



final report

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Establishing the economic benefits of a meat industry trained workforce

Report from the Community Study involving Burrangong Meat Processors and the community of Young, NSW

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Executive summary

The Meat Industry first developed nationally accredited qualifications in 1998. Since that time the industry has demonstrated substantial commitment to the roll out and implementation of the qualifications at all levels across the workforce. While developed and facilitated through MINTRAC, this effort has been concentrated at company level, where most companies have either become enterprise Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) or developed strong relationships with external RTOs such as TAFEs or private RTOs.

In 2006, MLA commissioned In2it Consulting to undertake an evaluation of research and development undertaken by MINTRAC on behalf of the MLA. The final report¹ identified a number of benefits, for example financial returns, reduced disputation and lower staff turnover. Whilst acknowledging that the evidence supporting these claims is anecdotal, the report also indicated that there is limited public documentation available upon which to determine improved profitability and profitability.

In July 2006, AMPC and MLA funded a Research and Development project, to be undertaken by MINTRAC, entitled: *Establishing the economic benefits of a trained workforce*. While acknowledging the difficulty of evaluating and quantifying the 'value' of a trained workforce, this project sought to establish the basis for justifying a level of on-going industry investment to sustain access to this trained workforce.

The first stage of the research project involved quantitative research, including commissioning special data runs from the national statistical database to determine participation and completion rates in Australian Meat Industry qualifications. The data run also provided student and employer satisfaction statistics from national surveys conducted by NCVER.

Stage 2 of the project involved qualitative research to establish the benefits of this training in areas such as Industrial Relations, regulatory compliance, Occupational Health and Safety, individual students, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), workforce skills, innovation and retention. This research sought to establish outcomes in the areas of industry image, responsiveness to changed regulatory and market requirements, market image through product hygiene, transformation of industry culture, and industry attitudes to a collaborative culture.

A literature review was conducted to explore possible research models for identifying and quantifying return on investment into training. The model selected was a community study of a meat processing company which was a significant employer within the community, had a well-established training tradition which was likely to have had a flow on effect in the local community, was an AMPC member, and was a progressive company which is continually seeking to adopt innovation and improve business practices.

This community study aimed to establish the impact of the trained workforce on the individual, the company and the wider community. The company selected for the study was Burrangong Meat Processors, situated at Young in NSW. The Community Study was undertaken by spending one week in Young, with additional preparatory and follow-up research as required. The research tools used in the study included informed person feedback, focus groups, Likert scale scores, community conversations, rapid community appraisal and statistics.

¹ MLA (2006) Review of the MLA/AMPC Research and Development impact delivered to the red meat processing sector through MINTRAC 1993-2005

The study demonstrated that a large meatworks can have a significant impact on a regional community. The 400+ workforce of BMP has a significant effect on housing, schools, and the local economy of Young. The company itself is perceived to be a significant local employer contributing substantially to the local economy. The company's long-term commitment to providing structured training to its workforce is acknowledged within the company, by all levels of employees, as being critical to the productivity, regulatory compliance and capacity of the company to meet customer expectations. In addition, the company's management believes that the training program has contributed to their capacity to fill all positions with skilled labour, and has enabled the company to promote skilled suitable applicants to higher positions. Managers also believe that the training program has improved retention rates, the company's safety record and the attractiveness of the company as a suitable regional employer.

Individual workers regard the training program as an essential part of their employment, and value the opportunity to receive an accredited qualification. They acknowledge that training improves their productivity, skill level, capacity to multi-skill, self-confidence, and understanding of the career opportunities offered within the meat industry. Many workers regard the opportunities within the meat industry as being suitable employment options for their own children, either as an interim or 'work readiness option, an opportunity to gain a trade or, in some cases, a long-term career option.

Despite their levels of job satisfaction and training, BMP employees do not consciously promote their place of employment or training achievements within the local community. Nor, at present, does the company (although it has done so in the past). This means that while many BMP employees contribute substantially to the social structure of the community through participation in community, voluntary and sporting organisations, the fact that they are BMP employees and that their willingness to participate may be attributable in part to the training they have received at BMP, goes largely unnoticed. Even so, there is a perception within the community that BMP employees do contribute effectively to the social framework of the community, especially through sporting teams and community initiatives and projects. BMP as a whole is perceived to be a valued corporate citizen, despite the usual issues associated with running a meat processing plant within an expanding residential community.



Acknowledgments

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- Grant Edmonds, Managing Director, Burrangong Meat Processors
- Kim Noble, Financial Controller, Burrangong Meat Processors
- Tamara James, Human Resources Manager, Burrangong Meat Processors
- Dr Lewis Atkinson, Manager Innovation Strategy and Adoption, Meat and Livestock Australia.

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1 Background to the study

This community study aimed to establish the impact of the Burrangong Meat Processors trained workforce on:

- the individual
- the company
- the wider community.

The Meat Industry first developed nationally accredited qualifications in 1998. Since that time the industry has demonstrated substantial commitment to the roll out and implementation of the qualifications at all levels across the workforce. This effort has been concentrated at company level, where most companies have either become enterprise RTOs or developed strong relationships with external Registered Training Organisations such as TAFEs or private RTOs.

In addition the industry committed substantial funds to the industry-wide development of training excellence through professional development, development of training and assessment support materials, and the funding of research and development projects through MINTRAC². While it is widely acknowledged in the industry that the implementation of a comprehensive training system has reaped enormous benefits to the industry, the evidence has been predominantly anecdotal.

A literature review was conducted to explore possible research models for identifying and quantifying return on investment into training. This included a review of NCVER research data and methodologies in relation to establishing the economic benefit of training was conducted.

Findings from the Literature Review included:

- Most firms don't evaluate returns on training because of the perceived difficulties in qualifying training benefits, separating the effect of training from other factors that also improve performance and problems with gathering the data necessary to make and evaluation.³
- '...the research evidence demonstrates the importance of focusing on approaches which provide timely, useful and accessible information, rather than on traditional notions of rigor. Future activities should focus on providing enterprise decision-makers with qualitative and quantitative evidence of the returns from training, rather than attempting to provide absolute proof of the impact of training on enterprise productivity and profits.'⁴

In 2006, MLA commissioned In2it Consulting to undertake an evaluation of research and development undertaken by MINTRAC on behalf of the MLA. The study was undertaken in two stages and was designed to fit within a larger study involving a further four stages.

- Stage 1 – Descriptive analysis of MINTRAC's R&D Activities
- Stage 2 – Review MINTRAC R&D against program objectives

The consultant reviewed MINTRAC materials and project final reports, and interviewed more than fifty-four individuals in an effort to gather relevant data for the evaluation. Three case studies based on plants were developed to illustrate how the R&D impacted, and individual 'stories' were

² The National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council

³ nr1002: *Return on investment in training: Research findings*, Research at a glance summary, page 7.

⁴ Moy, J. & McDonald, R (2000). *Analysing enterprise returns on training*. NCVER, p18.

recorded as testimony to the impact on individuals. The final report⁵ identified a number of benefits, such as:

- financial returns, such as attraction of over \$300m from trainees since 1998
- reduced disputation
- lower staff turnover
- better quality product
- wider variety of product
- assured food safety
- higher profitability and reduced costs attributable in part to improved training and staff capability
- improved adoption of innovation
- increased adaptability, and
- greater professionalism within the industry.⁶

Whilst acknowledging that the evidence supporting these claims is anecdotal, the report also indicated that there is limited public documentation available upon which to determine improved profitability and profitability.

The report concluded:

'There is another study to be conducted in conjunction with this evaluation to establish the net economic benefit to the industry. Data collection for this element of the study enables us to make some comments based upon scattered evidence and anecdotal reporting.'⁷

In July 2006, AMPC and MLA funded a Research and Development project, to be undertaken by MINTRAC, entitled: *Establishing the economic benefits of a trained workforce*. While acknowledging the difficulty of evaluating and quantifying the 'value' of a trained workforce, this project sought to establish the basis for justifying a level of on-going industry investment to sustain access to this trained workforce.

It was originally proposed that this project, through both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, seek to establish the 'value' of a trained workforce to the Australian red meat industry.

The research was expected to involve:

- quantitative research, including commissioning special data runs from the national statistical database to determine participation and completion rates in Australian Meat Industry qualifications. The data run will also provide student and employer satisfaction statistics from national surveys conducted by NCVER.
- qualitative research to establish the benefits of this training in areas such as Industrial Relations, regulatory compliance, Occupational Health and Safety, individual students, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), workforce skills, innovation and retention. This research will seek to establish outcomes in the areas of industry image, responsiveness to changed regulatory and market requirements, market image through product hygiene, transformation of industry culture, and industry attitudes to a collaborative culture.

⁵ MLA (2006) Review of the MLA/AMPC Research and Development impact delivered to the red meat processing sector through MINTRAC 1993-2005.

⁶ Ibid. pages 49-57.

⁷ Ibid. page 49

Ongoing discussions with MLA questioned the intent and purposes of this study, and at one stage possibly disbanding of the project was considered. However, a further model was proposed for consideration by MLA, and this formed the basis of the community study.

