requirements
I'm on placement this semester so it all fits in well. It's a real advantage.
For my course we have to do 24 weeks of work placement. A lot of other students are struggling to achieve this, but it all fits in with what I am doing anyway
I can tie this in with my course- I could choose feedlotting as part of 4th year, and I could line up work at the company for my Honours research project.
However, while it is useful for their degrees, they value the practical work experience and real life learning even more.
The best things are the experiences, gaining business skills, understanding how a business is run, communicating with people and learning about the industry.
It's an eye opener. Being one and a half hours out of town and mustering on a big scale for example. Seeing people living different lives.

It was a whole new thing I had never done anything with a real life application. It gave me experience in talking to people. I had to focus on the good side- talk about what was working and learn to be tactful!

It gives you practical experience. It turned other people off having to work in the holidays but I see it as a bonus

It's practical, hands on stuff, not theory.

The lab work I've done is not part of my degree so it gives me a whole extra dimension.

3.4.7 Impact on career choices

The Scholarship appears to have the potential to act as a springboard into the company and into the industry. At the same time, these young people are ware of other options and seeking new experiences.

The next step could be an ACC job though it's not in the contract and I know there are no promises.

 I've working on the feedlot but I don't think my degree would be worthwhile for a farm manager. I don't want to waste it.

QA applies across a broad range of industries but I can see myself working in the meat industry. I'm comfortable with that. But I want to take some time off after I finish.   And I'd love to do a PhD.

I haven't made up my mind. There are options to go into other types of food and I would like to get experience and I want to go overseas. But for now I also love working here. I have a lot to learn here. It's not what you can learn from books. It's about people.

I'd like to have my own property one day.

Interestingly, none of the Scholarship holders knew much about the ACC cadetship, but all were interested in this.

A cadetship would be an attractive proposition. I'd look at it.

I don't know much about the cadetship, but it could be a good thing. the main thing for me is to find my way into the industry and gain experience.

I'm not familiar with what the cadetship involves, but I would certainly consider it if it involves leadership skills

3.4.8 Promoting to others

The students all had similar stories about why their peers had not applied for the scholarships:

No one else knows about it. ACC doesn't advertise and I only knew because my lecturer promoted it in O Week. I don't think he's done it again.

Others didn't want to give u their holidays.

Working in the holidays turned the others off so none else applied. On paper 16 weeks out of 20 sounds like a lot.

Other people in my course didn't apply because they didn't want to work in the holidays. They thought they'd be bored. (I thought I might be too, but I'm not!)

The Scholarship program has been highly successful in creating ambassadors for ACC and for the red meat industry.

I am always telling other people about the industry and the program and the work experience because I think it's very good and I'm interested in it all.

There are eight people in my uni course but none of them had ever considered the meat industry until I told them. They didn't have any understanding of what they could do here. I think the uni should bring people to ACC for a lecture and promote the cadetship because no one knows about that either.

3.5   The Cadetships in action

3.5.1   Overview

ACC has used the MLA/AMPC graduate program since 2005 to support the appointment of cadets. Six had been appointed between 2005 and 2008, but one had left the program. At the time of the interviews for this report, three new graduates were on probation, and have since been signed, but one has recently left the program. Most come from Agricultural or Animal Science backgrounds and have been placed 'in the bush'. There is one cadet in the processing area.

Prior to the introduction of the MLA AMPC graduate program, ACC had a small cadetship scheme for trainee Feedlot Managers over two years. The MLA sponsored program runs for three years.

3.5.2   Cadet roles and responsibilities

One of the key features of ACC's placement of graduates is that they place them in genuine roles.
We don't bring in a whole group of young people with no idea of where or whether they might fit over time. We create a real position, not an extra.
This aligns with the broader ACC policy on selection and succession planning, where they prefer to promote the best person for the job, and do not have number of people vying for a possible position. However, a senior executive observed that his also means
 It is difficult to sustain. I can't create careers for an annual intake. We must have an actual job in mind.
There are other downsides:
It does mean that if someone leaves early we don't necessarily have a successor, and it also means we are starting with novices every three years, which undermines the value for us somewhat.
There are also logistical issues, given the degree of support required especially in the early period.
We can't have too many at a time. I'm flat out with two.
The requirement to identify a real role was not limited to the cadetship itself. The company tried to look ahead before taking anyone on, to see if they could provide a genuine career path.   This had limited their ability to keep some scholarship holders on as cadets because they could not guarantee a challenging position post cadetship, and had led to the loss of several high flyers. Speaking of one scholarship holder who had moved on to the mining industry:
He was just too smart for us. No reflection on him at all. We just couldn't offer him enough of a future to keep him.

Despite the fact that most of the cadetships to date have been on farm and feedlot, a senior manager observed that:
The best avenue for graduates is actually in the factory. Feedlots offer a narrow range of opportunities. Although there are some strategic/environmental roles in pasture/backgrounding there's not much in managing properties.
Another manager observed:
Is it easy for people with degrees to come into this industry? It depends on the stream- HR and safety are OK, but production management is tough because the focus is on experience rather than education. However things are changing. As things get leaner and meaner, there's more emphasis on technical solutions like automation, and in the bush, there's more science and expertise involved. Even feedlots have state of the art mills and young people with technical expertise are needed to work with cattle.

Graduates are selected with an eye to longer-term strategic consideration as well as short term needs. ACC has used the MLA scheme on two occasions to facilitate innovation through the introduction of new roles. One of these led to the development of a strategic direction for environmental management at the Cannon Hill plant.

We couldn't have given P the new job without the cadetship funding half the position.

The other created a new land-mapping role which significantly reduced the risk of the company being fined for unlawful land clearance, (the short term requirement) and laid the foundations for improved understanding and use of the land (the longer term strategic focus). Feedback from the cadet and senior managers suggests that the once innovative role has now become an accepted part of 'the way we do things round here.'

We created a role for Q with the help of the cadetship. It was a chance to see if it would be useful. And it certainly has been.

3.5.3 Selection

As discussed, several potential cadets have been identified through their involvement in the Undergraduate or Scholarship program, or by recommendation from a trusted university lecturer.

A lecturer told us about it and had an information sheet and application form. It sounded alright I wasn't sure what to do after uni and it sounded like a good opportunity as the company has a lot of areas you could work in not only the feedlot.

ACC's connection with the Intercollegiate Meat Judging Competition has also proved fruitful.

Some promising candidates have been offered cadetships as part of an employment package.

I applied to an ACC advert for an environmental position it didn't say 'graduate' but I saw it as a foot in the door. Then they asked me if I would be interested in the graduate cadetship.

The cadetship was part of my decision to join ACC – it wasn't the main reason but it was like the icing on the cake.

One senior manager expressed concerns about the selection process.

Picking the right person is not easy. We've made some mistakes. We sacked one cadet. Wasn't driven, took things for granted. Spent too much time on the MLA project and not on the job. We need some sort of trial period.

An unofficial policy appears to have evolved whereby some potential candidates are employed first or taken on in a probationary role before being offered a cadetship.

We had A and D for a year before we put them on the cadetship program. That was a good idea.

Placing existing employees on the program had yielded an unexpected bonus for at least one cadet.

It's difficult to be a feedlot manager and do any training. Being part of the cadetship program has made me and the company find the time. It also gives me a chance to network with others. Otherwise I'd be very isolated.

Some issues with the concept of probation have come to a head with the most recent cadet intake. The three previous cadets on farm and feedlot had all been employed by ACC prior to being offered a cadetship (although one was offered the option at the interview as part of the employment package). Two of the three had previous employment experience elsewhere, and one had worked with ACC as part of the Undergraduate program. The three new cadets were all straight out of university, and offered a cadetship rather than ordinary employment. However, they were required to serve a probationary period prior to formal involvement in the MLA component of the program. Six months on there was confusion between the HR manager, the probationers, their middle manager and their business unit manager about a range of issues, including when they might come off probation. This was part of a broader set of

misunderstandings about the terms of their cadetship, with the cadets believing at first that it was a two year role, but later being told it was three, their middle manager telling them they were being trained as feed lot managers, while they had been offered a more general cadetship by the HR manager.

The three cadets still on probation at Brindley Park after 6 months were becoming anxious that they would not be signed on, and that they were not able to participate in the formal MLA off site program. The lack of communication about what was happening was undermining the probationers' perceptions of the company, and their on going commitment to the program.
In the induction we had a vague explanation about the training and projects we'd be involved in, but when the paperwork came through there was nothing in the contract, no documentation.
I saw it as a great opportunity especially with the MLA connection but I haven't heard a lot about the training since we got here and it's been month

Some of this difficulty appears to have stemmed from some managers' genuine desire not to lock young people into a commitment too early. While recognising the need to attract young dynamic people and bind them to the industry, some senior managers were uncomfortable about asking for this level of commitment.
A three year program is too long in this day and age. Why would young kids come out and work in the bush when others are doing all those other exciting things? We don't want anyone direct from uni- it's too big a commitment.
We shouldn't tie someone down in their youth. We won't build in a bond as it is not a good idea to hold people against their will. ACC should make the experience so worthwhile that people will stay and if they do leave we should still value the fact that they will be good ambassadors for an industry that is not perceived as sexy.

Unfortunately, this uncertainty at senior management level was misinterpreted by the probationers and lack of communication on the issue had led to the circulation of various rumours.
When we signed up they promised us the world, but now I feel misled. It seems as if I am just a feedlot worker (except not getting paid as much as they do). I quite enjoy it but I wouldn't have taken the job if I'd known. I feel like they're saying' We're not sure about you yet'.
I've heard that people before us left because they worked for a year with no training program.
I heard people left because they weren't paid for the overtime they were working and not getting the extra training they'd been promised.

I heard the last people left after a year so is this why they are reluctant to start us- in case we'll start and then decide to go anyway? The crazy thing is that if we go for 12 months without starting the training program I WILL leave!
The position was advertised as a cadetship not as a trainee feedlot manager
I don't have any problem with starting at the bottom. If you come in at the top you're not in touch with what actually happens- but I don't want to stay here for three years!
We're paid for 7.6 hours but work for 10 or 11 hours every day. The way I see it it's OK for the training/experience component to offset the free hours. But it's not OK if we don't get involved in the training.

3.5.4 Program content

The HR manager has developed a structured internal program for each cadet, involving formal projects and enrolment in training programs focusing on management skills with some core elements plus electives relevant to individual need. Participants also attend the MLA run program off site. These meetings are held several times a year in Sydney or Brisbane.
Senior managers agreed that it was time to review the education and training components of the cadetship

I believe the company can provide the work experience and supply chain knowledge, and that MLA should focus on leadership skills, particularly people skills, rather than knowledge and technical skills.

The cadets need to learn how to deal with people- the subjects they don't teach at uni

Meat science isn't needed. They need interpersonal skills and people management.

It needs to focus on leadership in action. We could do a shorter version of the one the executive is doing.

They are greenhorns. They need experience more than they need formal training.

Two of our cadets have been conned with some of the courses they've had to do. The program needs to be much more tailored, with a lot more flexibility.

The timing of on site and off site training is tricky. It's part of life to go off site is OK but it's all got to be relevant.

Some cadets have had too much say in what training they do. Their managers and MLA should be more involved.

One cadet observed differences of perception amongst various managers

Paul sees you as a broadly trained person who is flexible and can be thrown in any direction and take on more responsibility. The manager sees you as someone getting trained with more specific knowledge that useful to this part of the business.

- **The off site component**

The MLA program was originally aimed at engineers so it assumed we didn't know about meat science for example.

They kept talking about the 'red meat industry' to engineers and HR people. I was one of the only ones in my year with an Ag Science degree.

The meat science part was wasted on me as I'd done a year on it as part of my degree.

The MLA program is focused on people who are outside of Ag but the ACC program is focused on people with an Ag background so there's a big mismatch.

The program was vey disorganised and there have been a lot of drop outs amongst the people who started with me.

Time off site is an issue because it takes 3 days out to do one day of training.

It's a real problem having people with key roles away t the same time especially if they are working in a team. It would help if the dates were set well in advance.

- **The on-site component**

Paul helped me set up the goals and the matrix sets out what training I've done and what I want to do. It's hard to fit in though, especially the logistics of getting to town. Going on a course can double the time I am away. I'd prefer to do it online but I'm usually so tired at the end of the day

Paul says I have to do the training but my boss here says do this! It's not a huge issue to get out – they do get over it- but I feel split. I know it will be good for me and I would like to do it, but I am also committed to doing a good job here. I suppose it's really my internal issue more than an issue with my boss or Paul.

Paul says he must spend the training dollars and not give them back but I would like more flexibility on how the dollars are used. If you could spread it over the 3 years you could decide to spread it or lump it together.

Paul is a strong driver. He's very organised and very good. If we identify a shortfall, he organises training. But some of the 'core' subjects are not relevant and I'm slowing down on these. Who is driving this? Is it Paul of MLA?

- **The projects**

I was writing up something that was my job anyway, but I had to write it for people outside the company and I didn't realise that they wouldn't understand what I was talking about! [My mentor] made me identify where I was making assumptions about what they knew. It really helped me put

things into words that others could understand. The project is one of the greatest strengths so far because I have to use my brain!

