

27 February 2023

Jobs and Skills Australia Discussion Paper
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601
Via: JSAengagement@dewr.gov.au

Dear Jobs and Skills Australia Engagement Team,

RE: Jobs and Skills Australia Discussion Paper

GrainGrowers is a voice for Australian grain farmers with grower members across Australia. Our vision is to build a more sustainable and profitable grains industry for the benefit of Australian grain farmers. GrainGrowers welcomes the opportunity to engage with Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) to provide insights into the experiences of Australian grain farmers on workforce issues.

The Australian grains sector is a powerhouse of regional Australia with 22,500 farm businesses growing on average 65 million tonnes of grains, oilseeds and pulses each year for domestic and global customers. The gross value of Australian grain production in 2021-22 was \$28.9 billion, accounting for over 33 percent of the total gross value of Australian farm production. We are a major contributor to the Australian economy, directly employing over 34,000 people.

GrainGrowers provides the following feedback on the discussion paper which covered the proposed structure and governance of JSA, the development of JSA functions and workplan, and questions on ensuring effective engagement with key stakeholders.

Structure and Governance

Consideration should be given on developing a specialist strategy and mechanisms to address rural and regional engagement, which can assist in understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by the industries and their workforces in rural and regional Australia. There are multiple bodies participating in this space and it is integral to the mission of JSA to ensure communication pathways between all bodies involved are clear to avoid duplication of work performed.

Jobs and Skills Australia functions

The functions of JSA must ensure rural industries are represented in research and analysis through a partnerships-focused approach. Engagement with industry is vital to ensure a clear understanding of issues on the ground. Workshops and roundtable discussions targeting specific topics are an effective way of gathering intelligence on information gaps to

assist with the development of solutions. In addition, regular engagement with key stakeholders would foster trust and a better understanding of the role of JSA amongst key networks, leading to more productive relationships.

A range of new information is required that takes into consideration the seasonal aspects of agricultural work, and this should be taken into account during development of JSA workplans. Data associated with workforce issues in regional Australia have historically been fragmented. It would be useful for JSA to engage with industry around the development of workplans associated with agricultural jobs to ensure collection of relevant data is representative of regional workforce experiences in a seasonal environment. Finally, data collection and analysis into the graduate/new entrant market should be enhanced, with reporting of opportunities for industry to capitalise on.

Functions and ways of working

As discussed above, mechanisms that allow for regular stakeholder consultations in a participatory way would allow for the development of co-designed programs targeting industry-specific issues. Engagement with industry can provide a clearer understanding of different audiences that JSA may wish to engage with, and can assist with the development of appropriate formats of information to be delivered to those targeted audiences. Furthermore, non-sensitive data should be available for public use in order to promote broader engagement and discussion on topics of interest.

GrainGrowers welcomes further consultation and engagement to provide further guidance on grains workforce-related issues and assist Jobs and Skills Australia to deliver positive outcomes for our industry. GrainGrowers will continue to work to improved workforce outcomes within grain growing regions and as such any collaboration with other organisations with similar interest or expertise is always encouraged and welcomed.

Should you require any further information, please contact Constantine Theodore, Policy Officer, on (02) 9286 2000 or constantine.theodore@graingrowers.com.au.

Yours Sincerely,



Shona Gawel
Chief Executive Officer
GrainGrowers