In November 2006, the first project milestone report was completed. This report included the analysis of the special data runs mentioned in (1) above. The major findings of this analysis were:

2 Commencements and completions at module level

- There was a steady increase in enrolments at module level over the period, with a slight plateau in 2003/4. Completion rates are consistently high (over 95%).
- There was a steady increase in enrolment commencements and completions in remote locations throughout the period, with a completion rate of 99.7%.
- The highest level of meat industry enrolments (~58%) are likely to occur in rural locations. A steady increase of enrolments is demonstrated, with the completion rates consistently high.
- Approximately 24% of all meat industry enrolments occur in capital cities – these numbers include the majority of meat retailing apprentices, as well as a number of smallgoods and meat processing trainees.
- NESB enrolments are about 6% of total meat industry enrolments, and have demonstrated a steady increase (nearly trebled) in numbers in the period. Module completion rates are at 94%.
- Enrolments of Indigenous people are at about 4% of total enrolments for the period, with a significant increase in numbers between 2000 - 2005.
- Numbers of women undertaking modules in the meat industry have increased dramatically during the period 2000-2005, from ~20% total participants in 2000 to 47% in 2005.
- The most commonly enrolled units were the core units from Certificate II level, with 20,000+ enrolments/completions during the period of 2000-2005. After that the figures indicate a broad spread of enrolments across all units within the qualifications.

No units registered nil enrolments, suggesting that the spread of units within the training package adequately addresses requirements across the industry.

3 Traineeship and Apprenticeship participation rates

- There was a sharp increase in the number of commencements between 1998-2000. This is the period when the Australian meat industry qualifications were being first introduced and were actively promoted and supported through MEATRAC and MINTRAC. Despite a small drop in 2001, commencement numbers have remained consistently around 8,000 p/a since that time, and in fact peaked at 9,000 in 2005.
- Qualification completion rates have steadied at between 3000-3500, or 40%. When considered in an industry context, these figures suggest that many trainees will complete the units they are enrolled in while they are employed in the industry, but that the relatively low qualification completion rates reflect the high employment turnover experienced within the industry.

Student satisfaction

- The figures suggest a level of satisfaction commensurate with or above that of all industries. Graduates tended to indicate higher levels of satisfaction with their programs than module completers, with figures reasonably consistently above 80%, and the level of satisfaction is generally increasing.
- Satisfaction of module completers tends to be slightly below the satisfaction levels of graduates, but also demonstrate a general increase in levels of satisfaction.
- Satisfaction levels of both groups peaked in 2005 with 87% (graduates) and 85% (module completers).

Employer satisfaction

The 2005 Employer survey was a completely new survey and so is not comparable to previous years. Data is available at cross-industry level only.

- There is a consistently high level of importance attached to employing people with vocational qualifications across enterprises of all sizes in Australia.
- Over 75% employers consistently expressed satisfaction with employees who had vocational qualifications. Employers from small enterprises are marginally less satisfied than those from medium/large enterprises.
- There is a steady decline in the number of employers who do not have vocational qualifications as a job requirement, with small enterprises most likely to not require vocational qualifications. It is proposed that should these statistics have been gathered for the meat industry alone, then the figures would have been much lower, as anecdotally, MINTRAC experience is that there is widespread and increasing use of vocational qualifications across the whole of the meat industry.

Burrangong Meat Processors fits the typical meat industry training profile described by these findings, i.e.:

- it is in a regional location
- it has a relatively low proportion of Indigenous and NESB enrolments
- it demonstrates qualification completion rates at around 40%
- there is a high level of importance attached to the gaining of accredited qualifications by the employer
- there is a high level of satisfaction with the training program by employees.

The first milestone report also explored a number of research methodologies in the context of three challenges:

1. the need not to replicate the data already produced in the Peter Long⁸ report, and instead to build upon these findings
2. the need to identify a research model which would be accepted by the companies to be interviewed
3. to have a clear understanding of the purpose to which the research findings would be put.

The milestone report concluded:

1. there was a need to further substantiate those economic benefits which Peter Long was able to identify only anecdotally, in particular areas such as:

- financial returns, such as attraction of over \$300m from trainees since 1998
- reduced disputation

⁸ MLA 2006, Review of the MLA/AMPC Research and Development impact delivered to the red meat processing sector through MINTRAC - 1993-2005

- lower staff turnover
- better quality product
- wider variety of product
- assured food safety
- higher profitability and reduced costs attributable in part to improved training and staff capability
- improved adoption of innovation
- increased adaptability, and
- greater professionalism within the industry.

2. There were two research methodologies which could be adapted to enable the qualitative research aspect of the project to be undertaken:

- an adaptation of the Moy and McDonald taxonomy of possible training outcomes, using evidence sources such as participants, participants' supervisors, subordinates, customers, experts, and using data collection methods such as existing enterprise data sources, surveys, focus groups, interview and observation of employee and work performance
- the use of tools such as focus groups and Likert scales, as described in *Measuring impact – a project evaluation tool*⁹. [Attachment 1]

3. The report concluded that of the range of stakeholders likely to receive the report, the primary value would be to peak bodies such as AMIC, AMPC, AMIEU and MLA, and it would be of secondary value to Government (DEST, AFISC and STAs), MINTRAC, regulatory authorities, individual processing companies and RTOs.

Following the completion of the report, and after further discussions with MLA, it was decided that instead of proceeding with the original research proposal of working with five of the top twenty-five companies, that a community impact study involving one meat processing company would be developed, using the remaining project funds. MINTRAC submitted a proposal by the end of January 2007, and this was accepted by MLA, AMPC, and Burrangong Meat Processors (the subject of the study). The study took place in Young NSW from the 12-16th April 2007, and for a further day on the 6th June 2007.

⁹ Adult Community and Further Education (Victorian Government): *A Project Evaluation Tool*

4 The community of Young¹⁰

Established originally as a sheep station in 1826, the area was originally reserved for lambing ewes, the area was first known as 'Lambing Flat' because of its well-sheltered valley with reliable water supply.

Young was catapulted to forefront of Colonial New South Wales with the discovery of gold in 1860. Within 12 months, more than 20,000 miners descended on the region, including about 2,000 Chinese miners. The European miners deeply resented the Chinese and in 1861, riots began with the Chinese being driven from the fields time and time again. The riots were so violent and widespread that soldiers conducted a public reading of the Riot Act on 14th July 1861, this is reputed to be the only official reading in New South Wales' history.

In 1889, Young became the first town outside the capital cities in Australia to install electricity into the streets and homes of the township. Young is also acknowledged as the first Local Government Area to institute a rural school bus system in New South Wales.

Widely known as the 'Cherry Capital of Australia' the area now boasts many cherry and stone fruit orchards. Young is centrally located in the Hilltops wine and food region, and is increasingly recognised for producing quality cool climate wines, foods and offering an authentic country experience.

The Young abattoir has been in existence for about 100 years and originally operated as a small regional domestic processing plant until bought by Burrangong Meat Processors in 1985. Despite the significant role played by BMP in regional employment and the local economy and its standing as one of the top 25 meat processing plants in Australia, this is not a role readily promoted to visitors to the region. For example the following extract from the 'visityoung' website states:

"We have a very diverse economy including agriculture, horticulture, mining, light manufacturing, value adding, tourism, retail, service industries, health services to name but a few."

The same website itemises about twenty significant events since 2003 under a heading 'Progress at a glance'. There is no mention of the job opportunities created through the reopening of the beef and sheep floors at BMP, although mention is made of extensions to a feed mill complex, planning approval for a McDonalds, and the opening of a Reject Shop.

The latest estimated population of the Young district is 12,000 with a current estimated growth rate of 2.86% pa. In a retailing sense Young draws on a large area including Cootamundra, Cowra, Harden, Boorowa, Grenfell, Temora and to a lesser extent West Wyalong. Estimated combined populations are in excess of 55,000.

¹⁰ <http://www.visityoung.com.au/>



The main street of Young

Burrangong Meat Processors

This study focussed on Burrangong Meat Processors at Young in NSW. The company was selected for the following reasons:

- it is a significant employer within the community
- the company has a well-established training tradition which is likely to have had a flow-on effect in the local community
- the company is an AMPC member
- it is a progressive company which is continually seeking to adopt innovation and improve business practices.

Burrangong Meat Processors Pty Ltd, established in 1984, is owned and operated by The Edmonds Group, and describes itself as 'a progressive Australian meat processing and distribution company'.¹¹

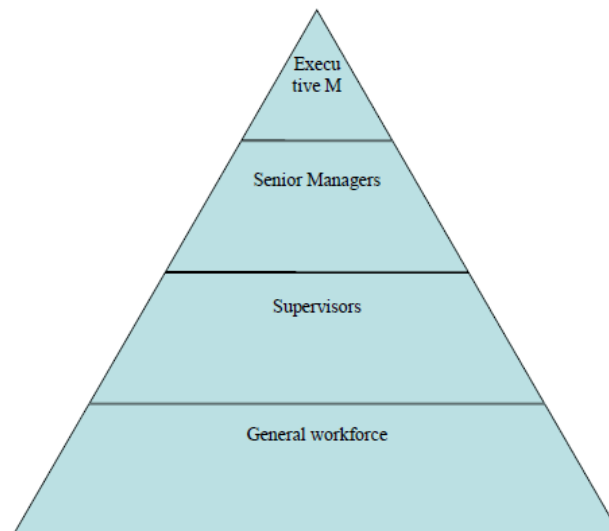
The Group operates a world-class processing plant at Young in south-western New South Wales. The Young operation supplies quality mutton and beef products to export markets and the Australian domestic market.

As the only NSW meat processor capable of processing all livestock species simultaneously, BMP is one of the most efficient meat processors in the state. Weekly production currently averages some 15,000 lambs/sheep, 1,000 cattle and 8,000 pigs. BMP's workforce is currently around 400. Most of the workforce is based in Young or in nearby towns such as Harden. In 2004, the plant suffered an extensive fire which led to the closure of the beef and sheep floors. While the plant attempted to provide ongoing employment for many of the staff during the rebuilding period, the workforce numbers declined from ~300 to 120. As the rebuilt floors came into operation (sheep in February 2006 and beef in October 2006– the pig floor did not close), so

¹¹ <http://www.bmpmeat.com.au>

the workforce numbers increased dramatically. The company elected to seek to employ an Australian workforce, rather than seek overseas migrants, and this led to an extensive local, regional and national recruitment campaign over a period of months.