In contrast, another cadet perceives the projects as largely busy work.

I've done three projects that we've deliberately made very work specific. I dashed off the reports – they're more historical documents about something that happened, not research projects.

How are the reports used internally? I don't know.

Senior managers observed:

The project can mean a lot. They are producing something. But some projects are fudged.

If they are directly related to what people are already doing in their work, they run the risk of become a sort of historical document and not necessarily challenging.

The Tour report they had to do for MLA was a complete waste of time. We had one person who spent days on it – but what for?

M's project was good. We didn't have a contingency plan if the mill blew up – now we do.

What the cadets want to learn

The cadets themselves identified the following 'vital 'skills. There was strong consistency across the group.

Industry related:
- Background knowledge on the whole supply chain, plus industry core knowledge relevant to your area
- The economics of the supply chain

Leadership related
- People skills
- Conflict resolution
- Reflection/self criticism
- Leadership skills
- Professional communication skills

Management related
- Business management
- Budgeting
- Risk management

Observations included:

We should focus on leadership as we can learn everything else we need within the role.

When I started in the new position I was on a steep learning curve, but after I had all the new systems in place I was getting bored. It had become a maintenance position, so I was pleased when they asked me if I'd take on the OH&S manager role. I'm on another steep learning curve and I can't be bored?

There's been some useful PD from MLA but I've learned more from what I've done here at ACC.

3.5.5 Job assignment

A comparison of the roles and responsibilities of first three cadets on the farm/feedlots with those of the three probationers highlights some important issues about the assignment of jobs to cadets.

The first three were all given high stretch roles as part of their cadetships– one became a feedlot manager within 15 months, another established a completely new role for the company and after his first innovative project also took responsibility for building the new agri-business and feedlot offices. The third took on various roles within the feedlot and was also responsible for developing and implementing new IT business systems .In contrast, the three later recruits were told they were being trained as feedlot managers starting at the bottom with rotation between the different

areas. However, 6 months on there was confusion about their probationary period, and concern from the participants that they had become little more than cheap labour. While none of them had a problem with mucking in and working their way up, a major issue was that there was no obvious challenge- no stretch component.

I feel like a normal feedlot worker. I don't have a problem with that I quite enjoy it but I wouldn't have taken the job if I'd known.

For the first three months I didn't want to do anything ore, but since I've found my feet I feel like I need to use my brain more. I'm working with people who haven't finished year 12 but are being paid more and I feel like a waster resource.

One of the probationers was in fact quietly developing his own 'project'. From his position watching the mill operations how had also identified a range of issue in the interaction between the mill and other arts of the feedlot and had documented evidence to show patterns of waste due directly to poor communication. However, he was hesitant to draw this to the attention of middle management as he also felt it would stir up issues between the mill and the others. At this point he was observing, reflecting and developing new ideas on how the problems might be addressed simply to give himself something to think about.

Other cadets also reported that they had had high challenge roles that had eventually become mundane. Some craved on-going stretch, and wondered if they would have to leave if this was not sustained.

I like to be on a steep learning curve.

3.5.6 Support structures

- **Mentoring**

The cadets have had vastly different experiences with their mentors. Some of the issues appear to be with the mentor. For example, two cadets with the same mentor spoke highly of the process.

He rings once a week and focuses mainly on the project. I've met him face to face twice. It's useful to have someone in constant contact who can give you a kick up the arse when you need it. He also gives the Big Picture industry perspective not just an ACC view. It's motivating. It's a good relationship. . I haven't done this, but if I had problems with the job I know I could talk to him confidentially. As he is completely removed from the company it could be useful.

My mentor was very good. He'd been in the industry a long time and was a good contact. We talked once a fortnight. He'd call me and catch me off guard. Sometimes I could have used him better I think – I should have had a list of things ready to talk about. It was all project focused. It would also be helpful to have someone to talk to about management issues.

Their comments are in sharp contrast to another two cadets who also had the same mentor- but a different one from the first group.

A mentor? I had one for 12 months but I don't have one now. It was not a success. A mentor should be someone you can look up to aspire to, but he had fundamentally different views to me. He was also very pushy about reports. Why? He's not my boss! My boss was asking me to do other things and I felt pulled in different directions. We had no regular contact but I rang him a few times. Then he emailed me about the report as if he saw it as his responsibility. He quoted the mentor's contract at me. He told me I'd failed because I hadn't done the report. To be honest, the mentor roles were never made clear. It's not all his fault as he got my back up and I also dug my heels in.

Mentoring is very important. I had a mentor in my second year for the first time. We had nothing in common. I never had anything from him or he from me. I reported this to the MLA rep and she said no to worry she'd sort it out. I don't think you should have a mentor thrust onto to you without careful planning. There needs to be a match. People should choose heir mentors.

 The senior managers are well aware of the issues

I don't want to pay for something that is not useful. We have to offer the kids something they can't get in the workplace.

There needs to be better matching with mentors. We've had two people with the same mentor and very different relationships and outcome

Perhaps we need to define the role better A coach would be more useful than a mentor.

The internal support I've had has been structured and helpful.

Feedback

Feedback needs to be regular. Even though I was told at the end of my project that it was outstanding I knew I was appreciated but it wasn't useful for progressing. I'd like examples of where I was doing well and where I wasn't.

I don't get a lot of feedback within the company. It's very isolated.

You need feedback that is regular but not constant. It's no good if it's left for ages. When that happens, (and it does) I know I could ask for it but I tend to let it go because it's easier, but I would like more direction sometimes.

I get useful feedback from X and Y- mostly when I've done something wrong. But what they say can be ambiguous – they are good at changing their minds!

Networking

There are great networking opportunities to meet with young people in other plants that I would not get this another way. We're all in the same industry and we can share ideas and issues.

Working with other cadets is important.

The company should always employ at least two cadets at a time. It is much easier if several people are involved.

MLA

From a strategic perspective, ACC's involvement the MLA programs has had high impact

 The MLA funding stimulated us to get off our backsides and develop our internal program. It's great for us, great for the industry. It raises everyone's image and profile.

The relationship on the ground has been however, another matter

I recognise the whole program has been evolving, but more planning, structure, coordination wouldn't go astray.

The MLA rep should visit regularly and talk to the cadets' managers directly not just work through Paul.

The MLA rep was there with Paul but she didn't introduce herself. It was if she didn't see us as important at all.

We need more feedback from MLA.

Cadets had similar perceptions:

We had no feedback from MLA on our projects. Did they read them? Did they even care?

I don't know what role MLA plays. Do they pay for training? Do they say what is in our training program or is it Paul saying we have to do this?

I sent the reports to MLA but there was no outcome. The Study tour was good and I got a lot out of it, but I didn't put much effort into the report. Some of the others did but they got no feedback so why bother! They should have asked us to pick a focus area and said something like, 'What will you take back to the business? Write a report for your boss.'

I've had some issues with the program. I didn't hear anything for a long time, and there has been no continuity. There hasn't been any follow up since the last program and no real structure. When something does happen there isn't enough warning and no time to plan.

3.5.7 Career Impacts and future plans

Most of the cadets felt that the program had already made a positive impact on their careers. (The probationers were reserving judgement).

This program has real benefits- especially the speed of progression straight out of uni.

Look at what has happened to X and Y. I hope to move into management also, and I've learnt a lot, had a lot of opportunities.

Most were committed to continuing in the company and/or in the industry.

In three years' time I'd like to go into MLA or be a consultant in the red meat industry.

Formal career planning is not my thing so I don't have a 10 year plan. I'll grab opportunities as they come up. I'd like to move into a management role but I also enjoy more hands on and less business. I don't want to do an MBA. I'm fatigued with study and report writing!
I don't see (feedlot management) as my career, but it's part of the understanding of the Big Picture. Biosecurity, contingency plans and the people side are important. Working in the office is also good as you can see a lot of the behind the scenes how and why.
I'd like to move out of feedlotting for a while. Later I'd like to go interstate, still work in the industry and not in academia. I don't want to do a PhD.
One saw a long-term future in the industry, but was not sure about the suitability of the program for others.

It's different for me. I worked into the program backwards. I already knew I was suited to the industry but it would be harder for people straight out of uni. Maybe that's why there's been a big drop out rate across the MLA program for my year? 4 people dropped out in the first 3 months as they realised this wasn't what they wanted to do.

The ACC experience shows that, even where a company is handling its side well, it may not be possible to provide the short to medium term career opportunities that suit the skills of each participant – especially those high flyers the industry might most want to keep! If the ACC cohort's experience is any indicator, it suggests that the MLA/AMPC approach has real potential to attract and retain promising young people in the industry. However, the way the host company supports the participants, and the degree to which the programs are integrated into the way that company does business will be critical to realizing that potential.
The comments of one of the participants who has since moved out of the industry provide insights into how the program can work- and how much more could be done with it to ensure that such candidates decide to stay.

The undergrad project itself (anther company) was a bit mundane, but it introduced me to the meat industry and its possibilities- I had no idea how good the industry was! It also gave me contact with ACC. The scholarship at ACC then gave me an unreal opportunity to develop something that is a first for the industry! It was amazing…
I was really torn about leaving the company and the industry. I would still like to go back – actually I do go back to ACC to keep working on what I started…I now have a patent on what I developed, and it has major possibilities for this industry, but I haven't done anything with it because I don't have the marketing skills I'd need, or the profile, to get it off the ground
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3.5.8 Involvement of middle managers

An important issue that emerged was the gap between senior and middle mangers in terms of understanding of, and in some case support for the programs. As the middle managers tended to be those to whom program participants reported, and who organised work commitments and potentially provided advice, this had made a difference to the success of some placements.

Interviews for this project identified a serious misunderstanding at the middle manger level regarding three new recruits on probation that was threatening to blow up into a major issue and could have seen the potential cadets leave the company.

Company managers recognised the need to help middle managers develop their program understanding and support skills, and increase their sense of ownership. They felt this would be assisted by better communication and documentation (Internal and external) about:

- What is actually involved in each program
- Clear agreed guidelines/requirements for managers
- Examples of why some of the core skills training organised by the ACC HR manager is part of the internal program and why it is considered important.

It would also help to have an idea of where a cadet will work, and some suggested they should not be to rotated and redeployed in order to give them time to 'find their niche'.
Interaction with other staff

While cadets and scholarship holders in the processing plant felt comfortable with other staff, there were some issues identified by some on the properties.

There's been some jealousy from other staff about my training. They say-' Why him- we work as hard as he does so why has he been picked out? 'A problem is that the system isn't set up for most of us out here to do training and y role isn't really understood anyway, There's a perception that I'm always off site and to some people that means I'm not really working. It's hard to overcome. Do you attract attention to what you are doing or try to play it down?

4 Evaluating impact

This section discusses the impact of the program on individual participants, ACC and the industry using the evaluation criteria developed as part of the project.

4.1 Are the programs facilitating learning and development?

In applying the Learning and Development framework (Table 2.1 p.16) to each of the MLA/AMPC programs operating at ACC as part of their PD Scheme, it can be seen that the three programs incorporate many of the factors required to facilitate the learning of young professionals. At the same time, there are specific areas that could be enhanced and some issues that need to be addressed.
The key aspects are summarised in the following section. Appendix 2 provides a tabular overview of the learning and development aspects of the three programs.

4.1.1 The Undergraduate program

The Undergraduate program has most of the right ingredients to support effective learning and development, and ACC participants' feedback suggests that it is an extremely positive and potentially life changing experience.

Participants in the Undergraduate program are novices in every respect. They usually know nothing about the meat industry, may never have conducted a major project with real life consequences, and some may never have lived away from home before. Most are given a project that is only partly related to their technical field of study, and some may be working on something they have not studied at all. They must acclimatize to a new environment, develop some understanding of the context within which they are working, establish relationships and scope and deliver an outcome within a 12 week period. That they are usually able to do this successfully at ACC is at least partly a testament to the quality of the thought and effort that ACC has invested in making this program work.

All Undergraduate projects have a high degree of stretch. Indeed, at times they may have been a little too challenging for the time frame and /or for the student. It is difficult for experts to remember what it is like to be a novice, but company members have learned a lot over time about appropriate scoping and matching, and in the main, the program has provided appropriate levels of support. Students must take responsibility, and make mistakes as part of the process, but they report feeling comfortable to ask questions and seek advice. Most middle and senior managers have provided useful feedback during and post project, and have been supportive of student participation in the off site components of the program although company personnel have on occasion, appeared not to recognise the full value of networking and external input.

The nature of support, including interaction with internal and external mentors, has encouraged reflection, although there have been times when this has been undermined by deadline pressures and the occasional conflict between MLA and ACC expectations and requirements. There have also been instances where roles and responsibilities of mentors and protégés have not been clear, and where the matching process could have been better.

Most projects have produced results that are seen as useful to the company, and some have had a significant impact over an extended period. However, the HR Manager feels they are still 'hit and miss', and at least one senior manager is hesitant to take on more students due to the personal toll on time and energy. While there is no expectation that a project must produce a result with a measurable financial impact, there are questions being asked about the Return on

Investment in terms of time and energy. There is a potentially high risk in taking on an unknown student for a short period in a project that requires a high input from ACC staff. One of the ways of reducing the risk is for ACC to play a greater role in the initial selection process.

