

**A PROJECT TO ESTABLISH ALLIANCES
TO PROGRESS SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER PATHWAYS
ACROSS THE RESOURCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE INDUSTRY SECTORS**

**REGIONAL EMPLOYERS' ALLIANCE PROJECT:
GETTING IT RIGHT FOR THE REGIONS**

PHASE 2 ~ PROGRESS REPORT



Australian Government
**Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations**



PROJECT PARTNERS:

Cement Industry Federation (CIF)

Civil Contractors Federation (CCF)

Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA)

Minerals Council of Australia (MCA)

National Farmers Federation (NFF)

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Regional Australia is confronting an unusual confluence of factors: an undersupply of skilled and semi-skilled workers in a range of occupations across a number of sectors; a resources boom; and the break of the drought that is increasing the demand for workers across sectors and industries. These factors, combined with the movement of young people from their regional locations, have led to the agriculture, infrastructure, local government and resources sectors¹ coming together to develop innovative regional workforce projects.

During 2007, Local Government Managers Australia, National (LGMA) led a project to develop alliances with regional employers across the agriculture, infrastructure, local government and resources sectors. LGMA formulated Regional Employers' Alliance Project (REAP) as the accessible project title.

The REAP project is a strategic national skills shortage initiative under the *2005–2008 Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce*. The aim of the REAP is to:

Develop alliances with employers within the Resources, Infrastructure and Agriculture industry sectors to evaluate potential career pathways in a range of skills and competencies in occupations across the sectors and with Local Government.

The skills shortage focus of the REAP project is the skilled and semi-skilled workforce, as defined in the initial REAP project discussion paper²:

Semi-Skilled Worker: A manual worker who has not completed a formal apprenticeship or training in a trade but has work experience.

Skilled Worker: A worker who has education and qualifications in a particular trade or craft.

The 2007 Phase I of REAP involved working across sectors with local employers to understand the challenges they faced in attracting and retaining skilled and semi-skilled workers in Central Highlands Queensland, Upper Hunter New South Wales, Northern Tasmania and South West Western Australia. Working closely with each of the regional facilitators, LGMA conducted interviews, discussions and two forums that led to the framework of an alliance of regional employers willing to work together on a cross-sectoral workforce development project.

In January 2008 the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) informed LGMA that the regional projects approved for Phase 2

¹ This includes the minerals, civil construction and quarrying sectors.

² REAP National Forum Discussion Paper 20 April 2007

implementation in 2008 were those that had been proposed for Central Highlands Queensland, Upper Hunter New South Wales, and Northern Tasmania. Although the project proposed for South West Western Australia was not approved, the funds allocated to this project were made available for Phase 2 of REAP.

The aim of Phase 2 of the Regional Employers' Alliance Project (REAP) in 2008 is to roll out cross-sectoral workforce development pilot projects.

1.1 PROJECT PARTNERS

As proposed in the Phase 1 final report and recommended for Phase 2 implementation, LGMA has developed a *Draft Agreement as to the Role and Responsibilities of the Project Partners* to gain formal commitment and agreement regarding the role of project partners. During the discussion process with the project partners about the draft agreement, the term 'Project Champion' was changed to 'Project Supporter'.

At the time of compiling this progress report, the *Draft Agreement as to the Role and Responsibilities of the Project Partners* had been accepted by the CCF, LGMA, MCA, and NFF. The CIF has as yet to provide a formal response to the draft agreement. It is proposed that the agreement be finalised by 9 May 2008³.

Even with the change of the term 'Project Champion' to 'Project Supporter' we have been unable to retain the interest of Cement Concrete and Aggregates Australia (CCAA) in the project. Ken Slattery, Chief Executive Officer of the CCAA, communicated that in March 2008 the CCAA Board reviewed the relevance of the REAP project and the value that its industry could derive from any further involvement. He reported that the CCAA felt that none of the projects REAP had decided to pursue were of any relevance to its industry, and that those regions that it was relevant to had been eliminated quite early in the process. Moreover Ken pointed out that *"The ability to effectively engage in the project was in our view compromised by inflexible schedules and limited effective consultation. We are also disappointed that this has concluded in this way as we still believe that action needs to be taken to find a solution to this on-going problem."*⁴

Despite the CCAA's concern regarding lack of engagement by its sector in the REAP project, the regional project managers have engaged businesses that work in that sector⁵ in the regional projects.