The workforce at BMP is structured as follows:



Using a community impact multiplier of 3.5, this then means that Burrangong directly and indirectly contributes a local population of about 1400, or 2.5% of the total regional population. This means that the plant has a significant effect on the regional population, providing an important source of employment, and well as contributing substantially to the economic well-being of the community.



The Burrangong meat processing plant, Young NSW

5 Study methodology

The Community Study was undertaken by spending one week in Young, with additional preparatory and follow-up research as required.

The specific research tools used in the study were:

- informed person feedback
- focus groups
- Likert scale scores
- community conversations
- rapid community appraisal
- statistics.

These are described below:

Informed person feedback

This involved talking to people who have been sufficiently involved with Burrangong personnel to given an informed comment.

Examples of 'informed personnel' used for this project included:

- company managers and supervisors
- community groups/volunteers
- local government
- education and training personnel.

Focus groups

Focus groups involved interviews of four to six people. These were recorded one-hour meetings facilitated by the researcher who asked prompt questions as a means of instigating a flowing group discussion. Focus groups used in this project included BMP employees.

Likert scales

Individuals were asked to fill out a pre-developed opinion scoresheet at the end of their interviews/discussions. The responses remained anonymous. The scores derived from these scales can support the verbal opinions in a more definitive and measurable way. It was determined that a minimum of twenty-five responses was required to develop valid scores.

Twenty-six question sheets were completed by all individual interviewees (excluding BMP employees), as well as through a series of randomly selected street interviews.

A copy of the Likert scale question sheet is attached. [Attachment 2]

Community conversations

Community conversations are informal discussions with relatively small groups of people. There is a clear understanding that the discussions are deliberately targeted and views are not representative of the whole community.

Three community conversations were proposed in this project, identified and conducted as follows:

- 'educational' through invitations issued through schools newsletters and local newspaper – restricted to twenty places
- 'families' through direct invitation to three to four family groups of current or former BMP employees
- 'general' through general invitation to community through local media – restricted to twenty places.

Unfortunately, despite extensive advertising in the local newspaper [Attachment 3], insufficient responses were received to proceed with the 'educational' and 'general' focus groups. A change of HR personnel at BMP during the course of the project meant that it became logistically impossible to conduct a 'families' group. However, a community conversation was conducted with invited community organisation representatives.

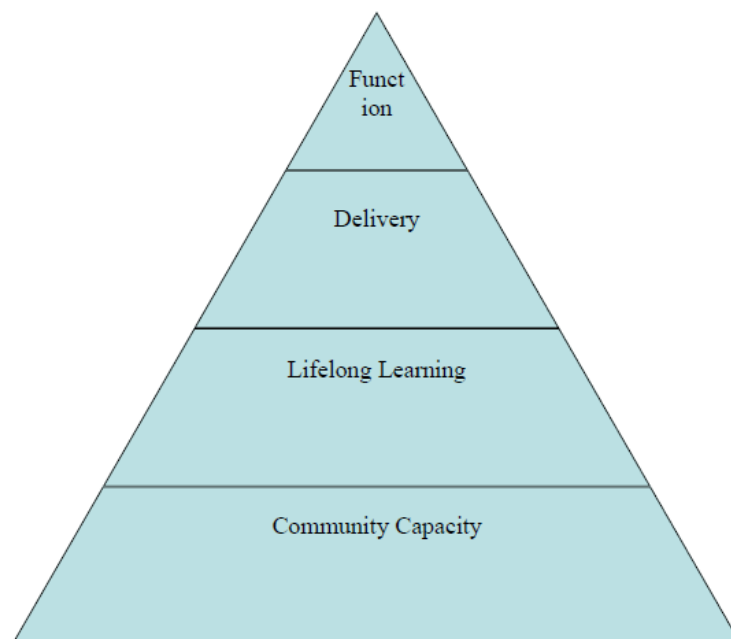
Rapid community appraisal

This involved the asking of five multiple choice questions [Attachment 4] to fourteen targeted small business within the community. The businesses were randomly selected, from the three main streets of the Young shopping and business precinct. While there was no previous knowledge by the interviewer on whether the business had any direct relationship with BMP, the businesses were selected on the basis of a slight possibility of a relationship, and covered services areas such as butchery, office supplies, pumping suppliers, refrigeration, tyres, electrical supplies, work wear, and hardware supplies.

Statistics

Statistics to be gathered in this project included current and historical training commencement and completion rates for Burrangong employees.

6 Community investigation framework matrix



1. Function

This tier involved evaluating the effectiveness of training such as specific training structure and activities, identification of training needs and the extent of networking among key stakeholders.

Issue	What you need to know	What you measure	How you measure it
What is the nature of training at Burrangong?	Scope and structure of training	Training system	Interviews with key personnel
	Role of training in company planning and performance	Approach to training in company planning	Interviews with key personnel and document review
	Level of stakeholder involvement	Number and role of stakeholders	Interviews with key personnel

2. Delivery

Evaluation at this tier measures the effect of training delivery and includes examination of the level of participation and contributions to changes in attitude and skills.

Issue	What you need to know	What you measure	How you measure it
What is the impact on training on the individual's work and company performance?	Participation rates	Commencement/ completion data	RTO statistics
	Impact on company performance	Views of key personnel	Informed person feedback Likert scale
	Impact on individual performance	Views of individuals Views of key personnel	Focus groups Informed person feedback Likert scale
	Impact on individuals' attitudes to training	Views of individuals	Focus groups Community conversation – families Likert scale

3. Lifelong learning

Evaluation at this tier provides feedback on the contribution of training at Burrangong to fostering lifelong learning. This includes informal everyday learning and the embracing of a culture of lifelong learning for individuals, groups and communities. At this level, the impact of learning that occurs through community groups, individuals and everyday interaction in communities is recognised.

Issue	What you need to know	What you measure	How you measure it
What is the impact of training at Burrangong on the lifelong learning of individuals?	Formal education participation by current BMP employees	Interest in higher/other qualifications	Focus groups Community conversations – education Likert scale
	Formal education participation by former B employees	Involvement in formal courses of study	Interviews with individuals Focus groups Likert scale
	Level of involvement of current employees in informal education	Expressed interest/involvement in ongoing learning	Focus groups Likert scale
	Level of involvement of former B employees in informal education	Expressed interest/involvement in ongoing learning	Focus groups Likert scale

4. Community capacity – (Quadruple Bottom Line)

This tier evaluates how training provided by Burrangong affects some of the social, economic, environmental and cultural conditions within the community. An improved environment might raise spirits and foster a more positive attitude towards the future. Informal and formal learning can underpin local economies, support social cohesion, help communities rethink issues and encourage citizens to anticipate and plan for change. These things build social capital and strengthen communities.

(a) Social

Issue	What you need to know	What you measure	How you measure it
What is the social impact of BMP employees in the Young community?	Current/ex BMP B employees in community: Overall? Leadership roles? Sporting roles? Volunteer organisations?	Opinion of community leaders Likelihood/transparency of involvement	Informed person feedback . Likert scale Community conversation - community

(b) Economic

Issue	What you need to know	What you measure	How you measure it
What is the economic impact of BMP B employees in the Young community?	Direct \$ impact Co and employees Destinations of ex-employees into areas such as small business etc	Economic data Views of community leaders	Community conversation – family/community Rapid community appraisal. Likert scale Statistics Informed person feedback

(c) Environmental

Issue	What you need to know	What you measure	How you measure it
What is the environmental impact of BMP employees in the Young community?	Community planning Community initiatives	Involvement of current/ex BMP employees	Community conversation – family/community Rapid community appraisal. Likert scale Statistics Informed person feedback

(d) cultural

Issue	What you need to know	What you measure	How you measure it
What is the cultural impact of BMP employees in the Young community?	Roles of current/ex BMP employees in local groups such as: Theatre Art Music Church groups Selected other groups identified in community directory	Involvement of current/ex BMP employees	Community conversation – family/community Rapid community appraisal. Likert scale Statistics Informed person feedback

7 Findings

1. Function - What is the nature of training at BMP?

This tier involves evaluating the effectiveness of training such as specific training structure and activities, identification of training needs and the extent of networking among key stakeholders.

Scope and structure of training

Training at BMP commences with a three-day induction program which introduces employees to the overall plant, Work Instructions and SOPs relevant to their areas of work, the Traineeship, and introductory OH&S and hygiene.

Internally, the training program is coordinated by the Human Resources Manager¹², who is responsible for the recruitment, induction and coordination of all training programs in association with Central West Community College. The Registered Training Organisation (RTO) is Central West Community College which has a branch based in the main street of Young, in conjunction with Central West Recruitment Services.

All new BMP employees are signed up as Trainees in the *Certificate II in Meat Processing* on commencement of employment. At the time of conducting the Community Study, traineeship numbers were at an all time high of 175 as a result of the intensive recruitment which had occurred earlier in the year after the reopening of the beef and sheep floors. Most delivery and assessment is conducted on-the-job: each area has dedicated trainers and all assessment is undertaken by staff from Central West Community College.

Beyond the Certificate II, continuing training into higher-level qualifications is available, although usually initiated by the employee themselves, with support from their supervisor. The RTO indicated that usually people likely to progress to a second qualification were identified during the period of their initial Traineeship, and then monitored and encouraged to continue.

Recently a number of opportunities to gain Certificate IV level qualifications were made available plant wide and all employees invited to apply. In addition, a wide range of ongoing professional development opportunities are offered across the plant: some involve participation in MINTRAC training programs, while others are initiated by the company itself.