If ACC were to withdraw from the program what would they lose? Involvement in the Undergraduate program brings them into contact with a broader range of students than they would otherwise access through their own channels, the external training and mentoring adds a critical dimension – and all participants place high value on the opportunity to learn more about the industry and to mix with their peers and MLA staff as part of the process.

4.1.2 Scholarship program

Scholarship students appreciate the value of the experience, the company support and the scheme's financial generosity. They know they are learning, and place a high value on the real life practical experience they could not get any other way. They believe this puts them well ahead of their peers, both academically and in terms of selling themselves on the job market. Their obvious personal and professional growth is a source of pride to company personnel who see them as 'part of the family'.

Feedback suggests that the Scholarship program is currently perceived by the company Executive to be more effective than the Undergraduate program. It is less of a pressure cooker experience for all concerned, allowing time for novice participants to be inducted, develop an understanding of an area and build relationships over time. It is a lot easier to gear their learning programs to their abilities and needs at the time, The formal programs provide a mix of work experience, formal projects and tailored training in skills relevant to need and participants have some influence over its content. The novices are well supported, with attention also paid to interaction with the families of students coming from other regions.

Students perceive all aspects of their involvement in the company to be high stretch- and they are enthusiastic about this, speaking highly of the feedback and mentoring they receive from their internal mentors-. The HR manager also fulfils an effective coaching role. They are comfortable, if not always enthusiastic, about their university mentor, but there have been issues with the MLA mentors- or lack thereof. Are they supposed to be part of this program and if so, what role should they play?

While scholarship projects aim to produce useful, concrete outcomes, they are primarily intended to be developmental, and in this regard appear to incorporate appropriate levels of challenge and support to ensure that the student learns something new. Several of the initial projects on farm may have benefited from prior scoping by those responsible to ensure achievability within the time frame. T the same time, although the students like to see some short term outcomes for their efforts, some may benefit from reflection on the fact that some tasks/projects in real life do not it neatly into designated timeframes, especially when they rely on input from others who have their own priorities.

The lack of awareness of this highlights the fact that first year students have very limited prior knowledge to bring to any project- their technical background in their chosen technical area is not yet developed, they are unlikely to have much knowledge of project design and management and they may have little relevant work experience. While they want to be engaged in projects with meaningful outcomes, there may be benefit in discussing the need for novices' projects to place more emphasis on developmental outcomes than on those that will immediately have a measurable impact on productivity.

4.1.3 The cadetship program

The cadetship program is where the rubber hits the road. It has produced some obvious success stories, although some managers have suggested that this simply reflects good choices of people who 'were going to make it anyway, program or not'.

Apart from those on probation, participants felt that their involvement in the program had contributed significantly to their learning and development- and in some cases had led to rapid progress in their careers. However, issues with the latest group of cadets to enter feedlotting suggest that some rethinking may be necessary. While the program is actively recruiting young people wanting to learn, and hungry for challenge, not all positions offer the degree of stretch these young graduates need to remain engaged. This raises questions about the concentration of cadets employed on farm and feedlot, given the limited range of on-going positions available.
It also suggests the need for a greater investment in involvement of middle managers in the development of the vision, and in on going decision-making regarding the program – and a stronger recognition of the critical importance of challenge. If the company wants to attract and retain promising young people – whether they are dynamic movers and shakers or deeply reflective people who can see the Big Picture, identify systemic issues and design practical solutions – they have to make sure there is a balance between brain work and muscle work. This does not undermine the need to learn the ropes and muck in with everyone else- it simply acknowledges the reality that this will not be enough on its own.

A connected issue is the need for a company to be able to offer challenge post cadetship. This has been proving to be something of a problem in some areas and could undermine the potential to keep young people long enough to take on senior management and leadership roles.

Program content and methodology also needs a rethink. While formal projects work well in the other programs, what is their purpose in their graduate program? A person's job role may indeed be, or include, a discrete project, but is the project for the role or for the cadetship? Is the project report to meet the requirements of the cadetship and MLA or an expected aspect of a company assignment? If MLA gets a copy of the report, what happens to it? Who reads it? Does anyone care or has the task been reduced to busywork to demonstrate accountability?

Cadets are only employed in a 'real' job. They have been chosen because they are committed and persistent, and want to do a good job. These admirable qualities can lead them into overdrive as they try to meet both the productivity and developmental expectations of their roles. Too often, the training and development component is put to one side. This tendency is compounded when the off site component is perceived to be irrelevant to their needs and interests- as has happened frequently over the past two years. This has been a particular issue for those on farm/feedlot who have an animal science background – the MLA component has not taken their prior knowledge into account, and the 'one size fits all 'approach to industry and technical knowledge has undermined the credibility of the off site program. A similar issue has emerged with the matching process for project mentors. While some mentors have been an asset, others mentoring relationships have not gelled, but when issues have been raised there has been little action taken. However, is a mentor of a technical project the best approach anyway? If the focus is on fast tracking management and leadership skill, would an external coach be more useful to help cadets reflect on themselves, and to learn more from their interactions with others. And should some 'projects' in fact focus on the people side of the business rather than the technical?

The issues that have emerged have highlighted the need for greater clarification of the aims of this program. The key questions are:
- 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.

4.2   Achieving goals and KPIs

While there are issues to be addressed, overall, the three programs have been highly successful in achieving their goals within the ACC context.

4.2.1   The Undergraduate program

The program aims to:
*   Raise awareness of the possibilities of the industry for those who might not have seen it as a career destination.
*   Contribute to a participant's personal and professional development
*   Provide practical, useful project outcomes for the participating company
*   Identify potential candidates for scholarship/cadetships

Table 4.1 demonstrates that the Undergraduate program meets the identified KPIs.
There is ample evidence to suggest that the Undergraduate program has achieved its objectives from the perspective of participants. They learn a great deal in a short space of time, have a memorable experience and gain positive insights into the red meat industry. Even if they do not go onto join the industry (although several from ACC have), they do become ambassadors for both the company and the industry. These outcomes have been achieved through the thought and effort of company members combined with the quality and relevance of the MLA external program.

While not all projects have had a major impact, they have all benefited the company in some way. Again this is as much a reflection of ACC's attention to scoping and supporting the process. Although it could be argued that the whole process is by its very nature, 'hit and miss, there have been some real hits and few serious misses. However, the potential for burn-out of committed staff members overseeing projects is a cause for concern, and suggest a need to stagger projects in some areas, rather than trying to run one or more every year.

ACC has used the program quite effectively to identify candidates for future employment. The approach fits their preference for getting to know a potential candidate and for building relationships.

4.2.2   The Scholarship program

This program has similar aims to the Undergraduate program:
*   To interest promising young people in the industry
*   To facilitate a participant's personal and professional development
*   To identify potential candidates for cadetships or employment

Table 4.2 outlines the evidence supporting the achievement of the KPIs identified Again, all the evidence suggests that it is attracting young people to the industry, targeting a mix of those who were already demonstrating an interest in animal science and those from a food science background who had not thought of the red meat industry as a career destination at all.
On has already taken this option, and is employed at ACC. However, given that the company selects people who are prepared to take some risks, and keen to learn, it is no surprise that scholarship holders say they will be looking to broaden as well as deepen their experience after

university. They may well leave to travel, to take up further stuffy or to move into another industry, but all who have been, or are still in the ACC program se the meat industry as a viable option – and would be happy to work for ACC.

The Scholarship program should also be providing ACC with an ideal way of identifying likely candidates for cadetships. However, the company has not promoted it as a pathway (perhaps as part of a 'no promises' philosophy), so scholarship holders had no information about the cadetship. Almost all were keen to find out more and saw it as a potential next step.

4.2.3 Cadetship

The program aims to:
- Provide promising young people with company /industry knowledge and experience
- Facilitate learning and growth aligned with the needs of the red meat industry, building long term interest & commitment
- To fast track participants so that they can take up management roles within 5 years.
- Help develop next generation of effective leaders

The evidence suggests that the company has identified a number of highly promising young people, who, it could be argued, 'would make it anyway'. Most, but not all, have already demonstrated a strong interest in working in the industry. The experience of a real job with high challenge has been the major vehicle for participants' learning and growth. Where the company has not been able to supply this, the results have been markedly different.

Several participants have already been fast tracked, taking on management roles well before the 5 year mark, but this may have been at the expense of their personal development programs, the high level of responsibility making it difficult for them to focus on the external elements of the program, or on the formal project work.

The external program has not made a major contribution to participants' development, and at this stage, if the program helps t develop the next generation of leaders it will be more because of ACC's ability to select the right people and give them a range of experiences than through any formal input.
Table 4.3 provides an overview of the KPIs and evidence.

	Undergraduate program	Evidence
Goals	• Raise awareness of the possibilities of the industry for those who might not have seen it as a career destination. • Contribute to a participant's personal and professional development	

	• Provide practical, useful project outcomes for the participating company • Identify potential candidates for scholarship/cadetships	
KPIs for the individual	Vacation pay in a meaningful job CV entry Industry experience Training in project design, report writing etc Meet new people, have new experiences	All interviewed valued the experience, on and off site, specific knowledge gained and CV entry
Company KPIs	Project that is valuable to the company – e.g. saves time and/or money, identifies useful information, develops a new idea Identifies a person with potential for the scholarship or cadetship program	Majority seen as valuable A third produced high impact outcomes 1/13 given scholarship 1/13 employed then given cadetship
KPIs for the industry	Identifies a person with potential for the scholarship or cadetship program in another company Raises awareness of industry opportunities Participant speaks highly of red meat industry and promotes as a career to others Participant chooses red meat career	1 from another company offered scholarship at ACC Strong positive industry awareness & examples of promoting to peers 2/13 stayed with the company and are both in post graduate employment Destination of others unknown

Table 4.1. Undergraduate program KPIs and supporting evidence

	Scholarship	Evidence
Goals	Interest promising young people in the industry Contribute to a participant's personal and professional development Identify potential candidates for cadetships	
KPIs for the individual	No HECS fees Vacation pay in a meaningful job CV entry Industry experience- for self and CV Opportunity to try new things with support	All see scheme as generous with highly valued benefits in all KPIs identified. Keen to stay All keen to know more about the cadetship
Company KPIs	Seeing someone learn & grow over time Projects valuable to company Want to join ACC after university	Strong positive feedback on participants with examples from all sr managers interviewed Projects seen as developmental but some useful contributions to productivity. (One outstanding project outcome with application across many industries, but company does not own IP) 1 participant gone on to full employment at ACC. Now in middle management . Others interested- feel loyalty to ACC/can see career for themselves but don't feel ACC obliged to hire them, though may also want to take other opportunities as well None has any information on cadetships but most interested – would see as opportunity
KPIs for the industry	Stays with the industry after graduation or associated in some way (eg goes on to do research associated with the industry, joins MLA etc)	All participants see meat as a viable career & promote to peers. Company unable to keep a high performer – has left meat industry, but consults back to ACC.

Table 4.2. Scholarship program KPIs and supporting evidence

	Cadetship	Evidence
Goals	Provide promising young people with company /industry knowledge and experience Learning & growth aligned with the red meat industry, builds long term interest & commitment Help develop next generation of effective managers and leaders	
KPIs for the individual	Meaningful employment with prospects Feels valued and supported by the company Accepts need to learn about all aspects of the company from the bottom up /prepared to take sideways steps in order to learn more Takes opportunities, accepts and copes with new challenge Sees a future in the company/industry and taking steps to secure this	Participants report on site work experience highly conducive to this, but off sit involvement in networking with program peers & other industry members also critical Most feel valued & supported Most recognise novice/advanced beginner role in industry, job and/or management role & need to learn the ropes but all seek stretch component Commitment to industry as career varies from high to very high, but some may leave if degree of challenge not available

		or maintained
Company KPIs	Seeing someone learn & grow over time Opportunity to trial new roles Stay at ACC for minimum of 5 years Take on middle management roles	Strong Sr management interest in cadetship cohort - knowledge of progress etc Two innovative roles established – one opportunity passed up Two cadets fast tracked into middle management positions. Others gradually taking on new roles at speed they prefer Length of time at ACC not yet possible to report on
KPIs for the industry	Stays in the industry long term Takes promotion positions Emerges as an industry leader	two cadets adamant about long term commitment to the industry Two will stay if jobs remain interesting Three probationers see definite future in some part of the industry, but may be lost to ACC

Table 4.3. Cadetship program KPIs and supporting evidence

4.3 Measuring company impacts

While the preceding analysis has focused on each program in isolation, at ACC, they are gradually evolving into one, somewhat seamless, entity. Therefore it is important to review the impact of the combined programs on ACC.

Members of the ACC Senior Executive believe their involvement in the MLA/AMPC sponsored programs does pay dividends, but do not think these could be easily measured in dollar terms.