The REAP project partners for Phase 2 in 2008 are:

- Cement Industry Federation (CIF)

³ See Appendix I for copy of the *Draft Agreement as to the Role and Responsibilities of the Project Partners*

⁴ Communication in an email of 29 April 2008 following an email from Beverley Klinger LGMA REAP National Manager outlining that LGMA would continue to send REAP reports to CCAA via Ken Slattery.

⁵ See tables for each region for lists of employers engaged in discussions during the regional project planning phase.

- Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia (CMEWA)
- Civil Contractors Federation (CCF)
- Minerals Council of Australia (MCA)
- National Farmers' Federation (NFF)

It is worth noting that the Phase 2 project partners have expressed disappointment with CCAA's determination to withdraw from the project.

An assessment of the implication of withdrawal of the CCAA will be made as part of the project reporting process in November 2008.

1.2 REGIONAL EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Sustaining and building on the solid foundation of local employer alliances within and across sectors – established during REAP Phase 1 – will be fundamental to the success of Phase 2 implementation of regional pilot projects.

To facilitate the growth of employer engagement and the responsive development of the regional projects, two key strategies have been adopted:

- I. The re-engagement of the Phase 1 REAP regional facilitators as Phase 2 Regional Project Managers – as they have developed an understanding of the employers' interests, the parameters of the pilot projects, and the challenges to be confronted.

Table 1. REAP Phase 2 Regional Project Managers

Region	Regional Project Manager
Upper Hunter New South Wales	Michael Murray CEO Pegasus Management Group (Pegasus) <i>Supported by:</i> Tony Marsh – Compliance Coordinator, Trainer and Assessor Chris Rose – Trainer and Assessor
Central Highlands Queensland	Peter Dowling General Manager Central Highlands Development Corporation (CHDC) <i>Contracting:</i> Liz Alexander Blue Dog Agribusiness
Northern Tasmania	Phill Bevan Director Trevor Forshaw Consultant SED Consulting – Tasmania (SED)

2. The requirement that the regional managers establish a local Regional Employers' Alliance that will meet at least three times during Phase 2 of the REAP and:
- Act as an advisory group for the development and implementation of the regional pilot project;
 - Identify examples of good practice in training, workforce and career development and other areas within the REA members' industries and sectors;
 - Provide relevant knowledge, skills and expertise regarding the skills and workforce needs, and development potential in their sector; and
 - Support and promote linkages across sectors and industries with regard to skill enhancement, training, workforce and career development.

The role of Regional Employers' Alliance members, who will be drawn from the REAP sectors, is to:

- Act as an information channel to and from their respective businesses;
- Provide information and advice regarding project activity (regarding skill workforce development and needs) within their respective industry and sector, while at the same time respecting commercial confidentiality;
- Contribute to the pilot project development and implementation including assisting with seeking appropriate resources;
- Assist with sourcing suitable project examples from their respective sector; and
- Suggest approaches to effectively and efficiently roll out the pilot project within their sector.

2. PHASE 2 PROJECT BUDGET REFINEMENT

Due to DEEWR's determination not to proceed with the South West Western Australia project yet to provide full funds, LGMA has revised the budget submitted to DEEWR in December 2007.

The following is the gross allocation of the \$35,363 initially provided for the Western Australia project:

National Management	\$ 6,063
Regional Projects	\$17,300
Showcase Forum	\$12,000

Total	\$35,363

Table 2 (below) provides a detailed outline of the reallocation of the \$35,363.