Role of training in company planning and performance

All senior staff of the company expressed strong support for training and saw training as important to achieving the company business goals, and of considerable value to the individual in improving self-confidence and skill levels. Most indicated that they believed that the training program was largely compliance-driven, but that it was also important in keeping people.

Despite this, there was little evidence of a comprehensive training plan as part of the company's business planning process. In part this could well be because the company had recently dedicated all its efforts to a comprehensive recruitment campaign for staffing the re-opening sheep and beef floors. The Human Resources Manager did refer to a Training Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), but this was not provided to the researcher. Several supervisors and senior personnel acknowledged that the training program could be more structured. When asked how training outputs were measured, the Executive Management team identified audit

¹² At the time this study was conducted, the HR Manager was Tamara James. Tamara left the company soon after this study was completed. During the interview with the CEO, Grant Edmonds, he indicated that there was a possibility that the training function might be separated from the HR role

compliance and Scoretrak¹³ as direct means of measuring training effectiveness. Most supervisors and senior managers felt that OH&S, hygiene and productivity outcomes were directly linked to training. Of the two Supervisors groups interviewed, one group indicated that there was little accountability for success or failure of training among senior staff, and that mostly the success of a training program was up to HR and the individual. Similarly, several of the supervisors felt that it was not their role to encourage staff to undertake additional training; instead this was really up to the individual. Despite this, they all agreed that there were lots of success stories.

2. Delivery - What is the impact on training on the individual's work and company performance?

Evaluation at this tier measures the effect of training delivery and includes examination of the level of participation and contributions to changes in attitude and skills.

Participation rates

At the time of the study, there were 175 Trainees at BMP. The RTO confirmed that participation in training at any time was usually about 25% of the total workforce, although this number is likely to drop slightly when the current group completes their Certificate. The RTO also estimates that about 80% of the total workforce currently holds at least a Certificate II qualification.

Traineeship completion rates are currently at 41%, which is slightly above the State average (36%)¹⁴ for meat processing completions. The RTO advised that the principal reason for non-completion was cessation of employment at BMP.

Impact on company performance

Worker groups interviewed generally perceived that training had an important role in improving OH&S, Quality Assurance, hygiene and product efficiency. One group suggested that training contributed to a happier workforce because it meant workers could rotate between different jobs. Supervisor groups also cited OH&S, productivity and hygiene compliance as being the major impacts of training on company performance, but added that training was an important way of signing off SOPs and Work Instructions. Most supervisors also claimed that an important outcome of training was the capacity to multi-skill and to fill all positions with suitably qualified personnel.

Senior Managers, including the Managing Directors, echoed the OH&S, productivity and hygiene compliance outcomes, but added that training was an important way of achieving audit outcomes, with one Manager suggesting that the whole training program was really 'AQIS driven'. Several drew attention to the belief that a good training program was essential in the Company's quest to gain US accreditation. Community members generally agreed (85%) that the training program at BMP was likely to have a significant effect on company performance.

Impact on individual performance

The worker group interviewees agreed that it was important to receive training and that training was means of understanding what you were doing. To many, training was a way of multi-skilling and gaining in self-confidence, and this made them feel more valuable as a team member, as well as making the job more interesting.

¹³ Scoretrak is an information management system introduced by the company in 2006 as a performance tracking and management tool. Outcomes were reported on a regular basis to all employees, and were linked to bonuses.

¹⁴ NCVER *Traineeship and Apprenticeship commencements and completion statistics 2004-5*, special data run.

Some saw training as a means of gaining promotion and establishing a career path, although some felt that training opportunities within the company were not sufficiently transparent. Several others suggested that factors other than training contributed to seeking promotion. Some of the older workers said they were comfortable in their current positions, and that they felt that advancement and further training was really for the younger people. Workers also felt that training improved their productivity and loyalty to the company, and they had the confidence to provide guidance and assistance to other people.

Nearly all groups indicated that receiving training did not necessarily encourage people to stay, but that if through training the job was more enjoyable, then workers would be more likely to stay longer.

Supervisors also drew attention to the value of multi-skilling opportunities gained through training, and commented that this made for a happier workforce and greater teamwork. They also indicated that it made their capacity to fill incidental vacancies easier when they had staff skilled across a range of positions.

Some supervisors felt that training contributed to improved retention and increased the likelihood of a worker seeking promotion, although one group indicated that younger workers had differing priorities and the training received had little impact on retention or promotion.

The Human Resources Manager felt that for many workers the career benefits of training were not always immediately evident, and that it was important to 'sell' the links between training and promotional opportunities. However, she felt that this was gradually improving, as evidenced by the large number of applications (15) for a recently advertised opportunity to undertake a *Certificate III in Meat Processing (Meat Safety)*. The researcher had an opportunity to interview the former Human Resources Manager, who left the company in 2005. She was able to provide a useful historical perspective on the introduction of formal qualifications for slaughterers – a move which was originally viewed with some scepticism by supervisors. However, as some workers gradually become more qualified than the supervisors themselves, there was a shift in culture, and many more experienced workers started seeking an opportunity to fast-track and have existing skills recognised.

The Management group, including the senior executive, indicated that training contributed substantially to improved individual performance, particularly in the area of productivity, and increased the likelihood of retention and promotion. Grant Edmonds (Managing Director) indicated that for senior staff in particular, completion of training often meant that they would leave the company and seek promotional opportunities elsewhere in the meat industry. Despite the initial loss to the company, he indicated that this was a positive outcome for the meat industry overall, and that at least one former employee had now returned to BMP in a senior position after gaining additional experience elsewhere.

Community interviewees indicated that they felt that they either 'strongly agreed' (58%) or 'agreed' (38%) that a BMP employee who received training was likely to be a more effective and productive worker.

Impact on individuals' attitudes to training

Some of the older workers felt that training was wasted on them and was better off being offered to the younger workers. However, for most the opportunity to receive training was 'really important' as a means of knowing what they were doing.

Members of one group indicated that there was no real recognition of training achievement other than a morning tea, and that gaining formal qualifications wasn't really of any great value. This

was not a universal view, however. For a member of a different group who had worked in the industry for a number of years and had only recently been employed at BMP, this was the first time he had had an opportunity to 'get a bit of paper'. Others suggested that gaining a qualification was of importance to them. Some felt that training had no impact on their loyalty to the company, but this was not a universal view and several said that training made them feel part of a team and that it did increase their sense of loyalty to the company.

Supervisors and Managers felt that training tended to make workers more supportive of the company because they had a better understanding of how the company worked and operated. Several groups were asked if there was a 'tall poppy' syndrome in relation to training. However, responses universally indicated that even though some groups did seem to have more opportunities to 'get tickets' they were never ridiculed.

The former Human Resources Manager indicated she had been very 'picky' about choosing trainers, because she believed that this was critical in ensuring a positive response from workers to a training program. She expected trainers to spend a great deal of time on-site and to develop relationships with their trainees. Certainly the current trainer from Central West Community College appeared to be well-received by the workforce and several indicated they felt comfortable when he was on the floor assessing their performance.

3. Lifelong learning - What is the impact of training at Burrangong on the lifelong learning of individuals?

Evaluation at this tier provides feedback on the contribution of training at Burrangong to fostering lifelong learning. This includes informal everyday learning and the embracing of a culture of lifelong learning for individuals, groups and communities. At this level, the impact of learning that occurs through community groups, individuals and everyday interaction in communities is recognised.

Formal education participation by current BMP employees

Each of the worker focus groups were asked whether they, or any other employees, had undertaken, or were interested in undertaking additional formal education. There were a few examples where people within the groups knew of people who had undertaken additional study, such as Meat Inspection, nursing, computer studies. Generally however, this was not an area of great interest, and few saw company training programs as fostering a desire for additional formal educational qualifications.

The HR Manager, understandably, had a more holistic view of the study progression of employees, and indicated that while not a high percentage of people came in seeking additional opportunities, there were some. She indicated that there was a need for comprehensive career development planning across the company.

The supervisor groups were asked the same question and some indicated that tradespersons, in particular, had sometimes undertaken university or additional TAFE studies. Some suggested that the long and sometimes unpredictable working hours at BMP, plus family and mortgage commitments, acted as a deterrent to undertaking further education.

Opinion within the community was divided, with the largest group being 'undecided' (42%) on whether a BMP employee who had received training was likely to undertake additional formal education. However, a significant cohort 'agreed' (38%) with the statement.

Formal education participation by former B employees

Of the three former employees who were interviewed, two had no interest in pursuing any further qualifications (and had left before completing their Certificate II), and the third had recently

completed additional tertiary education. Mention was made during the focus groups of some former employees who had studied part-time whilst at the company and had then moved on once their qualifications/degrees had been completed. Community members indicated that they were either 'undecided' or 'agreed' that BMP employees were likely to undertake additional formal education.

Level of involvement of current employees in informal education

Each of the worker focus groups were asked whether they, or any other employees had undertaken, or were interested in undertaking, additional informal education. Examples such as photography and DIY courses were suggested. Most worker groups indicated that the hours worked prevented this type of involvement – this issue was foremost in the minds of a couple of the groups who had had a series of record 'kills' over the preceding few days, and were also experiencing some staff shortages which contributed to very long days. However, no-one from any of the groups had undertaken such courses, although several believed they had heard of people undertaking photography courses.

Similarly, the Supervisor groups were unable to identify any participation in informal education. A strong proportion of the community members indicated that they were 'undecided' (62%) about whether BMP employees were likely to participate in informal education such as interest or self-help courses.