While the Managing Director acknowledged that their involvement in the subsidised programs was a way of getting some of the company levy funds back, he stressed that it meant far more to the company than that, and that it was critical that ACC 'invest the money wisely'.

The company's involvement had had strategic outcomes. Perhaps, most importantly, it had spurred them on to establish their internal professionals' development program:

We knew we needed a program like this but we wouldn't have gone into this area and built what we have …without this funding.

Over time, company members had learnt from their experiences, and were continually refined their ideas on what they wanted their internal program to achieve, and developing the systems and structures required to make it part of normal operations.

Involvement was increasing the company's ability to attract promising young people, and they were able to get to know them, 'trial' them over time and select the most appropriate for company needs and offer them on-going employment. They had also been able to use the partially funded graduate positions to establish completely new roles that would otherwise not have eventuated.

The three programs had enabled the commissioning of 19 internal projects to the end of 2008. The majority of these of these were judged to have made a contribution to the company, although company managers did not believe the impacts were necessarily easily measured in financial terms – and some were reluctant to go down that path.

The issue of cost: financial benefit raises some important questions:

- Could there be unintended outcomes from attempting to place too much emphasis on the financial return from a company's involvement in any of these programs?
- Could the drive to get concrete measurable outcomes undermine the learning and development aspects of programs that are essentially for novices and advanced beginners?
- What is the priority for these programs? Is it to attract/retain young professionals or is to get a job done cheaply to save company money?

While the ideal may be to find a balance between a measurable return and a positive leaning experience, it is important that any company participating in these programs has identified their priorities and it clear about how these align with their company vision and goals. In ACC's case, senior managers see the developmental and longer term outcomes for the company and the industry ahead of the immediate return. However, they are still very happy to get outcomes that make a difference to their bottom line!

4.3.1 Costs and benefits

At the simplest level, a measure of cost saving would involve identifying the cost of alternatives-
- What would it cost the company to do nothing?
- What would it cost to take an employee off line to conduct this work?
- What would it cost to hire an external consultant?

Some projects have provided quantified information that confirms what people on site already 'knew' rather than identifying a serious previously unrecognised issue. The benefits identified include evidence to back up decisions being made, or to provide for regulators, and increased confidence that critical decisions about water, energy, or stock l for example are well informed.

- Some projects have positioned ACC 'ahead of the game'. For example, the Best Practice Water management positioned the company to mange their resources more effectively during the drought and to adjust to new regulatory requirements
- Some projects have reduced the risk of the company facing prosecution – e.g. the Property Maps of Assessable Vegetation
- Some projects have opened up new areas of business- for example the Land Development project on Babbiloora and Barngo. (See Table 4.4 for other examples)

Table 4.4 Examples of project impacts

Project and focus area	Outputs	Impacts /benefits	Implemented? Follow up?	Costs /savings	Industry applicability
Best Practice Water management Environmental /waste Processing Undergraduate program 2003 Warner	Surveyed water reticulation systems across the facility for cold, hot and warm water. Measured water usage by functional area/department & by plant Reviewed current best practice water minimization & utilization methods & investigated possible waste streams for re-use/recycle Investigate and Identified current state legislation & Australian Standards, and site plant and equipment from historical records & as surveyed Examined requirements & feasibility for inspection & testing with nominated authorised maintenance/repair contractor Conducted evaluation of plant and equipment (pumps and motors) standardization and completed risk assessment for spares/parts inventory.	Judged high impact Used to inform decisions re water use on an on-going basis – of particular importance as drought conditions prevailed & govt water use requirements tightened Evidence for regulators Reduction of water use & risk re govt regulation	Yes- Become our bible' In regular use for past 5 years Subsequent MLA/AMC sponsored project built on this work	Standard Undergraduate project cost Time of chief engineer /HR manager Alternatives: • do nothing & keep guessing/relying on gut instinct • take an employee off line for 2-3 months • employ an external consultant	Best practice Lit review could be made available to others Could provide template for similar evaluations in other plants
Vegetation mapping Risk management Farm Undergraduate	Property Map of Assessable vegetation (PMAV) prepared for Redford Station plus 'lock in' PMVAs for other properties	Judged high impact Significantly reduced risk of large fines for unlawful clearing Increased amount of land recognised to be	Yes Trialled some 'unproven' ways of presenting evidence to regulators but outcomes not recorded. (What	2 Undergraduate program time of Sr exec to oversee plus middle manager Alternatives: • do nothing & keep guessing/relying on gut	PMAVs relatively new in 04. Tailored to need but process applicable for any area with similar needs, DNRM

Project and focus area	Outputs	Impacts /benefits	Implemented? Follow up?	Costs /savings	Industry applicability
program 2004 Lamrock/Saint	Identified key information required to deal with regulation. Vegetation monitoring stations built to provide ongoing information on pasture conditions (eg how pasture responds to seasonal conditions over time)	available for production. reliable information over time re pasture conditions support decisions re stocking rates/general stock mgmt	happened? Did they work? eg Were parts of Redford reclassified from remnant to regrowth/Brindley locked in Was a PVM plan developed for Redford Station?)	instinct • take an employee off line for 2-3 months • employ an external consultant	regulatory rrequirements
Eating quality benchmark Processing Undergraduate program 2005 Squires	Identified reduction in tenderness of steak from 2001-2005 of a magnitude detectable by consumers-especially seasonal fluctuation.	Low to medium impact Eating quality & consistency a vital aspect of ACC's production system- not regularly benchmarked, but factor that influences consumer choice Provided basis for further research to identify critical factors	Was this seen as important enough to do further investigation? Does it suggest that benchmarking should occur more regularly?	1 Undergrad program Middle manager/HR manager time	Eating quality obviously an industry issue- if people stop buying Coles red meat because it seems tough, may decide all red meat is tough or that tender meat will be too expensive & switch to red meat alternative. Could provide another student project?
Assessment of quality & Processing mnmgt systems integration Undergrad program 2006 Chan	Areas for improvement in QA system identified.	Medium impact Identified specific gaps in QA officers/prod operators knowledge of cuts/ specifications & HACCP awareness Found evidence that not enough attention being paid to quality of actual product improve cooperation between	Recommended introduction of AUSmeat or Cert III in Meat Processing + better support /direction from mgmnt/ quality circles & toolbox meetings to encourage greater staff engagement. Suggested adoption of practices used in other parts of ACC e.g.	Issues identified but size/cost not measured Student offered scholarship and later employed full time at ACC. Now in middle management position. – program acted as training ?probation period. Ensured company got the employee they wanted Savings re recruitment costs, Reduction of risk of training	Contributes to general information on quality management in the industry. Cd become case study for QA training /setting up QA systems

Project and focus area	Outputs	Impacts /benefits	Implemented? Follow up?	Costs /savings	Industry applicability
		production quality team in Retail Ready	regular review of Work Instructions etc	someone who does not stay on	
Land Development on Babbiloora and Barngo. Graduate program 2006 Walker	Identified areas suitable for clearing & established potential ROI of doing so Produced detailed land development plan for 8.467 hectares of company owned land Gained permits to clear Ensured appropriate areas identified and cleared prior to final legal date for broadscale clearing GPS points for Contractors manual & induction process developed to ensure appointed contractor understand legal requirments etc	Judged high impact Made large tracts of the most appropriate land available for future use – significant increase in productivity, short to long term 'Was nothing in place but now can ask, 'What is this really costing? What are the options? It has moved the whole business along'.	Yes Seen as significant development Role seen as innovative at the time- now part of mainstream practice.	ROI of various decisions identified as part of project Reduction of risk of contractors breaking the law & of ACC being held responsible. 'If we'd stuffed up we would have gone to court! ' If W had not done this, would have had to pay a consultant as no-one available wit the skills within the company	While seeking compliance Process, critical issues could be of value in other parts of the country

4.4 Leveraging change

The levels of perspective provide another way of considering the goals and operation of the ACC PD Scheme incorporating the MLA/AMPC programs.

4.4.1 Shared Vision

One of the key elements of success is that the ACC PD Scheme is directly aligned to aspects of the company vision and strategy and has a semi-articulated vision of is own. There is also alignment and commitment to most aspects of this vision across senior management, with strong consistency in the messages they are sending, and the language they use to talk about what hey are aiming o achieve and the values and beliefs that underpin their strategy. However, they acknowledge that this vision is not necessarily shared by all middle managers, and this has led to some of the implementation issues identified.

Some MLA and ACC personnel have been operating to some extent with a shared vision throughout the development of the programs. This has enabled ACC to suggest and pilot a number of innovations, and learning from this has had a broader impact on the industry programs.

4.4.2 Mental models

Members of the ACC executive have a genuine commitment to helping the industry as well as their own company. The program is underpinned by a set of guiding principles shared by those interviewed, which include the belief that:

- Young people should not be tied to a long term commitment
- Young people should be able to gain broader experience
- We can't take them into the program if we don't have a real job for them
- We must be able to offer them challenging positions post cadetship
- We are investing in the development of our next generation of leaders
- Leaders need highly developed strategic and people skills
- We need leaders, but they have to learn the ropes and start at the bottom. They also need to learn to be managers.

Again, the messages become more mixed at middle management level, where there is some evidence to suggest a greater commitment to learning the skills of the immediate job.

There was a strong belief at ACC that if the industry was serious about producing a next generation of leaders, then it needed to focus on its current managers as well.
This would have more impact in the next 3 years than the graduate program!

While there was alignment within ACC that the PD Scheme (and any MLA input) should focus on developing leadership skills, there was less consistency amongst members of the industry bodies consulted for this project, with some expressing a belief that leadership skills cannot be taught, or that management skills must precede leadership skills. ACC executives proposed that MLA prepare a briefing paper to get support from all peak bodies for a 25 year program to ensure the industry has the skills it needs for the foreseeable future.

There may be a lack of alignment between industry bodies and ACC in regard to whether program funds are a seeding arrangement or a long term commitment. While MLA personnel would like to see companies such as ACC integrate their approach into their mainstream business, senior executives at ACC were more inclined to see the use of these funds as a' wise' way of using money that they believe is actually theirs anyway-having been provided as an industry levy. There is a fundamental mismatch in these two perspectives that will need to be articulated and resolved.

4.4.3 Systemic structures

Internally, a lot of thought and effort has gone into the development and continuous improvement of program structures, systems and processes. The basic scaffolding is in place and is gradually being aligned to the strategic intent

- Networks /relationships to reduce the time, energy and risk involved in identification and selection of candidates
- Learning based on real tasks and experiences facilitated by formal mentoring, feedback and other support processes
- Formal training and development programs reflecting company beliefs about core knowledge and skills and tailored to some extent to participant needs and interests

A structural issue that could undermine the program stems from arrangements associated with individual business units. The HR unit coordinates and facilitates the PD Scheme, and manages the interaction with MLA and levies internal charges on the company's business units. At the time of the interviews, there was a perception that these charges may have been 'over the odds'. Questions were also being raised about the program requirements- were they being driven by MLA or HR ? While this was causing unrest that was also reflected in some program participants' comments, interestingly, it also appeared to be driving some members of senior executive to revisit and better articulate the aims of the program and to consider what it should involve.

I want to know what I am actually paying for. If the program costs me $25,000 is it want I really need or could I get better value by getting someone in and doing it myself?

This level of reflection has the potential to drive further innovation and lead to a program that is genuinely responsive to the needs of each part of the business. However, the flip side is that it could lead to the dismantling of the company-wide approach and associated synergies. This could also isolate participants from other parts of the company and would certainly take away their ability to build, external networks through their involvement in the MLA off site program.

There are also issues with program content and methodology, particularly in the cadetship. Should the role and nature of the project, and of the mentor be revisited? Should projects in all parts of the program be technically based or should some be used as vehicles to explore management and leadership issues that are centred around people? And should the support person always be a mentor with the industry knowledge and technical skills to provide assistance with the project, or are there appropriate parts of the PD Scheme where the best learning will come through working with a coach with the expertise to challenge and stretch participants in areas associated with management and leadership?

The feedback on MLA structures and systems was generally critical, reflecting the changeover of personnel and the fact that all three programs had been in something of a holding pattern for some time. However, while there are reasons to explain the problems identified, the comments do not reflect well on the programs, or on MLA. As MLA decision makers are aware, there is a real need to ensure that the programs are facilitated by people with the appropriate skills, knowledge and organisational skills and that support structures are in place to ensure smooth operations. These issues are discussed further in the next section.

4.5   The programs from an MLA perspective – what's working and what isn't?

The company and participants identified a range of positives and issues:

- Undergraduates had enjoyed their projects and generally felt proud of the results they had achieved. Most but not all spoke highly of their MLA appointed mentors, and of the time spent in the MLA program with other undergraduates. However, one ad had problems with her mentor, which included the fact that he did not see any reason for her to attend the end of program week and kept her back for several days.
- Scholarships students were all very happy with the current arrangements. Their only reservation was that they did not have a chance to catch up with their families during the holidays. As they all board away from home in the university term this was an issue.
- Cadets liked the flexibility of the personal training programs and availability of funds to make them happen, but most questioned some aspect of the content of the MLA training, particularly those in the feedlot areas who already had a background in meat science

There were also widely different reports on the appropriateness and usefulness of individual mentors appointed by MLA. There were suggestions about compatibility matching, participant input into selection, and the potential to have a coach rather than a subject specific mentor.