Table 2. REAP Phase 2 – Revised Budget April 2008

Project Component	Project Manager	Finance Plan	Revised allocation
		December 2007 \$	April 2008 \$
National Project Management Part time project management and travel costs for regional visits	Local Government Managers Australia – National	81,000	87,063 ⁶
Central Highlands, Queensland Regional Project Management Matching local skill needs to skill sets of transient population	Central Highlands Development Corporation contracting Blue Dog Agribusiness	65,000	71,000
Upper Hunter, New South Wales Regional Project Management Develop common competency, training and associated attraction strategy	Pegasus Management	65,000	70,700
Northern Tasmania Regional Project Management Develop common competency, training and associated attraction strategy	SED Consulting - Tasmania	65,000	70,600
South West Western Australia	Project not proceeding	35,363	N/A
Showcase Forum – Melbourne November 2008 Includes cost for 2 regional project representatives (total of 6) travel and accommodation in Melbourne	Organised and facilitated LGMA National Project Manager	N/A	12,000
Total		311,363	311,363
GST 10%		31,136	31,136
Total inclusive of GST		\$342,499	\$342,499

⁶ This includes a contingency for unexpected costs for travel such as an additional meeting in Tasmania in May with Skills Tasmania.

3. REAP SHOWCASE FORUM

A REAP Showcase Forum is planned for late November⁷ in Melbourne. The benefit of holding a showcase forum is to facilitate interactive reporting of the three regional REAP Projects. The forum will bring together regional employers' stakeholders and regional REAP managers enabling them to present:

1. The design of pilot projects – strategies and processes, opportunities and barriers; and,
2. The outcomes and learnings from regional pilot project development.

It is anticipated that the outcomes of holding the Showcase Forum will be to:

1. Inculcate commitment to comprehensive roll out of pilot workforce strategies, including training, from a range of public and private stakeholders such as government departments – federal, state and local – and employers and employer associations;
2. Garner support and in-principle commitment of resources to roll out pilots and continue the collaborative approach to workforce development in the pilot regions; and
3. Foster interest from employers and other sectors in developing regional collaborative workforce development projects in other regions or sectors with or without LGMA's expert support.

It is proposed that the showcase forum would be for a maximum of 100 people drawn from:

- COAG representative from Commonwealth – State Skills Shortage Initiative
- Federal Government – DEEWR
- LGMA (staff of National and State offices, Board and Skills Shortage Steering Committee,)
- NFF-MCA Skills Project Manager and Regional Manager
- Project Partners (including CCAA)
- REAP Regional Project Managers – NSW, Queensland & Tasmania
- Regional Employers' Alliances representatives from each region
- Skills Australia
- Skills Councils – Agri-Food, Government Skills Australia, Skills DMC
- Relevant State Government Department representatives for the regional projects, for example training and regional development

The funding for this Showcase Forum has been provided as part of the reallocation of funds from the \$35,363 budgeted for the Western Australia project that is not proceeding (see section 2 above).

⁷ Current planning is for the Forum to be held between 25th and 28th November 2008. The date to be finalized in May.
Local Government Managers Australia

4. REGIONAL PROJECT SUMMARIES

4.1 UPPER HUNTER, NEW SOUTH WALES PILOT PROJECT

The Phase 2 Upper Hunter NSW project planning meetings were held between 12th and 13th March 2008 in Singleton, Maitland and Newcastle NSW.

Information gathered in the planning meeting and in discussions with key stakeholders has led to the development of the project plan, milestones, timelines and a refinement of the project title and description.

The Regional and National Project Managers have determined to add value to the project scope determined at the 22nd November 2007 Project Partners' Forum. Regional employers outlined that broadening the scope of the project to include consideration of mobile plant would ensure the project is viable and relevant to local employers and businesses.

4.1.1 Project Title

A model for the establishment of flexible career pathways that is portable across sectors that utilise mobile plant in the Upper Hunter.

Project Partner Supporter: Civil Contractors Federation

4.1.2 Geographic Coverage

The local government areas covered by the project are: Singleton, Scone, Upper Hunter, Cessnock, Muswellbrook, Maitland and Dungog.

4.1.3 Project Task and Outcomes

The project has set six key objectives and outcomes to be achieved by 31 October 2008:

- a. A viable model for flexible career pathways, which are mobile across sectors that utilise mobile plant in the Upper Hunter.
- b. Commitment from leaders within the sectors utilising light plant in the Upper Hunter to support the model.
- c. Commitment from training providers to support the model.