4. Community capacity – (Quadruple Bottom Line)

This tier evaluates how training provided by BMP affects some of the social, economic, environmental and cultural conditions within the community. An improved environment might raise spirits and foster a more positive attitude towards the future. Informal and formal learning can underpin local economies, support social cohesion, help communities rethink issues and encourage citizens to anticipate and plan for change. These things build social capital and strengthen communities.

At the commencement of this study, and assumption was made that BMP employees freely disclosed and discussed their place of work when participating in the general community. However, quite a number of employees indicated that they rarely identified their place of work when they were in the community, instead referring to their job vaguely as being 'out of town'. This was evident in the community as well, as many respondents indicated that they wouldn't know if their sporting team mates, school parents etc worked at BMP.

This made it very difficult to quantify not only the level of participation in community activities by BMP employees, but also the impact of this participation.

(a) Social - What is the social impact of BMP employees in the Young community?

Some community individuals and groups were asked about their general impressions of the social impact that BMP employees made to the community. Comments most often drew attention to sporting participation by individuals or groups of workers, either at player or support-worker level. Several respondents also commented on the company sponsorship of community events such as the races and sporting teams. A number of individuals were identified as undertaking leadership roles as coaches, captains, radio commentators etc. Others suggested that employees were involved in volunteer organisations such as the Rural Fire Services and Police Boys. Mention was also made of former employees who had successfully set up small businesses within the community.

A significant proportion of the Likert respondents indicated that they 'agreed' (73%) that BMP employees made a significant contribution to the social framework of the community. However, when the questions were broken down to impressions of BMP employee involvement in specific areas, the results were a little different:

- community leadership roles – ‘undecided’ (69%)
- community sporting teams – ‘agree’ (58%)
- community volunteers organisations – ‘undecided’ (50%), although quite a number ‘agreed’ (31%)
- community planning – ‘undecided’ (54%)
- community action groups – largely ‘undecided’ (42%) although also an equal spread between ‘agree’ (27%), and ‘disagree’ (27%)
- community church groups - ‘undecided’ (54%), although 23% 'agreed'.

Worker focus groups were also asked to identify any areas of community involvement undertaken by themselves, or other workers. Examples of participation included school P&C, dirt track side cars, playing in a band, a wide range of sporting involvements, State Emergency Services, pony club, boxing, and ceramics. One or two indicated that they also ran their own small businesses. Several were identified as undertaking leadership roles such as coaching and captaincy. Several groups suggested that such participation was limited by working hours, especially when differing shift hours meant that finishing times were uncertain.

Some Supervisors and Management team members mentioned fundraising barbecues held by BMP, as well as community donations determined and awarded through the Consultative OH&S committee. Supervisors also identified hours of work as being a deterrent, although one suggested that having coaching commitments was a means of ensuring that he did get away from work.

Members of the Management Team believed that the training programs and work experience provided at BMP provided a good basis for the development of future leaders, and that many already participated in the community as sporting leaders and coaches. They felt that it was only when the impact of the 2006 shutdown took hold in the community that there was any real recognition of the important role BMP employees played in the community.

Each focus group was also asked if they knew of any significant achievement of any BMP employee, past or present. One employee was consistently identified by all groups as having a high fund-raising and volunteering profile in areas such as Relay for Life. A former Young Mayor had also been a BMP worker.

(b) Economic - What is the economic impact of BMP employees in the Young community?
Direct financial impact of the Company and its employees

An opening question with all community interviews was “What can you tell me about BMP?” As well as being an ice-breaker, this question was designed to gauge the type of information community members felt was important about the company and its employees. Responses typically addressed areas such as:

- a major employer which has grown from small beginnings
- an export company
- many mentioned the fire and the impact it had had on the community
- several mentioned job opportunities, in particular Traineeships
- an equal opportunity employer
- the value of the site
- odour emissions.

Overall, the researcher did not come across anyone in the community who did not know about the plant. General impressions of the economic value of BMP to the community were sought both through the Likert questionnaires and the Rapid Community Appraisal. Likert responses almost universally ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that BMP was a major Young enterprise (96%), that it

contributed substantially to the economy of Young (100%), that it offered employment opportunities (100%), and that it provided education and training for people in the community (85%).

The Rapid Community Appraisal respondents indicated that they regarded BMP as a major employer (93%), of significant economic value to the community (93%). Opinion was equally divided about which of these roles was the more important. Other interviewees within the community were invited to comment on how they rated the importance BMP to the Young community. Comments included:

- BMP is a major employer, although the survival of the town after the BMP fire suggested that there were significant other employment opportunities (this was a minority opinion)
- must have a really high turnover because they are always advertising for labouring positions
- there is a narrow scope of employment – all that is ever advertised are labouring positions
- the company is significant to the growth and survival of the whole town, particularly in times of drought
- contributes basic job skills to the whole town
- important local market for producers.

The Management Team suggested that the community probably didn't realise the full extent of the economic contribution of the company and its employees until the 2006 shutdown. They pointed out that many employees were rent and rate payers, and that the shops would have noticed a significant impact on levels of trade.

The Managing Director indicated that there were a number of former employees who ran pubs, electrical services and other local businesses.

(c) Environmental - What is the environmental impact of BMP employees in the Young community?

Community planning and initiatives

Discussions with the former Human Resources Manager indicated that she had participated extensively in local committees such as the Children's Medical Research Institute, and had actively sought to be a public face for BMP within the community, seeking to positively impact people's perceptions of BMP. BMPs' involvement in the hospital was recalled by a number of people within the community. However, no particular individual was nominated by community members as having any kind of impact on community planning or initiatives. When questioned as to their impression of such community involvement by BMP employees, the largest proportion (69%) was 'undecided'.

(d) Cultural - What is the cultural impact of BMP employees in the Young community?

Roles of current/ex BMP employees in local groups such as Theatre, art, music, and church groups.

BMP employees themselves identified a wide range of activities undertaken by individuals, including musicians, artists, ceramicists, and photographers. However, often they found it difficult to recall their names, and the details of involvement were vague. None of the employees who participated directly in the focus groups claimed to have any involvement in such activities.

Similarly, the community groups and individuals interviewed were unaware of any involvement or achievements of BMP employees. However, when asked if BMP employees were likely to be involved in community cultural groups such as theatre, arts and music, there was an equal spread of opinion between 'agree' (27%), 'undecided' (35%) and 'disagree' (35%).

One group suggested they would like to encourage greater involvement of BMP employees in their organisation, and asked advice about how to go about this. The company newsletter was suggested, but it appears that this had not been published for some time. When asked about church involvement, most indicated that they 'wouldn't know' and that church group participants would be unlikely to identify themselves anyway. Several did make mention of a Muslim group of staff, especially those involved in the halal slaughtering program.

Discussion

During the preparatory period for this study, several assumptions were made about the likely impact of a long term investment of training by a meat processor company. These included:

- that because of the size of the workforce within the local community, there would be a reasonably strong level of understanding of the training and career structures at BMP within the local community
- that there would be a reasonable level of awareness within local community groups that some members of the groups might be employees of BMP
- that as a result of training, members of the BMP workforce would have an increased level of self confidence
- that this self-confidence would translate into active participation and a willingness to undertake leadership roles within the local community
- that the company would actively promote the success stories of its workers within the BMP and wider community
- that as a result of training received at BMP, employees would have well informed career expectations for their own families and be actively involved in providing advice and support.

As the study progressed, it became clear that some of these assumptions were not correct, and this has impacted on the findings of the study.

The level of understanding of the training and career structures at BMP within the local community

There was a surprisingly high level of understanding of the training program at BMP within the local community. Most respondents were aware that the company offered Traineeships, and local businesses indicated that it was clearly evident that the people they dealt with from BMP had received training.

Over the past few years the company has extensively promoted Traineeships as part of its recruitment campaign to re-staff the new floors. This promotion has occurred both at the High School and through the local media. Prior to the new floors opening, the company held an open day for students and invited them to tour the premises – a rare opportunity since Q-fever inoculation is required to visit an operating plant. This move increased the awareness of the nature and availability of employment opportunities both within schools students and also with the careers advisory staff.

Since then, there has been an ongoing relationship with the High School. BMP and Central West Community College have made general presentations to the school, and an after-school work experience program has been implemented. There are currently no school-based traineeships, and the relationship between the school and BMP appears to be based more upon the efforts of single individuals than an established process.

The school also celebrates achievements of former pupils by publicising them on the window of the library – during the time this research was undertaken, the HR officer, a former student of the

High School, had recently graduated from Charles Sturt University, and her photograph and a newspaper article had been placed in the window. Despite this, the awareness of career structures within the meat industry was less evident.

BMP, as with most meat companies, tends to promote from within, so it is not usual for promotional positions to be publicised externally. This appears to have led to a perception within the local community that there are just labouring positions available (even though these may be regarded within the industry as 'skilled'), as it is these that they are most likely to see advertised. This is a perception that will have been consistently reinforced over the past couple of years as the company has sought to recruit large numbers of workers locally to staff the re-opening floors.

Awareness within local community groups that some members of the groups might be employees of BMP

This was one of the more surprising findings of the study. Almost universally, members of the community indicated that they wouldn't know if their colleagues, customers etc were members of the BMP workforce.

While such a finding might be expected of local business etc, where contact with customers is short and purpose driven, the researcher did expect to find a greater level of awareness in areas such as schools and community groups. However, the school representatives interviewed indicated that it would only be on a rare occasion that they would become aware that a parent might be a BMP employee. Similarly, community organisations also suggested that they would rarely know if a member was a BMP employee. Even the random interviews conducted on the street found few people who claimed to actually know a BMP employee, although many had heard of Grant Edmonds (Chief Executive).