From the company perspective, there was some strong criticism, particularly from the farm and feedlot end, regarding the usefulness of some aspects of the off site MLA programs, and of the mentors, given the time, cost and disruption associated with people attending. Program participants generally supported this view.
One company director observed:

It's a 'One size fit all' approach, with too much focus on people with no meat industry exposure (engineering background) and little recognition of those at the front end of the supply chain.

Most thought that it would be more appropriate for MLA/AMPC external program to focus on developing participants' understanding of the industry 'Big picture', and more specifically their interpersonal and leadership skills.
Company mangers and participants also commented on the lack of notice given in the past that had made it particularly difficult to plan ahead and had thus had a negative impact on the business, given that the participants involved re not 'extras' but have genuine roles to play and expectations to meet within set timeframes. This was a particular problem in the bush, where there are no other staff to fall back on.
Another issues that had caused concern was that all communication from MLA was via the HR manager in Brisbane. While no-one was criticising his role, ACC is set up as separate cost centres, each of which funds its own participants in the program. Besides being seen as a necessary courtesy on the part of the MLA program coordinator, direct contact with program participants' line managers would facilitate communication and ownership.

Both participants and their managers commented on the general lack of feedback from MLA regarding the study tour and project reports. They asked, 'Are they used? Are they even read? Does anyone care - or is it just busywork? The usefulness of the Study tour report was singled out as an example of time-consuming busywork. In fact, this had been the final straw in the case of one cadet. The manager had been having doubts about her commitment, and found she was spending many work hours on the study tour report which he likened to a, 'What I did on my holidays' project. She was cautioned but continued on. Her position was terminated.

5 What have we learned?

As part of this and related projects, members of MLA. AMPC, Mintrac, ACC and the ICMJ provided input into the development of a draft blueprint for industry supported PD.
Fig 5.1. provides an overview of the major goals of the PD Blueprint (See Attachment 1 for a more detailed version).
The draft proposes that the overarching aim of all activity should be:
To ensure the industry has access to the knowledge and skills it needs to remain sustainable and profitable.
Goal 5 has particular relevance to this project.
To attract and develop new graduates in relevant disciplines
In order to achieve this, five objectives need to be achieved:

5.1   Identify the right young people
5.2   Offer a multi faceted program for promising young people
5.3   Ensure companies are skilled in supporting program participants
5.4   Establish industry leadership and effective management of the program

Each goal is discussed further below, with reference where appropriate to learning from the ACC Study. Attachment 3 provides a visual representation of Goal 5, related objectives and examples of possible strategies.

5.1   Identify the right young people

5.1.1   Which skills do we need?

Members of the industry consulted for this and other connected projects had a consistent message about the industry knowledge and technical skills that will be needed at a university trained level. They were also very clear about the need to actively focus on management and leadership skills. MLA, AMPC and Mintrac are in an ideal position to with industry leaders to monitor current and future needs and to use this information to influence aspects of a Young professionals program. Target areas in the processing area include engineering, food science, environmental science and IT.   In other parts of the supply chain, animal and rural science will continue to provide a useful entrée, but skills in areas such as agri-business are becoming vital. In the industry in general, will there be a need for a new generation of marketers to combat the anti red meat lobby?
Skills forecasts can be used to influence the university disciplines that are actively targeted, the companies that are approached to participate, the mentors and technical advisors employed etc.

Fig 5.1 Blueprint for Professional development in the red meat industry
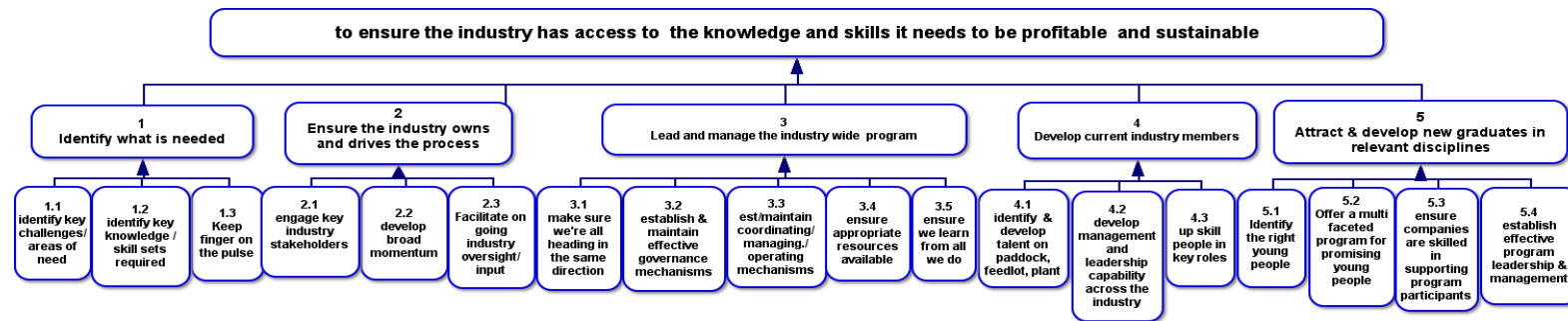
See Attachment 1 for the latest version of the full blueprint. This replaces an earlier version submitted with the report on the Engineering Network and Technical Tour.
The summary version above is reproduced over two pages in Attachment 2

5.1.2 Where should we source the young people?

Having identified the priority disciplines, how could young people be informed about the industry and the most appropriate drawn into the program?

Some groups have made it easy because they have already identified themselves. Young people from rural and regional backgrounds already know about aspects of the red meat industry. They are keen on seeking a career in some part of the industry, select agricultural subjects at school and/University and elect to participate in rural youth groups, such as those involved in cattle and meat judging. The most highly committed apply for scholarships offered by breeder associations and other rural groups and are selected for rural leadership programs, and/or become involved in the Intercollegiate Meat Judging Competition (ICMJ). These young people are also self-selecting for the industry. While the majority is more familiar with the front end of the industry, research conducted at the ICMJ demonstrates that they are open to the potential of other parts of the industry also.

ACC has established direct links with the ICMJ, with selected universities such as the University of New England, and more recently with several schools. While this suits the ACC predilection for selecting their own candidates, MLA could assist other companies by doing some of this legwork, and by establishing a data base of young people who have expressed an interest in the industry, maintaining contact with them, promoting the industry and advertising job opportunities.

MLA is already working with the ICMJ committee to develop the career promotion aspects of that competition, but there is also potential to run a specific Jobs forum each year in conjunction with meat companies. University students welcome similar career days held by other industries, and they are very well attended. The ICMJ connection could also be better exploited as a source of graduates. ICMJ coaches have often been ambassadors for Australia and the industry in the US competition. They are highly committed and prepared to give their time voluntarily to coaching and often to the committee as well. While ACC has recognised their value, there is potential to offer a formal link into the MLA sponsored program.

The Undergraduate program has proved very effective in tapping into engineering faculties and in a relatively short time has become over-subscribed. While this might be seen as a reason to cut back, on effort in this arena, is there a way of building on the contacts established with those who are not successful. It was beyond the scope of this project to explore this, or the current criteria for selection, but it may be fruitful for other parts of the program or for direct employment. Closer involvement of participating companies in the selection process may also yield new ways of utilising the program's ability to identify those whoa re least 'willing to give it a go". A comprehensive data base would make it possible to stay in touch with this group and apprise them of other opportunities. A national competition for engineers along the lines of the ICMJ might provide a way of seeing some of these contenders in action, and of promoting the industry to them. (Dog soccer has been suggested as a way of tapping into those interested in robotics).

Is it also time to focus on other disciplines. (Anecdotal evidence from the ACC study suggests that links into the food science discipline have not yet been well exploited)? If so, how could those young people identified be placed? If the program is to cater for an increased number of participants, MLA will need to consider encouraging companies to develop internal programs with clear goals and continuity so that they are actively working with MLA to make things work and to establish their own internal systems and structures to support the process. Without this, MLA staff will be constantly working on start up projects, many of which will have little chance of making any real difference at company level.

ACC is already exploring the School connection and would like to offer school based scholarships for young people who might then be sponsored to complete industry relevant university courses. While ACC senior management have justifiable reservations about asking for commitment at an early age, the current arrangements, with no bond, place the emphasis squarely on engaging a young person. Although there can never be any guarantees, if they like the industry and the company, they may well stay- or return at a later date.

5.1.3 Which attributes should we look for?

MLA should work with industry representatives to develop a clear set of criteria for selection to each part of the program, and there should be some guidelines for matching individuals with sites, projects and personnel. Although it will never be an exact science, these can be gradually refined on the basis of experience. Structured collection of feedback from participants and company representatives will be important in this regard.

Companies directly involved in the program should also be directly involved in selection of specific participants. They may wish to identify certain priorities within the general selection list to reflect their specific contexts and needs.

5.2   **Offer a multi faceted program for promising young people**

It is time to integrate the three existing and separate programs into one integrated approach. This also provides an opportunity to incorporate new programs and to link more effectively with other industry initiatives.

On the basis of discussions with industry personnel and drawing on the findings of the case study, a draft pictorial overview of a focused, integrated and streamlined program was developed and may be used as the basis for on-going discussion with industry personnel. (See Fig 5.2).

5.2.1 Key features

The program would:
- create clear, obvious pathways from school to post graduate employment in the industry with multiple exit and exit points
- offer a broad range of industry experiences, with the potential for participants to move between companies
- incorporate an external training program designed to:
  o recognise and build on a participant's prior knowledge and experience
  o support participants' movement from *novice* to *competent* in regard to industry and technical knowledge, and management and leadership skills
  o provide continuity for those moving from one stage of the program to another.
- draw on the knowledge and experience of industry members across as well as within companies, particularly in regard to sharing their insights on management and leadership.

While identifying young people within the university sector, the program would also actively seek to identify and provide opportunities for promising young people already in the industry.

In order to extend participants' experience and encourage them to develop a broader understanding, the new program would offer a range of opportunities for overseas postings, exchanges with other industries, and secondment to MLA further study. Further study might include Masters' programs, PhDs, or MBA.

There might also be opportunities for inter company exchanges. This would be supported by a contractual arrangement incorporating a commitment to stay within the industry for three years. The program should seek to develop options to enable high performing young people to move

between companies if a company is unable to provide the appropriate role and level of challenge. An option that could be explored further is the potential for an entity to employ a pool of graduates external to any individual company. Such a scheme might operate in a similar way to a group training company for apprentices

- An issue to be considered in all areas of the program concerns intellectual property. Participants should be subject to a contractual arrangement that recognises any previous IP they may bring to their placement, but clearly stipulates that ownership of anything produced during their participation in the program remains the property of the company and MLA. There may also be some value in issues related to access to information that is commercial in confidence.

5.2.2 Provide clear benefits for all stakeholders

All facets of the new look program should provide clear benefits for all stakeholders.
The current Undergraduate and Scholarship programs are meeting the needs of participants, but the graduate program needs considerable rethinking.

In order to attract companies to, and retain them in the new program, it will be important to demonstrate the benefits of their participation.   While financial benefits may be part of the package, it is important these should not be allowed to overshadow the recognition and importance of other benefits- particularly those pertaining to engaging a young person in the industry and supporting their learning and development within the industry context, and ensuring that their experience is so attractive that they will want to remain. While ACC managers are very clear about their priorities for the program, MLA may need to raise awareness in some companies – and to be careful about the stated and hidden messages in any reporting and promoting of outcomes.

5.2.3 Refocus program content and methodology

Whether a new streamlined program is developed, or the three programs remain separate, it is time to revisit the aims and content of the on and off-site PD components to better reflect the needs of a company and the background knowledge and interests of an increasingly diverse cohort of participants. Key questions to be addressed include:
- What DO we want participants in each part of the program to know more about and why?
- How do we ensure that all participants see the program as relevant to their needs, interests and contexts?
- What is the most effective way to facilitate their learning? Should it be part of the company program or the off site program? Should there be an experiential component? Should it be the basis for a project? What role might an external presenter, mentor or a coach play?

5.3   Ensure that companies are skilled in supporting program participants

Assuming that selection and placement programs are effective, no matter how good the external program may be, participants' experiences within a company will be pivotal in achieving program outcomes. The ACC study has identified several areas for attention.

5.3.1 The critical importance of a shared vision

There is strong support for the program within ACC at senior management level, and a close alignment between senior managers' beliefs and values and those that underpin the program in action. This is critical if a program is to be anything more than a one off 'event'.

While some middle managers working with participants also appeared to be on the same wave-length, this may have been more due to good luck than good management, and where this was

not in evidence, the program was quickly going off the rails. As the senior managers had become aware, middle managers (and possibly other staff) all needed to understand and share the vision, be committed to principles and practices underpinning the program and be very clear about the processes associated with the program.

Although it could be argued that the MLA managed components of the program have not met the company's needs and expectation, the external program has been adequate to get ACC started, and has been applied flexibly enough to assist the emergence of each subsequent iteration. However, anecdotal evidence suggests this outcome has not been repeated in other companies. It may be due to the fact that ACC has a group of senior managers with the vision, skills and courage to take the ideas further. The industry programs have helped them along an intended path.