- d. Establishment of an agreed framework for the issuing of appropriate certification across national packages.
- e. Showcase presentation for the model.
- f. Funding for the implementation of the model.

4.1.3.1 Project Tasks

The initial project tasks framework was developed on 12th March 2008. However at the time of writing, this task list is under review given the work already carried out by Skills DMC national industry skills council (see 4.1.3.3 below) and other bodies.

April Industry Sector Engagement

- Identify appropriate leaders for each of the sectors
- Confirm terms of reference and meeting timetable with sector leaders
- Commitment of sector leaders to the Project Advisory Group

April - May Mapping of Skills

- Define the range of equipment included in the scope of the project
- Map the skills for each item of equipment across the targeted sectors
- Cross reference skill sets across sectors
- Map the common required skills for item of equipment:
 - In each of the sectors
 - Unique for each sector

June Mapping of Accreditation Framework

- Map selected skill sets to national accreditation framework
- Identify skills not adequately covered
- Identify progress of competency rationalisation project

July -

August

Design Mobile Pathways Across the Sectors

- Prepare competency model for each item of equipment within current framework references
- Review the model with Advisory Panel
- Update the model based on the Advisory Panel

August -

September

Design Training Framework to Support Pathways

- Develop learning and assessment strategies for each item of equipment
- Pilot and review by Advisory Group
- Update based on review by Advisory Panel

October

Engagement of Pilot Project Funding Partners

- Identify potential funding partners for the pilot

- Prepare information kit for potential funding partners
- Commitment from funding partners

November Engagement of Training Partners in Pilot Project

- Identify regional providers with capacity and relevant business focus to provide relevant training and assessment services
- Establish criteria for selection of pilot project training partners
- Select pilot project partners

Showcase Forum

It is proposed that the detailed design of the Pilot Project materials and the implementation of the project will require further funds and time and that this is likely to occur in 2009.

4.1.3.2 Milestone Reports

Milestone reports to the National Project Manager on the pilot project process have been agreed for the following:

1. **Employer Alliance and Project Plan Status Report – 31st May** setting out:
 - Attainment of employer buy-in; and,
 - Establishment of employer alliance.
2. **Mid Term Status Report – 31st August** setting out:
 - Identification of common skills and competencies across the sectors and training packages including common OH&S requirements, and consideration of the potential for RPL and RCC for up-skilling; and,
 - Preliminary outcomes and assessment of funding requirements as well as barriers, and opportunities for continued implementation after 2008.
3. **Completion Report – 7th December** setting out:
 - Pilot project activities, including employability skills (e.g. literacy and numeracy), programs for delivery in the workplace and to under-utilised populations; and common skill set training with training organisations; and,
 - Project outcomes including achievements, barriers and proposals for continuation of the pilot project in 2009.

4.1.3.3 Ascertaining skills gaps, occupations, competencies and training requirements

Ascertaining specific occupations, skills and competencies and training requirements for consideration – including details of relevant training packages and training providers – is a major part of the pilot project. The Mid Term Report in August will provide clarity regarding these issues.

The Regional Project Manager (Pegasus) and the National Project Manager (LGMA) met with Skills DMC, the national industry skills council for drilling, mining, quarrying and civil infrastructure, in Sydney on 31 March 2008. The purpose of the meeting was to share information and to discuss the progress of Skills DMC's rationalisation of training packages in relation to the development of the Upper Hunter REAP project and the establishment of flexible career pathways that are mobile across sectors utilising mobile plant. An important aim of the information sharing process was to avoid duplication of effort and to communicate learnings. Skills DMC also outlined their Skills Maximiser and Future Workforce Manager tools.

Subsequently, on 8 April Dorothy Rao, Operations Manager for Skills DMC, demonstrated the Skills Maximiser computer tool to the Pegasus team in Singleton, NSW. This software has the potential to offer a systematised process to meet client needs through profiling, customisation and training needs identification. However, the Skills DMC software does not cover the agriculture and local government sectors.