The focus groups of BMP employees provided an explanation. Very few indicated that they discussed, or even disclosed, their place of work outside of the company. Many said that they just tell people they work 'out of town', or simply don't mention their place of work. The exceptions were the HR Managers (past and present) who both indicated that they actively promoted their role and place of employment within the local community. This finding does not necessarily suggest that employees were in any way embarrassed about their place of work - for the most part, employees suggested that having received training, they felt a sense of loyalty to the company, and most were proud of both their training achievements and skill levels.

However, it may suggest that employees were wary of community perceptions. The former HR Manager claimed that much of her time within the community was spent challenging negative perceptions about the nature of employment and BMP. Despite this, the researcher came across very little negativity about the nature of work and employment at BMP among community members. Although many suggested it was not a career of primary choice, most perceived employment at BMP as being well supported by accredited training and an acceptable employment option.

Level of self confidence among members of the BMP workforce as a result of training

This assumption was clearly confirmed during the interviews with the BMP workforce.

Every group indicated that as a result of training they had gained a high level of self confidence. Comments made included:

- increased level of confidence in ability to perform the task
- gives me the confidence to stand up for myself
- boosts your confidence

- feel competent in knowledge about the position – not frightened to tell other people if they are doing it wrong
- increases level of self-esteem.

A willingness to undertake participation and leadership roles within the local community

The reluctance of BMP employees to disclose their place of work outside of the organisation made it very difficult for the researcher to quantify the levels of community participation and leadership roles. Discussions with the employees revealed a fairly significant level of participation in sports and community volunteer organisations such as SES, RFS and P&Cs. Of these, a reasonable proportion also undertook voluntary leadership roles.

However, any knowledge of this type of participation was controlled by the willingness of the individual to speak openly about their roles in a variety of forums. Individual achievement at work and beyond is not currently celebrated or publicised in any way by the company itself, either through the company newsletter (not currently being published) or through the local press.

The former Training Manager suggested that the levels of self confidence gained through training programs may not necessarily lift trainees' confidence to a level of more open community participation. Most trainees do not go beyond a Certificate II level qualification, which concentrates predominantly on practical skill levels relevant to the processing floor. The development of interpersonal skills within this qualification focuses predominantly on teamwork and the clear and concise sharing of essential information in a workplace context. It is not until Certificate III level that training is underpinned more strongly with skills more readily transferable into a community context, for example, working with customers, problem solving, and applying knowledge of own role as part of a team.

Company promotion of the success stories of its workers within the BMP and wider community

Many employees, former employers and community members could recall active promotion by the company not only of its corporate community participation, but of achievements of individuals in the past. However, with changing personnel and the focus on other significant priorities such as recovering from the fire, rebuilding, re-staffing and re-opening of the new floors, much of this promotion has not been occurring over the past 2-3 years.

Some of the senior employees, plus local media and the RTO admitted that there was a need to re-introduce active promotion not only of company achievements but individual achievements through the re-introduction of the company newsletter and active promotion through the local media.

Employees' career expectations for their own families

As a result of having received training, most employees admitted to having become far more aware not only of the value of a qualification, but of the types of pathways and opportunities to them. A number of employees from the focus groups articulated very clear personal career plans including:

- I want to use my skills to travel Australia
- I want to retire at 40
- in 10 years I'd like to run the place
- I'd love to be a trainer, but it's very hard to get
- I'd really like to be a supervisor.

However, a significant proportion of those interviewed were workers in their 40's and 50's, who regarded employment at BMP as an end-of-career option, and expressed satisfaction with their

current job and skills level, with no desire to change. Each of the focus groups was asked about expectations of their own children (either presently or in the future).

Many respondents indicated that their desire was for their children to get a trade or similar formal qualification. Comments included:

- I want them to go and get a trade and not be dole bludgers
- get a trade, any trade. With a trade you can go overseas and do whatever you want
- I'd prefer my kids to get a trade – here would be OK
- this is a really good place to get a trade – there are lots of opportunities
- get a trade – can lead to lots of different directions and is good to fall back on, as well as being transferable outside the industry
- you can always fall back on an apprenticeship
- a trade is the best option.

The groups were also asked if they would encourage their own children to work at BMP. A significant number already had family members working at BMP and saw it as a positive means of gaining work skills and a formal qualification. Most indicated a preference that their children should view employment at BMP as a pathway to something else. Examples of responses include:

- working in the meat industry was good enough for my grandfather, it's good enough for me and it's good enough for my kids
- my daughter did work here and now works in an electrical repair shop
- I'm quite comfortable for them to work here - it's a good interim job
- a butcher would be a good trade – they could start here
- it's a good start as a stepping stone
- this is a good place to learn what work's about
- I have a son who works on the slaughter floor and is training to be a slaughterman
 - I'm quite pleased with that
- if they were unemployed I would bring my kids here as a stepping stone
- if my kids left school and were unemployed, I'd get them up here. Fair dinkum, this could be a good career
- I've a nephew who wants a job here as a means of getting money before entering the army
- it's good as a backstop job, not a long-term career
- I'd encourage my kids to get a traineeship and finish it – is a really good start
- at the most I want them to work and not be a dole bludger
- working here is a good basis for future leaders
- a meat industry qualification is great to fall back on if you go elsewhere.

Some, however, were very clear in wanting quite different educational and career outcomes for their children. Responses included:

- I'd prefer other avenues for my kids – they are capable of better things
- my kids have skills in different areas
- I suppose they could work in meat, but it's always indoors, and so cramped you fall over each other
- I want my kids to study hard and work hard and not end up in the same place as me
- I have two that work here, but I would have liked to see them do better
- definitely not at the abattoirs – I want them to have better than me
- they can do better – like a university course
- not meat workers on the floor

- when she turns 16 I'm going to bring her up on the floor and say 'listen, this is what happens to you if you don't listen in school'
- I want my kids to get to year 12 and get some sort of Certificate
- I don't want my kids to work here, not with the weather. It's too seasonal.
- further education, like sports medicine, where you can transfer the skills.

8 Conclusions

This study has demonstrated that a large meatworks can have a significant impact on a regional community. The 400+ workforce of BMP has a significant effect on housing, schools, and the local economy of Young. The company itself is perceived to be a significant local employer contributing substantially to the local economy.

The company's long-term commitment to providing structured training to its workforce is acknowledged within the company, by all levels of employees, as being critical to the productivity, regulatory compliance and capacity of the company to meet customer expectations. In addition, the company's management believes that the training program has contributed to their capacity to fill all positions with skilled labour, and has improved enabled the company to promote skilled suitable applicants to higher positions.

Managers also believe that the training program has improved retention rates, the company's safety record and the attractiveness of the company as a suitable regional employer.

Individual workers regard the training program as an essential part of their employment, and value the opportunity to receive an accredited qualification. They acknowledge that training improves their productivity, skill level, capacity to multi-skill, self-confidence, and understanding of the career opportunities offered within the meat industry. Many workers regard the opportunities within the meat industry as being suitable employment options for their own children, either as an interim or 'work readiness' option, an opportunity to gain a trade or, in some cases, a long-term career option.

Despite their levels of job satisfaction and training, BMP employees do not consciously promote their place of employment or training achievements within the local community. Nor, at present, does the company (although it has done so in the past). This means that while many BMP employers contribute substantially to the social structure of the community through participation in community, voluntary and sporting organisations, the fact that they are BMP employees and that their willingness to participate may be attributable in part to the training they have received at BMP, goes largely unnoticed within the community.

Even so, there is a perception within the community that BMP employees do contribute effectively to the social framework of the community, especially through sporting teams and community initiatives and projects. BMP as a whole is perceived to be a valued corporate citizen, despite the usual issues associated with running an abattoir within an expanding residential community.