The key question is: If a company wants to get real value from these programs, does it need to have a vision of what it wants to achieve and some idea of how these programs can help achieve this- or could the programs be used to help drive this sort of thinking?

Without some idea of *why* a company wants to take a student or graduate and of how this could fit into a bigger picture, it is hard to see how the experience of having one or two participants from the programs will leverage a change in thinking at company level, or lead to the establishment of a broader program, such as has occurred. Yet, unless a company is able to do this, the likelihood of a program participant staying on is likely to be significantly reduced.

Further to this, MLA may lose a lot of the ground gained for example, in the Undergraduate program. Introducing an undergraduate into a company that does not have a clear idea of what it wants from the program, short and longer term, and without appropriate support structures, will be nothing more than another 'event' to the poor sod who is given the responsibility for making it work. The event may be tolerated and managed by a busy manager as part of an already stressful workload. After a couple of years, these busy individuals will start wondering – quite rightly- why they are bothering. They will see benefits for the student, but little for the company or for themselves unless they were lucky enough to scope a project that delivered something spectacular. They may well decide to withdraw from the program altogether, and who could blame them? If this pattern is repeated in other companies, MLA will be struggling to find placements for the increasing number of applicants – and will be investing most of its energies in trying to attract new companies and help them get started.

5.3.2 Helping companies to ask the big questions

At the very least, MLA should build in a 'Big Picture' component to all programs, to encourage participating companies to consider how the programs might contribute to their company's broader goals, and reflect on what they learn from their participation. This might involve:

- A facilitated session with company senior and middle managers to identify their needs and expectations, focus their goals, establish shared principles and develop processes to support participants
- One or more action learning reflection sessions help at agreed points in the process. This may involve input from participants and other staff and may lead to adjustments in the process
- Debriefing and evaluation session at the end with lessons learnt compiled for the industry.

It may also be timely to identify a set of criteria for identifying companies most suitable to join the program. This could lead to the development of targeted strategies and clarity about a company's responsibilities as part of joining a program. Rather than chasing anyone who might express a mild interest, MLA might decide to focus effort on those most likely to contribute to the long-term

success of the strategy by providing effective placements over time and acting as models for other companies. A targeted strategy could be linked into other proposed industry initiatives – for example, companies that volunteer to join Communities of Practice focusing on specific areas they want to improve might take on students and graduates to contribute to a larger project.

5.4 Establish industry leadership and effective management of the program

While some MLA personnel have had a strong vision for the programs, this has not necessarily been shared widely, and the programs have been treated as something of an add-on. They have been used as a developmental experience for younger employees, but without clear leadership or mentoring. This, combined with several changes of personnel and periods of time without anyone appointed, means management of the various programs has been quite haphazard over the past several years. This is not an attack on those who have been involved. They have done their best with limited direction, background or resources and it is to their credit that the programs have reached the point they have.

It is now time for the industry to decide whether they want to actively build the knowledge and skills, and if so, whether to invest the resources required to implement a new improved program.

If such a move is to be effective it will require:
- Industry commitment and a higher profile for the program
- A group with the appropriate skills, knowledge and resources to make things happen
- A systematic approach to managing, monitoring and continuous improvement

5.4.1 Industry commitment and profile

This could be achieved as part of the proposal to bring together a group of key industry stakeholders in a forum to improve upon, and ultimately ratify the draft PD Blueprint and identify a set of agreed priorities. Findings from the ACC case study and input from the ACC CEO and other staff could provide useful background information and insights for forum participants regarding the potential of the program. Other companies that have been successfully involved in the programs could also be asked for input.

5.4.2 Highly skilled personnel

MLA will need to employ a group of people who between them have high-level expertise in the design and delivery of effective learning programs, industry knowledge and networks, and the ability to work with companies to consider their own Big Picture issues and design and monitor their own programs. While young project officers clearly have an important role to play, the program will need a mix of people with different levels of expertise. It could itself become a training ground for promising young people.

5.4.3 Establish and maintain the appropriate structures and systems

While some current systems appear to be working reasonably well, the case study identified some logistical issues to be addressed, possibly through the development of new systems

Start up processes
The need for a structured approach to help a company articulate its vision and support structures has already been discussed.
MLA and ACC between them should also consider developing a joint information pack that can be provided as part of a participant's induction and form part of on going interaction with their immediate manager so that everyone understands what is going to happen, what to expect, who is responsible for what and why. This will also ensure that the messages are consistent, and provide a way of holding all parties accountable if required.

Communication
Systems to facilitate communication and relationship building should include:
- Direct regular contact with all company personnel responsible for program participants. This may include HR manager, senior managers and middle managers.
- Forward planning and timely, regular communication with companies and participants to especially in regards to off site activities and allow time to organize attendance. This is especially important for those based in regional areas.
- Regular, specific feedback to participants and company representatives on any work competed as part of the program, such as projects or reports.

Monitoring and evaluation
MLA needs to institute formal processes to monitor and evaluate participation of individuals and companies. While this needs to be tailored somewhat to a participant's or a company's identified goals, MLA could develop a checklist to assist with the process, and develop a data gathering process as part of the startup process.

Data gathering should focus on a broad range of benefits, for example:
- Impact on costs
- Identification of information that may assist a company to take advantage of new opportunities
- Reduction of risk
- Staff internal development e.g. a competent staff member develops greater proficiency through role in inducting a novice
- Examples of participant growth and development.

While some individual projects have in the past identified costs and benefits, this has not been consistent or necessarily wide ranging. There is also scope to implement more systematic follow up to identify the influence of a project within a company over time. (Were the recommendations implemented? If so, how and what has happened as a result etc). Follow up at three months, six months and 12 months might also encourage a company not to side line taking acting on a report due to the pressure of day to day events, and would encourage deeper reflection on what the company has learned from the exercise and may help to ensure that companies continue to participate.

Managing information
As discussed earlier, e is a need for more effective knowledge management associated with the programs. Ares for further exploration include:
- A centralised database of all young people who demonstrate an interest in the red meat industry. (This could be via a range of avenues).

Promoting the program
As already discussed, the current promotion of the Undergraduate program is producing many responses, largely from engineering. However, there is a need to target other skills areas for this part of the program, and to better advertise the Scholarship and graduate programs. This may be done through establishing stronger links with specific entities rather than trying for some sort of mass advertising campaign.

To assist this process, it is time to revisit the promotional material available to ensure that it focuses on the benefits young people currently in the program (and their parents) find really valuable.

New packages of promotional material (paper and web based) could be developed, containing core material plus additional information targeted at specific groups. There may also be a need to move away from the standard MLA formats which a test group of young people did not find eye catching, interesting or particularly relevant. Although there have been internal concerns about the need for consistent branding, this may be counter productive if the branding becomes associated with boredom in the media savvy minds of the next generation.

6 Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The MLA/AMPC sponsored programs have had a significant impact on the development of an internal program at Australian Country Choice that brings promising young University trained people into the industry.

While the ACC scheme has developed gradually, with the effect of the industry sponsored programs, and the interaction between them, clearer in hindsight than at any particular point in time, there is evidence that:

- The Undergraduate projects kick-started the process by raising company awareness of the potential of young graduates across the supply chain. (The fact that several of the initial projects were so immediately and obviously useful was important, particularly as another was problematic)
- The scholarship program provided a means of 'keeping' some of the promising undergraduates, and of maintaining relationships with young people identified through the HR Manager's University connections, and more recently through involvement in the ICMJ
- While the cadetship program also provided a way of keeping young people identified through other programs within the company, it has mainly been used as a way of offering more to young graduates who have already signed on at the company and/or demonstrated their potential.

The internal ACC PD Scheme has evolved over the last 5 years and is still developing. It is clear that it would not have been established when it was, or taken on the shape it has, without the impetus of the MLA/AMPC sponsored industry programs. It is, however, also important to note that the relationship – and impacts- have been two way. ACC has been happy to share its experiences with others, and has provided extensive feedback and new ideas to MLA that are reflected in changes to the industry programs. (The learning from this case study is also likely to have significant impact on the next evolution of the industry program),

In this symbiotic relationship, the industry programs have acted as catalysts, suggesting possibilities that might not otherwise have been recognised, and reducing the company's risk when it came to putting new ideas into practice. ACC has been able to take on promising young people within a sponsored program. The sponsorship provides a degree of scaffolding to a company that likes to innovate but also welcomes ways of reducing risk.

A key outcome of the ACC experience has been the development of one overarching program. Although the connections between each aspects are still fairly loose, it is possible to see how this program could provide a pathway for young professionals with multiple entry and exit points, coordinated content, synergies between elements and networking between participants.

Whether a new integrated program is established or not, there are a number of areas in which the current programs could be improved. ACC should consider ways of directly involving the middle managers who supervise participants in the planning and reviewing of the program. There are also operational and financial issues between business units that were still to be resolved at the time of the interviews. As they seek to continue the program, they may also wish to revisit their appointment of a number of cadets in the farm/feedlot area and consider ways of expanding the number of cadets taken on in the processing area.

MLA and AMPC have done well to envisage and implement the programs, but the programs are unlikely to be able to continue successfully in their current format, and with current resources. It is time to consider what has been learnt from their rather ad hoc evolution and to seek wider support for a reconceptualised approach from within MLA and AMPC and amongst key industry stakeholders. The plans to involve industry members in a review of PD/skills development provide the ideal context for this to occur, and the findings of the ACC case study could be used to promote the potential of the young professionals programs as catalysts for innovation.

The Blueprint for industry professional development and the model for an integrated young professionals program developed for this project could provide a useful way of engaging industry members in setting goals and identifying priorities for action.

6.2   Recommendations

For ACC
- Clarify a range of issues, internal expectations and arrangements with particular attention to clarification of the roles and responsibilities of individual business units and ways to better involve middle managers
- Revisit and clarify beliefs about asking for a commitment from young people and the need for a probation system in order to design an effective company wide selection and placement system
- Identify the best ways to ensure that participants in each part of the ACC PD Scheme have appropriate levels of challenge built into their programs
- Collaborate with MLA and other industry members in the development of a streamlined, integrated industry program with clear goals and appropriate external program components

For MLA/AMPC
- Facilitate the development of an integrated program incorporating the Undergraduate, Scholarship and Graduate programs, with the potential for individuals to enter and exit at various points, and to move between companies where appropriate
- Seek support for this approach from industry leaders as part of the proposed forum to develop a shared vision and agreed priorities for industry capacity building
- Within the context of this shared vision, revisit the arrangements for off site support of the elements of the program in light of the issues raised at ACC:
  - o Refocus the content of the off site program to support the development of participants' broad understanding of the whole supply chain, and of the industry at a strategic level,
  - o Refocus the major elements of skills development on leader and leadership development.
  - o Develop a more targeted approach to the selection and oversight of mentors
  - o Clarify the mentoring role in different parts of the program, and consider the potential to involve industry members, particularly strong established leaders, in the mentoring of the next generation of young leaders
  - o Consider the need to introduce coaches into the graduate program.
- Develop a formal process to assist companies wishing to move beyond the hosting of an individual student towards a strategic capacity building process. Depending on a company's starting point, this might include:
  - o Advice on how to identify clear program goals aligned with the company's strategic direction
  - o Processes to ensure that senior and middle managers have agreed understandings about how the program will operate
  - o A checklist of logistical issues and ideas on how this might be addressed.

- Seek input from industry leaders on the value of introducing a formal Leadership program for current middle and senior managers, who in turn may become mentors or coaches of the next generation.

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8 Appendix 1: Literature review

This review involves a number of different aspects.

- While having a short to medium impact, the MLA/AMPC programs are intended to bring about long term change in industry capability. ACC is also aiming to influence the make up of its management team in the short term and to help build its leadership capacity in the longer term. workforce
- The programs focus on developing technical skills and knowledge, managerial and leadership skills and the industry understanding needed to contextualise these.
- The programs involve formal education and training components as well as learning on the job, project work and mentoring.

The Literature review provides an overview of the research, theories and models that have informed the development of the evaluation criteria and ideas for the future.

