



final report

Project code: A.MIN.0084
Prepared by: Jodie Hummerston
MINTRAC
Date submitted: June 2009

PUBLISHED BY
Meat & Livestock Australia Limited
Locked Bag 991
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059

Research need for, and develop an induction skills set for meat processing plants

Milestone reports

Meat & Livestock Australia acknowledges the matching funds provided by the Australian Government and contributions from the Australian Meat Processor Corporation to support the research and development detailed in this publication.

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1 Background

This project had two Stages:

Stage 1: Research and report on the viability and implications of developing an Induction Skills Set for the meat processing industry

Stage 2: Develop, trial and submit for endorsement the Skills Set qualification

Induction has long been recognised as a critical component of employment commencement in a meat processing plant. Previous R&D projects undertaken by MINTRAC (Retention project, NESB projects), confirmed the importance of induction and assisted in the development of valuable induction tools which are now in widespread use across the industry. Induction for workers in the areas of Food Safety and OH&S also represents a legal requirement for any meat processing plant.

For most meat processing plants, induction is undertaken as part of the delivery of the core units within the *Certificate II in Meat Processing Traineeship*. However, this has been problematic, because to include induction as a formalised part of training, the new worker needs to be signed into the Traineeship upon commencement of employment (otherwise the RTO does not get State funding for the induction training).

Research has demonstrated that the most significant 'drop out' period for trainees is in the first three months of employment. This means that RTOs and employers who have signed on trainees at induction are incurring high non-completion rates, thus putting at risk their access to future traineeship funding.

If meat processing plants wait until the end of a three-month period before signing employees into a traineeship, all induction costs are carried by the company, and the opportunity to provide accredited induction training is missed. This sometimes leads to a shortened induction period which in the long-term is unsatisfactory for both the trainee and the company.

This project provides the opportunity to provide an accredited Induction Skills Set, which can be counted towards a full Traineeship, but which will not impact on traineeship statistics if the employee should leave within the first three months.

There are increasing opportunities to gain State funding for such skills sets. In this way both the RTO and the State Training Authorities can be winners. The RTOs have access to funding for induction training and STAs have better completion rates for traineeships.

It is also feasible that the Induction Skills Set can be used as preparatory training for the 'underemployed' and 'unemployed' workers who are identified as key priorities within the *Skilling Australia for the Future* Labour policy document. However, the industry also needs to be mindful of the risk of devaluing the Traineeship, and research will be used to identify the potential impact of an accredited Skills Set on the overall Traineeship, and access to traineeship funding across the meat industry.

2 Milestone requirement 1 – accreditation completed

There has been strong support across the industry for the Basic Meat Industry Training Skills Set as is evidenced in the minutes of the Training Manager Network Meetings from the last six months.

The Skills set has been added to the MTM07 Training Package Issues Register for discussion at the next Meat Standing Committee meeting. If approved by the committee it will be recommended for inclusion in the next version of the Training Package. At this stage, Agrifood Skills Australia has not yet confirmed when the next revision of the training package will commence and as such, nothing further can be done towards accreditation until then.

3 Milestone requirement 2 & 3 – trials completed & State funding arrangements approved

As discussed in the previous milestone report, two plants in WA and two in NSW were prepared to trial the program. An indication from the State Training Authorities was that funds would be allocated to piloting this program in both of these states. Unfortunately all state funding was frozen earlier this year due to the introduction of the Productivity Places Program. Eventually, in April the NSW Government withdrew their funding for this program as all their funds were being diverted to PPP.

WA DET finally made a decision in April to go ahead with the pilot and are currently developing contracts for the RTOs involved to ensure MINTRAC receives the statistics required to determine the effectiveness of the program. The contracts will state that statistics need to be collected over the next 18 months, or until the completion of a traineeship for each person signed up to the program. MINTRAC will meet with representatives from WA DET on Friday 5th June to confirm that the contracts meet industry and MINTRAC's needs. It is anticipated that the trials will commence shortly afterwards.

Fletchers International Exports have requested an initial 20 places in the program with the intention of signing up an additional twenty places if the first program goes well. Training Solutions Australia will require five to ten places for four different plants over four months. Food Safety Operations will also need a number of places once their training contracts with a major processor in WA are signed. Australian College of Training have shown some interest in the trial but doubt that their clients will enrol their workers in the training.