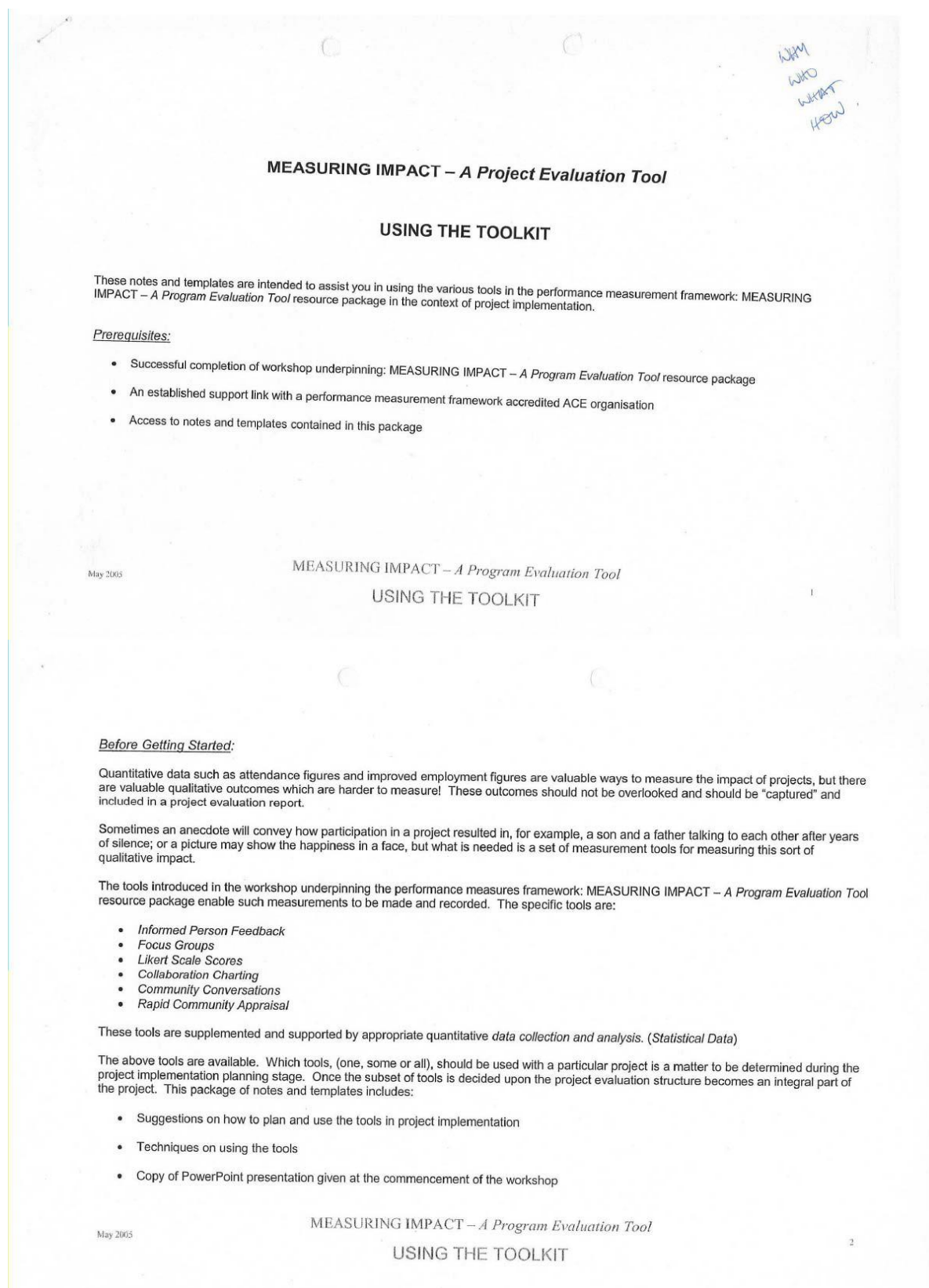
The findings of the study suggest that the success of the training program and the achievements of individual employees are perhaps one of the best-kept secrets of BMP. An appropriately targeted public relations campaign could serve to improve the community understanding of meat industry careers structures, celebrate the achievements of individual employees (especially as increasing numbers are gaining higher level qualifications), and improve the profile and recognition of BMP employees within the community.



Entrance to the Young High School

9 Attachements

9.1 Attachment 1: Measuring impact, a project evaluation tool



To Begin:

Recall from the workshop the four tiers at which the effectiveness of the project can be measured, i.e.

4. Community Capacity
3. Lifelong Learning
2. Delivery
1. Function

and the associated matrix for each.

On the following pages each matrix framework only is reproduced.

Complete each matrix in respect of the project being undertaken.

(It is best to not rush this exercise! Take time to consider and think through carefully. Involve all of the project team and any other relevant persons to explore and tease out just what should be included under each section. Be as precise and clear as possible. Remember this is the skeleton on which the project is based and all evidence collected is based on what is predicated in the matrix!)

- It is a useful exercise when you have completed each matrix to run it past an "outsider" to see if they can understand what you are attempting to do.
- It is a useful exercise when you have completed the matrix to allow an adversarial challenge to take place, i.e. allow the contents of the matrix to be challenged and you defend it. This will often result in a useful finetuning.
- It is a useful exercise when you have completed the matrix to allow it to settle for a while (say a week or two) and then revisit it with fresh eyes.

May 2005

MEASURING IMPACT – A Program Evaluation Tool

USING THE TOOLKIT

3

1. Function

THIS TIER INVOLVES EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ASPECTS OF FUNCTION SUCH AS SPECIFIC PROJECT ACTIVITIES, IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS AND THE EXTENT OF NETWORKING AMONG COLLABORATING ORGANISATIONS

Issue	What You Need To Know	What You Measure	How You Measure It

2. Delivery

EVALUATION AT THIS TIER MEASURES THE EFFECT OF YOUR DELIVERY OR ACTIONS AND INCLUDES EXAMINATION OF THE LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION, THE DELIVERY OF FORMAL & INFORMAL ACTIVITIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHANGES IN LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OR CHANGE OF ANY SORT

Issue	What You Need To Know	What You Measure	How You Measure It

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USING THE TOOLKIT

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3. Lifelong Learning

EVALUATION AT THIS TIER PROVIDES FEEDBACK ON THE PROJECT'S CONTRIBUTION TO FOSTERING LIFELONG LEARNING. THIS INCLUDES INFORMAL EVERYDAY LEARNING AND THE EMBRACING OF A CULTURE OF LIFELONG LEARNING FOR INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS & COMMUNITIES. HERE WE RECOGNISE THE IMPACT OF LEARNING THAT OCCURS THROUGH COMMUNITY GROUPS, INDIVIDUALS AND EVERYDAY AND EVERYDAY INTERACTION IN COMMUNITIES.

Issue	What You Need To Know	What You Measure	How You Measure It

4. Community Capacity – (Quadruple Bottom Line) – THIS TIER EVALUATES HOW THE PROJECT WILL AFFECT SOME OF THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL & CULTURAL CONDITIONS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY. AN IMPROVED ENVIRONMENT MIGHT RAISE SPIRITS & FOSTER A MORE POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FUTURE. INFORMAL & FORMAL LEARNING CAN UNDERPIN LOCAL ECONOMIES, SUPPORT SOCIAL COHESION, HELP COMMUNITIES RETHINK ISSUES AND ENCOURAGE CITIZENS TO ANTICIPATE & PLAN FOR CHANGE. THESE THINGS BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL & STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES.

a) Social

Issue	What You Need To Know	What You Measure	How You Measure It

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b) Economic

Issue	What You Need To Know	What You Measure	How You Measure It

c) Environmental

Issue	What You Need To Know	What You Measure	How You Measure It

d) Cultural

Issue	What You Need To Know	What You Measure	How You Measure It

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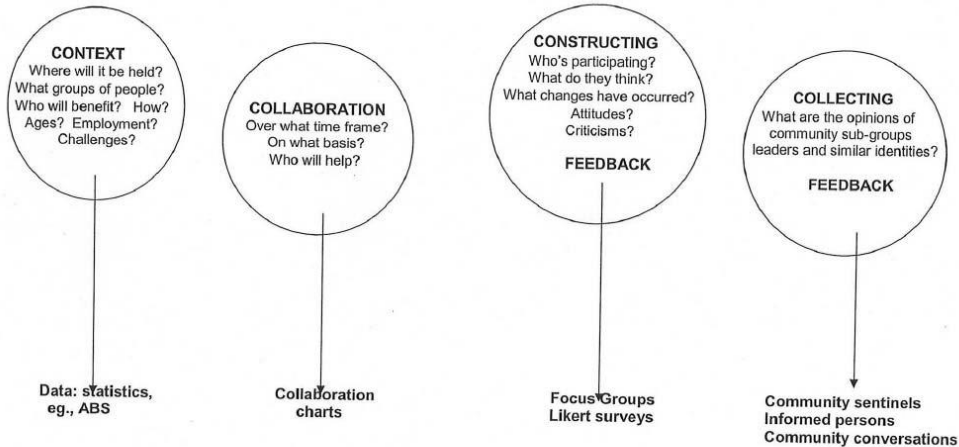
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SAMPLE CASE STUDY:

Evaluating the Learning Festival



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The Tools

Informed Person Feedback

Gaining feedback from the community by talking with "informed persons" means talking to people who have had enough contact with your project to give an **informed comment**, but who may not be directly involved.

Talking with "informed persons" is deliberately selective.

"Informed persons" should represent a good cross section of the community. To check whether or not you have a representative range of responses -

- record the main role of the person giving feedback, such as "small business owner", "retiree", "Secretary of Rotary Club" and so on.
- use a checklist such as the one at right to show that discussions have covered the main sectors in the community. People often will belong to more than one category, but only record one category per person. This category would be the main context in which they provided feedback.

One way to increase your number of informed persons is by "snowballing" – asking an interviewee to recommend other appropriate persons.

Generic Checklist

Community groups/Volunteers
Seniors
Young people
Working families
Unemployed
People with a disability
Sport and Recreation
Local Government
State Government
Business
Rural/Agriculture
Participant in education & training

My Checklist

**This is not an exhaustive list.*

Be careful to check gender & demographic balance if appropriate!

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The Tools

Focus Groups

Focus Groups are group interviews of 4 to 6 people, where prompt questions form the basis of a discussion. You need:

- a facilitator (a project team member or a community member) who asks the prompt questions as part of a flowing group discussion.
- a note taker
- as with individual discussions, "informed" people across a number of sectors can be invited to participate in the Focus Groups.
- meeting should last about 1½ hours and be held at a convenient time (e.g. after work). They are most successful in a social setting with some refreshment provided.

The aim is to stimulate responses that give insight into the full range of indicators without asking specific questions on each of the indicators. Sample prompt questions might be

1. Community Engagement

How has the project team and the local community engaged with each other?

2. Participation

How has the project influenced people's participation?

3. Needs and Options

Have any new options or opportunities occurred as a result of the project?

Planning the Session:

Facilitator: (Name)

Note-taker: (Name)

Report Preparation: (Name)

Report Follow-up: (Name)

Summative Summary is recorded. "Test" accuracy through check questioning and "read back" for group verification. Note any significant divergent minority views.

Community Engagement

Participation

Needs and Options

Recognising Everyday Activities as Learning

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4. Recognising Everyday Activities as Learning

Have attitudes on learning changed as a result of the project?