- **From novice to expert: the need for different learning experiences**

It is important to take into account the level of experience of the learner/participant in the design of any formal career development program.
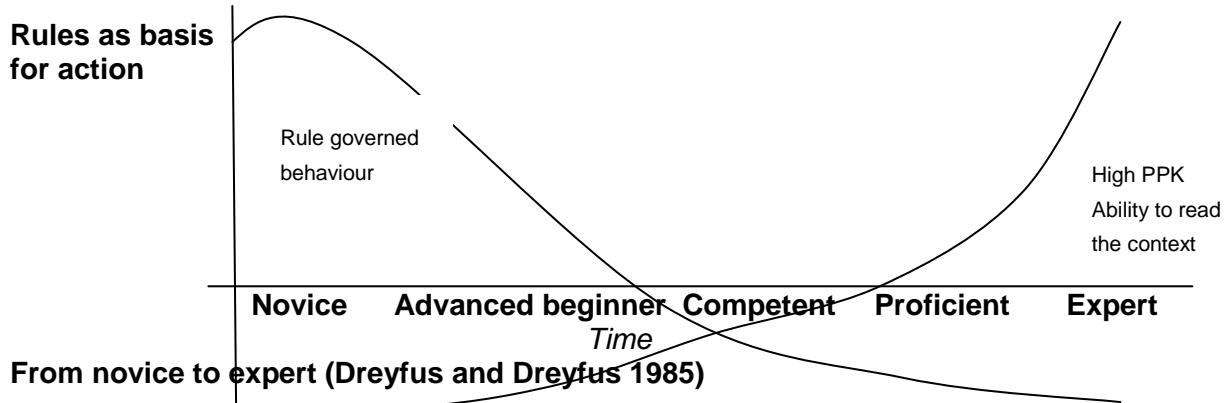
The grounded research of Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1985) identified a 'novice to expert' continuum that has significant implications for professional learning. In any area of learning they suggested that an individual moves through stages, beginning as a *novice,* and moving to *advanced beginner*, *competent, proficient* and finally *expert*. These stages were characterised by the nature and number of rules a person needed to function.

They found that *Novices* and *advanced beginners* needed clear, consistent rules to direct their behaviour. They needed to know exactly what to do, step by step because novices are dangerous! They don't know what they don't know. With practice and support, they reach the *competent* stage, which means they have internalised the rules and know how to operate effectively within them. They have learnt how to plan and organise activities, and feel able to cope with unpredictable situations by working out how to apply the rule. It is important to note that this usually takes several years.

Proficient performers have moved beyond this, and can deal with most exceptions to the rule, but they still need to check in with someone every so often to affirm that they are doing the right thing.

Experts know when to break the rules and when they must never be broken! Experts draw on their wealth of PPK to 'read' the context and quickly make complex decisions. An expert seems to know instinctively what to do in any situation, and has the expertise to perform at a high level. An expert also knows what he or she doesn't know and is always interested in learning more.

From Novice to Expert

**Rules as basis
for action**

Rule governed

behaviour

High PPK

Ability to read

the context

Novice   Advanced beginner Competent   Proficient   Expert
Time

From novice to expert (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1985)

The research on this model in many different job roles shows that:
- there are major differences in our need for rules at each stage on the continuum
- expertise depends on the context. We can be an expert in one area, competent in another and a novice in another
- a competent person is defined as one who knows the rules and can be trusted to follow them
- not everyone moves through all stages. Many people reach the *competent* stage and move no further unless given the right kinds of support
- we become temporarily deskilled when we move to a new context, (for example, if an expert mechanic becomes a plant manager he will be a novice as a manager).
- moving along the continuum takes time. Individuals need the opportunity to try things in practice, appropriate support and reflection.
- competent people are the best people to teach novices. Experts are the best people to teach competent people

A novice needs clear guidelines, and is best taught by someone who is competent- that is someone who knows the rules. They are the ideas people who stretch and challenge those at the competent stage so they can learn and grow. Experts are not however the best people to teach novices or advanced beginners because experts know too much (including when and how to break the rules!). Experts can become more skilled at sharing their knowledge if they are encouraged to reflect on, and articulate what they normally do instinctively, and this also increases their ability to tap into their own expertise.

Dreyfus and Dreyfus also found that expertise is contextual and that we can be expert in one field, competent in another and a novice somewhere else, even within one role. An expert engineer who is promoted may still be an expert engineer, but she is now a novice manager. An expert manager who moves to a new company becomes deskilled for a time, because he does not know the new 'rules' -he is a novice, although his ability to read the context and make connections with past experience, is likely to mean that he will move more speedily along the continuum than someone who has never been a manager before. Although this seems obvious, in many organisations the prevailing mental model is that expertise in one area is directly transferable, and few formal or informal support structures exist to assist novices.

Time and experience are key factors in moving along the continuum, and research has shown that it takes an average of 2 years for a person to move from novice to competent. There is a need for hands on experience that cannot be short cut very much. There is no guarantee that

anyone will move through all stages. Many people reach a point where they are competent in a certain area but never progress any further. An individual's progress is affected by their motivation, the opportunities they have has to test new behaviours, the quality and nature of the support they are given and, again, most importantly, individual's capacity for reflective practice.

This has implications for professional development in the meat industry, pointing to:
- the importance of identifying where an individual sits on the continuum
- the need for a high degree of support for novices, even if they are experts in another field
- the importance of providing appropriate supports for competent practitioners to move along the continuum
- the importance of promoting reflective practice for all
- the choice of teacher in different circumstances. Novices may be better taught by those who are competent than by experts, unless the expert is also an expert teacher, mentor or coach.
- the choice of professional development methodology, content, facilitator and mentor for people at different stages of their professional journey.
- the need to challenge the assumption that someone with many years' experience has necessarily developed a high degree of expertise – some people, particularly those who are not reflective, remain 'competent'

- **What influences professional learning?**

Although the term 'professional development' is still synonymous in some people's minds with attendance at externally delivered conferences, workshops and seminars, we will define it more broadly as, 'any activity that develops an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics'. (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation 1998).

The aim of professional development is to change behaviour. For this to occur, Kirkpatrick (1998) argues that an individual must:
- want to change
- know what to do and how to do it
- work in an appropriate climate, and
- be rewarded, intrinsically or extrinsically.

The literature suggests that professional development programs and activities must be deliberately designed to increase the potential for learning and behaviour change. Many researchers (Kutner et al 1997, Ferry & Ross Gordon 1998, Maldonado 2002, Smith et al 2003, Cranton & King 2003, Poell 2004) have identified the factors that facilitate this. They all say the same thing - the most effective professional development approaches are likely to:

- be interactive, sustained and intensive
- incorporate action learning
- acknowledge and actively draw on a participant's current expertise
- encourage inquiry into existing beliefs, assumptions and specific practices
- facilitate sharing of knowledge by peers
- involve specialists where appropriate

A meta-review of research by Maldonado (2002) identified a range of characteristics that distinguished effective professional development for practitioners in the schooling sector. Formal professional development was much more likely to lead to changes in professional behaviour when it was sustained and intensive. It needed to be conducted over an appropriate number of contact hours and span of time to allow for absorption, discussion and practice of new ideas and

information, and provide opportunities for follow-up, continuous reflection and evaluation. Smith et al (2003) found that professional development was more likely to spark a positive reaction if practitioners perceived it to be relevant to their needs, were strongly motivated to learn about the topic, and wanted to integrate new learning into their practice.

- **The critical importance of reflective practice**

Although attending courses and seminars can clearly play a role in raising awareness, sowing seeds and alerting participants to areas they may wish to pursue further, it is unlikely to bring about changes in professional practice in its own right. The most effective professional development encourages the reflective process. Similarly, the key to gaining expertise does not seem to reside in merely gaining experience, but in how the individual uses experience as a learning mechanism (Ferry & Ross-Gordon 1998, p.107). The research consistently shows that it is the ability to reflect, and the quality of that reflection, that makes all the difference.

In his Model of Human Action, Butler (1996) argues that there is little evidence that professional practice is much influenced by what he terms *public knowledge* – that which is made available in theories, policy directives, papers, manuals professional development workshops and quality assurance processes. Rather, a person's practice is based on their store of lived experience, or *personal practical knowledge,* which in turn is driven by their *world view,* the values, beliefs and assumptions that influence all thoughts and actions. PPK is highly resistant to change, so in fact, the strongest determinant of what a person will do tomorrow is what they did yesterday, (and the day before and the day before). To change behaviour, an individual must challenge their PPK and its underpinning values, beliefs and assumptions. Reflection-on- action (from Schon 1983) is the major way in which we can revisit, reframe and ultimately decide to change what we do, and why we do it.

The greatest leverage in the development of professional practice is the reading of one's own actions. (Butler 1996: 269)

Schon (1983) found that incorporating new knowledge is not a simple, straightforward transfer of information from one context to another. In exploring this further, Daley (2001. pp.44-48) compared professionals in four different fields, and found some interesting similarities and differences in the ways in which different professions went about making meaning from the knowledge presented in professional development programs.

All groups reported that such programs were often a mechanism for reaffirming and reinforcing what they already knew, and that new knowledge only became meaningful when they found a way to link it to their practice. Daley found that learning from professional development programs often changed once it was put into practice, and that this could have a profound impact on how professionals organised and thought about their work. Significantly, such paradigm-shifting experiences were only likely to occur when new approaches were put into action, and when practitioners reflected on their action.

Incorporating new knowledge is a recursive, transforming process, rather than a simple straightforward transfer of information from one context to another. (Daley 2001: 50)

This is what Butler (1996) refers to as 'moving from action to thought' or as Michael Fullan puts it, 'People must behave their way into new idea and skills not just think their way into them'. (Cited Edwards et al 1997, p.5)

Action learning offers a practical, systematic way of encouraging reflection and group interaction while managing a new idea through from concept to reality. Dick (1997) defines action learning as, 'a process in which a group of people come together more or less regularly to help each other to learn from their experiences'. The critical element is the adoption of a *systematic* approach to trying something, collecting data about what happens, reflecting on what has happened and

using the learning to change subsequent action to continually improve practice. It can be designed to accommodate people wherever they are on the novice to expert continuum.

Ferry and Ross Gordon (1998, p.2) conducted a study into whether reflection was a rudimentary problem-solving process that all individuals use at all stages of their professional lives, or a process that emerges with experience. They found that not all practitioners were reflective, and that reflective and non reflective people adopted profoundly different problem-solving processes. Non-reflective practitioners saw problem-solving as a job to be performed using a step-by-step scientific style process with little personal involvement. They quickly defined the problem by isolating surface symptoms that allowed them to solve it by applying a rule. In contrast, reflective practitioners spent time conceptualising the issues beyond their immediate parameters in order to define the real problem, and were, 'so actively involved in their decision-making process that the process was viewed as an ongoing cycle, an ever-expanding learning process …built upon past experience'. Reflective skills were closely connected to the development of expertise, but were not necessarily the result of years of experience – for example, the researchers found some novices who were highly effective reflectors with sophisticated problem-defining and solving skills.
The key to expertise does not seem to reside in merely gaining experience, but in how the individual uses experience as a learning mechanism (Ferry & Ross-Gordon 1998: 107).

Sveilby (cited in Tannock 2003, p10) found that, 'many professional people reach a professional plateau after a number of years in the same profession', suggesting that knowledge workers may feel they have learnt all there is to know after some 15 years in the same profession. However, perhaps this is more likely to be a characteristic of non-reflectors? Poell (2004) suggests that, 'a key objective for improving knowledge workers' professional development is to broaden their repertoire of learning strategies.' Learning to reflect is a critical tool in assisting professionals to keep developing their expertise without ever feeling bored or stale.

- **PD is not just about the individual**

Research shows that the environment within which someone works is likely to have a significant impact on the take-up of professional development opportunities, the application of new skills and learning within an individual's practice, and the degree of innovation that occurs across the organisation. (Hawke 2000). Therefore to bring about change, it is not enough to focus on the individual staff member. Effective strategies must be holistic, with professional development as one of a set of integrated strategies to bring about change. However, individual professional development is still part of the mix.

In evaluating the impact of a professional development program, Kirkpatrick (1998:pp.19-23) identifies four different levels of focus.

Level	Key questions
Reaction	What is a participant's immediate response to a professional development event?
Learning	What new knowledge or skills does a participant now have? Is there an identifiable change in attitude?
Behaviour	How far has behaviour changed in response to this learning?
Results	What is the evidence of impact on the organisation's business?

Evaluation of Professional Development (Kirkpatrick 1988)

- **Developing young professionals**
-

In' People Rules for Rocket Scientists, Edwards et al (1997, p.ix) offer a set of 'rules' for young professionals who are working with others, suggesting that 'our motivation as to fill a serious gap in the training and experience of many young professionals in the areas of people skills and self management', (a claim borne out by the lack of research in this area even 10 years later). They argue that the maximum leverage for professional growth comes from inside the self, leading to a need to focus on develop as an individual rather than trying to change others, and on the importance of rule governed behaviour in the early steps of learning.

Although they may be highly trained in an academic setting, young people entering the red meat industry have limited PPK in their chosen technical field, in the world of work generally and often in the red meat industry also. They are, after all, young! They haven't been around all that long in any capacity.

This suggests that an effective development program will provide:
- the rules a young person needs to need to get started in a new context
- the hands-on opportunities they need to experiment
- the reflective opportunities and practices that will enable them to learn from those experiences
- permission to make mistakes as long as they learn from them (this requires a developmental climate rather than one in which the focus is productivity and performance outcomes are the driver)
- on going support, the nature of which may vary depending on where they are on the novice to expert continuum.

The research informed the identification of a set of criteria for evaluating the potential of the current Undergraduate, Scholarship and Graduate programs to influence the learning - and behaviour change of participants.