5. Community Capacity – Social

Has the project changed the social situation in the community? (e.g. the level of people's participation, or the development of new networks and contacts)

6. Community Capacity – Economic

What impact, if any, has the project had on the local economy? (e.g. employment or business activity)

7. Community Capacity – Environmental

Has the project contributed to any environmental outcomes?

8. Community Capacity – Cultural

Has the project prompted any cultural change?

Community Capacity – Social

Community Capacity – Economic

Community Capacity – Environmental

Community Capacity – Cultural

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The Tools

Likert Scales

Participants in Informed Person, Focus Groups, Community Conversations and the individual conversations of the Rapid Community Appraisal can be asked to fill out an opinion scoresheet such as a Likert Scale at the end of the discussion.

If the same people who gave responses in the discussion fill out the scoresheet, the scores can support the verbal opinions in a more definitive and measurable way.

People may be asked to score the extent to which they feel, for example, networks have changed in the community as a result of the activities of your project (to the exclusion of all other influences).

- Scoring takes about 5 minutes.
- Scores from at least 20 people are desirable for reasonable conclusions to be made.
- The scoresheet includes questions on each appropriate indicator in the framework.
- The questions are usually different from, and more specific than, the more open ended prompt questions used in the discussion itself.
- It is important that if people don't know enough to give an answer that they tick the "don't know" box. This needs to be emphasised when they fill out the score sheet.
- People also need to do the scoring anonymously and not be influenced in any way to tell you what you want to hear.
- Bar graphs can be used to illustrate Likert scale responses.

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The Tools

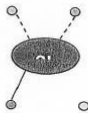
Collaboration Charts

A very good picture is gained by using collaboration charts, particularly if the groups are drawn in the same relative position, as in the example below.

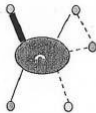
Likely collaborating groups are identified, and represented in a diagram on a whiteboard or butchers paper. The team then draws lines between the groups to represent relationships using some consensus method.

Lines are drawn with different thickness to illustrate the strength of the relationship:

No relationship



No line



Communication
Communication and/or some collaborative activities
Frequent communication and/or active collaboration



Another chart is drawn after an agreed interval (usually 6 to 12 months), and the changes noted. A series of charts over time track relationships.

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The Tools

Community Conversations

Community Conversations are informal discussions with relatively small groups of people. There is a clear understanding that the discussions are deliberately targeted and views are not representative of the whole community.

Your project team identifies various sub-communities in the local community, and key local people or groups in each sub-community are identified and invited to contact group members or to convene meetings where issues can be discussed with the project team.

One option is for team members themselves to act as "gateways" to the sub-communities they represent. Key people are identified and invited personally to a discussion. However, an open invitation is also made to the community at large through the media, school newsletters or local communication networks.

Alternatively, key members of sub-communities can agree to talk individually with their group using prompt questions, Likert Scales or other methodologies, and report back to you.

Who would you select?

How would you identify these people?

Criteria?

Verifying selection?

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The Tools

Rapid Community Appraisal

Rapid Community Appraisal involves a team of 2 to 20 people conducting an intensive series of personal discussions and meetings with a range of community members.

This technique could be adapted to collate information on criteria in the evaluation framework such as using prompt questions in discussions.

An appraisal involves prearranged discussions with people in businesses, community organisations or local government.

It can also include impromptu discussions with community members.

An appraisal can take from a few hours to several days.

For example a squad of volunteers can be sent around with clipboards asking a single question on a Community Fete Day, a Sports Event, a Public Barbecue and so on.

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The Tools

Statistics

Traditional stats and charts are still an essential tool!

Generally one needs:

- A Basic Demographic Profile on the community in which your project is based. Choose from population, age structure, ethnicity, language spoken at home, individual income, employment by industry, educational attainment.
- A Demographic Profile on your target group. Choose from stats on numbers in appropriate formal and informal organisations, stakeholders, age profile, mobility, educational background, employment status, details of current activity levels.

If there is a difference between the two profiles that might be important.

Use charts and graphs if they add to a story and make for easier interpretation "at a glance". (Be sure that any visual representation includes an interpretive statement). **Data for the Demographic**

Profile can be obtained from:

- local government
- any major partnership body
- a local LLEN. For LLENStat: www.llen.vic.gov.au
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics: www.abs.gov.au
- State and Federal MPs

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Keeping Track

Once the matrix has been completed it is useful to tease out and identify each specific major and/or key task/activity to be undertaken.

To assist in this it is useful to use a *Project – Task/Activity Checklist* for each such as the one on the following page.

The check list can be used for a number of purposes including:

- Ensuring all tasks/activities are identified
- Keeping track of project progress
- Evidence of planning & process
- Review and planning
- Apportioning workload
- Mini evaluation

The above list is not exhaustive.

- It is useful once each Project – Task/Activity Checklist is filled in that all of those who will have an involvement in undertaking the task/activity are "walked through" the sheet and each aspect fully discussed. This will also usually prove to be an opportunity for some finetuning

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9.2 Attachment 2: Likert scale question sheet and findings

Starter questions

(community)

How long have you lived in the Young community?

<1yr;	2-5yrs	6-10yrs	>10 yrs
2	4	6	14

Have you heard of the Burrangong Meat Works?

Yes	No
26	

Select respondent category (tick)

BMP Employee	BMP Manager	BMP Family member	Young community member
			26

	5	4	3	2	1
	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree
1 BMP is a major Young business enterprise.	18 69%	7 27%	1 4%		
2 BMP is important to the local community because it offers employment opportunities.	24 92%	2 8%			
3 BMP is important to the local community because contributes substantially to the economy of Young.	22 85%	4 15%			
4 BMP is important to the local community because it provides training and education for people in our community.	13 50%	9 35%	4 15%		
5 BMP employs more than 200 people.	13 50%	3 12%	10 38%		


6	More than 50% of the BMP workforce has been employed by the company for more than two years.	4	4	12	6
		15%	15%	46%	24%
7	All workers at BMP undertake formal training.	7	10	9	
		27%	38%	35%	
8	The workforce training program at BMP has a significant impact on company performance	7	15	3	1
		27%	58%	12%	4%
9	A BMP employee who receives training is likely to be a more effective and productive worker.	15	10	1	
		58%	38%	4%	
10	Training received at BMP is likely to be of benefit to an employee if they leave the company to seek work elsewhere in the meat industry.	12	13	1	
		46%	50%	4%	
11	Training received at BMP is likely to be of benefit to an employee if they leave the company to seek work in positions not associated with the meat industry.	9	10	3	4
		35%	38%	12%	15%
12	ABMP employee who has received formal training is likely to undertake additional formal education.	2	9	11	4
		8%	35%	42%	15%
13	BMP employees are likely to participate in informal education such as interest or self-help courses?	1	6	16	3
		4%	23%	62%	12%
14	BMP employees make a significant contribution to the social framework of the	2	17	6	1

	Young community.				
		8%	65%	23%	4%
15	BMP employees are likely to undertake community leadership roles.	1	3	18	4
		4%	12%	69%	15%
16	BMP employees are likely to be involved in community sporting teams.	4	15	7	
		15%	58%	27%	
17	BMP employees are likely to be involved in community volunteer organisations.	2	8	13	3
		8%	31%	50%	12%
18	BMP employees are likely to be involved in community planning.	1	3	14	8
		4%	12%	54%	31%
19	BMP employees are likely to be involved in community initiatives and action groups.	1	7	11	7
		4%	27%	42%	27%
20	BMP employees are likely to be involved in community cultural groups such as theatre, arts and music	1	7	9	9
		4%	27%	35%	35%
21	BMP r employees are likely to be involved in community church groups.	1	6	14	5
		4%	23%	54%	19%

9.3 Attachment 3: *Young Witness Advertising*

Invitation to contribute to a community research project

Residents of the Young Community are invited to nominate to contribute to a meat industry research and development project.




The National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council (MINTRAC) has been funded to undertake a one-week study in a NSW community (Young) where a meat processing plant (Burrangong Meat Processors) comprises a significant component of the local economy.

The study seeks to establish the social, economic and communal impact of the company investment into training for the individual, the company and the community.

You may nominate to be part of one of two groups:


- **education group:** Monday 16th April from 5.00 - 6.30pm - this group will discuss the impact of BMP training programs on the education interests and aspirations of Young residents



OR

- **general group:** Tuesday 17th April from 7.00-8.30pm. This group will discuss the social and community impact of BMP and its employees.

The final report will be presented to Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA), Burrangong Meat Processors (BMP) and the Australian Meat Processor's Corporation (AMPC).



You may nominate by telephoning Jenny Kroonstuiwer on 1800 817 462, or by email to jkroonstuiwer@mintrac.com.au. Further information will be provided after the final groups have been identified.

9.4 Attachment 4: Local Business rapid community appraisal and findings

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
1 my business deals	directly with BMP on a regular basis	directly with BMP on an occasional basis	does not deal with BMP		
	10 71%	1 7%	3 22%		
How would you rate the importance of BMP to your business?	BMP is a major direct customer	BMP's employees are my customers	BMP is of some importance to my business	BMP has no impact on my business	
2	6 43%	0 0%	6 43%	2 14%	
3 The people I deal with from BMP have	obviously received training for their job role	may have received some training	I wouldn't know if they have received any training		
	6 43%	4 28.5%	4 28.5%		
How would you rate the importance of BMP to the Young Community?	Major employer	\$\$ to the community	don't know		
4	13 93%	13 93%	1 7%		
I believe that BMP is most important in our local community because it	is a significant employer of local labour	contributes substantially to the local economy of Young	provides a market for our local farmers and producers	trains and upskills people in our community	can't discriminate- all of the above
5	5 36%	5 36%	0 0%	1 7%	3 21%