Criteria for evaluating potential impact of professional development on participants

> **Professional development that facilitates learning/behaviour change in young professionals**
>
> - Acknowledges and connects with participants' prior knowledge and interests
>
> - Recognises participants' current levels of expertise (novice, competent, expert)
>
> - Facilitates interaction and knowledge sharing (between peers, with presenters and with technology)
>
> - Encourages deep reflection, including inquiry into existing beliefs, assumptions and specific practices
>
> - Involves specialists/experts where appropriate
>
> - Supports a sustained focus over time
>
> - Enables next steps/follow up, preferably through an action learning approach

- **Leadership development**

A review by Day (2000) offers insight into 50 years of research into leadership and leadership development. It highlights the need to distinguish between *leader* development and *leadership development*. He argues that leadership has traditionally been seen as an individual skill, with development programs therefore focusing on training the individual in the knowledge, skills and abilities associated with formal leadership roles, so that the individual begins to think and act in new ways (ibid pp. 583- 584). The emphasis is on building intrapersonal competence including self awareness, self regulation and self motivation. Day calls this *Leader development.*

In contrast, leadership can be seen a social practice that engages everyone. From this perspective, *leadership development* involves using social /relational systems to build commitment amongst members of a group that sees itself as a community of practice (Wenger 1998 cited in Day 2000 p.583). Central to this is commitment to mutual obligation, supported by reciprocated trust and respect (ibid p.585). The major focus of education and training in this model is on building and using interpersonal competence – the ability to understand others. The focus is on social awareness and social skills, with a recognition that effective development occurs in a social context.

Leadership development can be thought of as an integration strategy by helping people understand how to relate to others, coordinate their efforts, build commitments and develop extended social networks by applying self-understanding to social and organizational imperatives.(Day 2000 p.586)

Congar (1993, p.46) cautions that one of the biggest organisational challenges can be to reverse the tendency for leadership development to become a 'haphazard process' because it becomes so embedded in the on-going work of the organisation that there is no longer accountability or evaluation –leading to the loss of the original intention.

Comparison dimension	Leader	Leadership
Leadership model	Individual • Personal power • Knowledge • Trustworthiness	Relational • Commitments • Mutual respect • Trust
Competence base	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal
Skills	Self awareness • Emotional awareness • Self confidence • Accurate self image Self regulation • Self control • Trustworthiness • Personal responsibility Self motivation • Initiative • Commitment • Optimism	Social awareness • Empathy • Service orientation • Political awareness Social skills • Building bonds • Team orientation • Change catalyst • Conflict management

Leader development or Leadership development? (Day 2000 p.584)

While the *leader* and *leadership* development models could be seen as contrasting, Day suggests that they are complementary.

In building the leadership capacity, necessary to continually reinvent themselves, organisations need to attend to both individual and collective leadership development. Furthermore, these approaches must be linked with each other and connected to a broader organisational strategy (Hall & Seibert 21992, Latham & Seijts 1998) for maximum return on investment. (Day 2000 p583)

He also argues that leader/leadership development does not have to occur 'only through specially designed programs held in specific locations' (ibid p.586) but should be a continuous process. Supporting Moxley & O-Connor Wilson (1998), he suggests that:

'Leadership development in practice .. means helping people learn from their work rather than taking them away from their work to learn (ibid)

Leadership development strategies
In a survey of 350 companies involved in leadership development, strategies reported as being most successful included mentoring, action learning and 360 degree feedback (Giber et al 1999). Other strategies identified by Day as both popular and promising include coaching and networking. On the basis of available research into the effectiveness of these various leadership training strategies, Day (ibid pp .592-598) makes the following observations based on cited research

Coaching

- Executive coaching as a follow up to a training program was shown to increase productivity by 88% in public sector managers (Olivero, Bane and Kopelman 1997) cited Day p.592)
- 360 degree feedback can be undermined by people's well developed defence mechanisms and needs to be linked to follow up coaching
- Coaching effectiveness is enhanced to the degree that individuals are carefully selected for coaching, matched with a compatible coach and are willing to change.

Mentoring
- The opportunity to observe and interact with senior managers is a critical part of mentoring because it helps develop a sophisticated and strategic perspective on the organisation (p594).
- Research suggests that informal mentoring may have more positive benefits. There are also indications that gender influences mentoring outcomes, with males mentored by females having lower promotion rates than protégés of male mentors, and female proteges of female mentors having the lowest promotion rates of all. (Dreher and Cox 1996, Ragins & Cotton 1999)
- A study of ideal mentor characteristics identified listening and communication skills, the ability to read and understand others, honesty and trustworthiness (Allen & Poteet 1999). Attention needs to be paid to developing effective mentoring skills, and also to ensuring that there are no unintended side effects of mentoring , (for example, when a protégé becomes to closely aligned with a single senior executive leading to resentment by others, or an overreliance on the mentor by the protégé, or a protégé's fall from grace if the mentor falls from favour) (pp596)

Networking
- Leaders need to know more than *what* and *how*- they also need to know *who*. Networking exposes potential leaders to new ideas, challenges assumptions and encourages organisation members to form relationships and commitments external to their immediate work group.
- Research suggests that networking with peers offers particular benefits because of the degree of mutual obligation and the duration of the relationship (p597). Some peer relationships span a 30 year career (Kram & Isabllea 1986) as compared to a typical mentoring relationship which lasts 3 to 6 years (Kram 1985) or a coaching relationship which may only last 6 months (Levinson 1996).
- Managers who form ties with people in networks external to their own immediate circle benefit in terms of information and entrepreneurship (Burt 1992). However, to gain these benefits, an individual needs self awareness, motivation and self regulation skills and a well defined set of developmental and strategic objectives (p597).

Job experiences
- Development through job experiences pertains to how managers learn, undergo personal change and acquire leadership capacity as a result or roles, responsibilities and tasks encountered (McCauley & Brutus 1998)
- Job assignments have been shown to be helpful to managers in learning about building teams, how to be better strategic thinkers and how to gain valuable persuasion and influence skills (McCall, Lombardo & Morrison 1998) p598
- Some kinds of jobs are more developmental than others and associated with different kinds of learning (McCauley & Brutus 1998). The more developmental jobs included

'stretch' assignments that pat a manager in a new situation with unfamiliar responsibilities and may require him/her to build new relationships and tend to be associated with more meaningful learning

- A study of the role of succession planning found that 31%of promotions were considered developmental in nature Choosing the right 'stretch ' job for an individual is about using succession planning for intentional leadership development by making individual learning with organisational strategy (Hall & Seibert 1992). However, it is also important to recognise that some jobs may be too important for developmental assignments.
- The way in which influential organizational members react to failure will foster or undermine the development of a climate conducive to learning. Although learning from failure can help performance in the long run by enhancing an individual's resilience, studies suggest it is more common
- It is important to attend to all three aspects of assessment, challenge and support in developmental job assignments for senior managers to push maximum performance rather than take a developmental view (p599)
- Research into the impact of Job rotation (Campion, et al 1994) shows a range of skills gained e.g. broader perspective on the business (46%of respondents), adaptability and flexibility (31%), leadership skills (19%)

Action learning
- Action learning is based on the assumption that people learn most effectively when they work on real organisational problems (Revans 11980)
- Because action learning projects re tied to the business, individuals and problems should be carefully matched.
- Action learning goals that are aligned with individual goals result in meaningful developmental experiences
- Some research suggests that action learning projects can enhance team psychological safety (ie the feeling of members that they can take interpersonal risks). This links directly to leadership development because in a climate of high team psychological safety members are more likely to admit errors, ask for help and discus problems. Several studies have s linked this to improved productivity (Spreitzer, Noble, Mishra & Coole 1991)

Putting it all together
Many of these strategies work more effectively in concert. For example:
Feedback, mentoring, coaching and networking opportunities need to be linked in a way that produces an integrated leadership development system that ..[provides] assessment, challenge and support. By including these linked processes within the context of a developmental job assignment or an action learning project, the link between leader development and leadership development can be enhanced. Day 2000, pp.597-598)

9 Appendix 2: Applying the Evaluation Framework

Focus area	Factors that promote or undermine learning	MLA/AMPC Program in action at ACC		
		Undergraduate	*Scholarship*	*Graduate*
Novice to Expert	Where on the continuum for each context (technical. industry, workplace etc) ? Provision of appropriate rules, support, opportunities	Prepared to take people from diverse backgrounds Degree of support dependent on area but generally high	Preference for those with country /boarding school/ICMJ experience Recognition of novice status in multiple contexts Appropriate induction Support for family & student	Preference for those with industry and company experience Induction processes -mixed impact. Lack of clarity between HR & business units can lead to confusion
Job assignment	Matching process Developmental- stretch component Degree of challenge, support, assessment Job rotation	May not be in student's immediate area of knowledge/discipline	Within student's discipline High stretch associated with real life work, rural placement, some projects, work outside scope university training field	Mixture of high stretch associated with innovative new job roles and projects vs traditional' learn the ropes' feed lot management
Projects	Selection/ Matching process Alignment of project goals to meaningful individual goals Involvement of others	Attention to project design Company managers learnt from experience – able to make I= projects achievable in time frame - most projects produce results	Challenge to find projects that can produce meaningful outcomes. Largely developmental for student rather than of immediate value to company. Mostly seen as useful, relevant but some tightening may be needed re logistics.	Can be too embedded in day to day work- become busywork/a burden and this can undermine potential for reflection and learning
Reflective practice	Strategies Opportunity Support	HR manager, mentor & off site program all provide opportunities and encouragement for reflection	Some mentors valuable Interaction with immediate manager and/or with HR manager useful for some. Formal presentations, regular, specific timely feedback helps	Tend to be swamped by busyness Focus moves to productivity rather than development
Mentoring	Formal/informal Matching process With whom? (Senior manager/Technical expert etc) Mentoring skills Management of unintended side effects eg peer resentment, over- dependence	Formal relationship with external mentor - usually someone with relevant technical knowledge Are roles and responsibilities clarified with mentor or protégé? External mentor matching hit and miss	Most middle managers involved operating as effective mentors No evidence of unintended side effects (eg over- dependence) Uni mentors largely informal input MLA mentors not always in evidence – are they going to be part of the program or not?	Informal mentoring within company- mostly seen as supportive & useful Links to senior managers not structured Some resentment by other staff of those in the program – not clear if related to close connection between some graduates and certain senior managers

Focus area	Factors that promote or undermine learning	MLA/AMPC Program in action at ACC		
		Undergraduate	*Scholarship*	*Graduate*
				External mentor matching very hit and miss Lack of clarity re external mentor role- related to project rather than to other aspects of placement Questions re some mentors' understanding of mentoring role and skills to do it. Mismatch of some protege expectations with those of company/MLA
Coaching	With whom? Matching process When? Coaching skills?	n/a	HR manager acts as unofficial coach on occasion	Not part of program but most participants would like a formal coach to assist with the managerial aspects of their roles
Feedback	Quality Frequency Support structures etc	Reported useful feedback during the project and valuable feedback from senior managers at formal presentation- appreciate time given, careful listening provided respectfully	All scholarship recipients value and actively seek feedback. Comfortable with quality and nature of feedback – timely, specific and constructive	Mixed- established participants positive More recent participants have had major issues – mixed signals, etc
Networking	Peers External industry players	High value placed on off site contacts, sharing, friendships	Some would like to be involved in the off site undergrad program but not a priority given their full time study plus vacation work commitments	Getting off site challenging but valued- peer group contacts, sharing of ideas, friendships For those in regional areas very important to break isolation but uncomfortable about leaving on going jobs, some resentment from other staff & a perception of lack of support from some middle managers who see it as 'time off"
Formal PD	Content selection/relevance (eg Recognition of prior knowledge Methodology (Degree of interactivity, knowledge sharing, Encouragement of inquiry & deep reflection, sustained focus over time Involvement of experts as appropriate	MLA program largely seen as relevant though some care needs to be taken with participants from Ag /rural science Generic skills (report wtg, presentations) appreciated MLA follow up	Tailored PD with student input	Very hit and miss especially for those from rural disciplines Little recognition of prior knowledge Lack of continuity or follow up Some high spots but a lot not seen as relevant

Focus area	Factors that promote or undermine learning	MLA/AMPC Program in action at ACC		
		Undergraduate	*Scholarship*	*Graduate*
	Accessibility Follow up			
Leadership development	Focus on individual development – Intrapersonal skills (self awareness, self regulation, self motivation intrapersonal skills) Focus on relationships-Interpersonal skills (social awareness, social skills)	n/a	n/a	Ad hoc- has been some content but not a clear goal ACC managers and Cadets place highest priority on this but currently ad hoc and not clearly articulated as a goal of the program.
Organisational climate	Developmental or productivity focus (eg acceptance of failure, measurements of success) Alignment to broader organisational vision & strategy	Largely developmental focus but productivity contributions acknowledged and valued. Some questioning of whether the ROI is commensurate with the tie and energy required	Developmental focus – projects designed to broaden and deepen understanding but most successful from student perspective also lead to a concrete outcome	Mix of development and productivity – not always in balance. Tasks focus can swamp time and energy for Training & development Mixed messages from managers/other staff about going off site Personal conflict between involvement in program and dedication to job. ACC starting to rethink and reframe their vision for the program especially cadetships MLA /Industry needs to do the same