Pegasus's REAP regional management team have been assessing the Skills Maximiser and other similar software products to determine which will be most useful in assisting them in the critical first stages of the project plan: the mapping of the skills and accreditation framework, the design of mobile pathways across the sectors, and the design of a training framework to support the pathways.

Other comparative software products Pegasus which will be evaluating for application to the Upper Hunter project include: the Competency Navigator, Skillsbook, and HR Workbench. Ultimately, the software tool which will be chosen will be the one that is the best mapping tool and that can be used as a guide to work out how to structure the recognition process, across all of the REAP sectors.

It was noted by a number of employers that focusing on three sectors, rather than all five, might make the project more feasible and adaptable. At this stage Pegasus are looking at focusing on a grader as the trial item of equipment. The decision as to which sectors and how many has not been finalised. It will be based on the degree of commonality regarding the skill sets across the sectors.

4.1.4 Key Stakeholder Engagement

The initial project planning process included consultations and discussions with local employers within the region as well as representatives of relevant state government departments.

4.1.4.1 Local Employer Stakeholders

Table 3 below sets out a list of meetings between the National Project Manager LGMA, Regional Project Manager Pegasus, and key representatives of local employer stakeholders from industry partner sectors.

These meetings were held on the 12th and 13th March to cement the engagement of the relevant industry sectors – Agriculture, Mining, Economic Development, Infrastructure, Local Government – as well as Indigenous Program consultants.

Farmer and Upper Hunter Rural Lands Protection Board member Bill Stacey reinforced the wisdom of this project and encouraged learning basic plant operation skills on small mobile plant. *“Len Hedges taught me how to operate dozers: ‘Learn to drive a small dozer and you’ll learn to drive a big dozer, but learn to drive a big dozer and you’ll never learn to use a small one.’”*

The mining industry representative identified key mining companies in the Upper Hunter for Pegasus to approach and make a business case for involvement. There was consensus that there would be interest as mines generally spend too much time and money on training. If the costs of training and development are reduced, there also needs to be quality assurance of that training.

The Indigenous Programs discussion covered a lot of ground and there were many learnings from the Upper Hunter Skills Development Centre representatives, who have had successes with the training and employment of young indigenous people. The importance of employers having both an indigenous employment policy *and strategy* was stressed, as well as the need for government organisations to think outside the box. *“Training programs ...don’t have enough of what is really required. The prime training should be: OH&S, Communication in the Workplace, Employability, Conflict in the Workplace, Local Risk Assessment (out of Level 1 of Civil), Problem Solving, Self Management, Team Work, and Planning and Organising Work.”*

Regarding the infrastructure sector discussion, a comment was made by a person with considerable experience in the infrastructure sector⁸ that the core ideas that need to be understood and applied were around *“concepts of people and energy: Manage the risks associated with these elements and their interaction, and focus on developing capacity for people to work safely.”* Accordingly he thought that the potential training structure should encompass: Core Principles of Risk and Energy; Operation Fundamentals; and Function Specific Competencies.”

⁸ John Dwyer in his personal, yet expert, capacity at a meeting on 12th March 2008
Local Government Managers Australia

4.1.4.2 NSW State Government Liaison and Engagement

Table 3 (below) sets out a list of meetings between the National Project Manager LGMA, Regional Project Manager Pegasus, and key state government representatives.

In April, discussions were initiated with state departments to outline the REAP Upper Hunter project and to discuss compatibility with other state based projects, as well as to discuss potential future funding.

Pegasus has established good links with state government at both the central and regional level. Following our phone conference with Tony Sansom, Regional Manager for the NSW Department of State and Regional Development (referenced in Table 3), Michael Murray spoke with Clive Faro, Senior Manager, Policy, for the central division of that department. Clive Faro, has indicated that the Upper Hunter project has been mentioned informally as one that the NSW Skills Council may have an interest in. *"Of particular interest to the Council are projects in regional NSW which address the issue of competition for skills across sectors, especially in locations where there is a limited skills pool."*⁹

Meetings were also held with the NSW Department of Education and Training: Pat Tate, Training Coordinator, State Training Services; and Rebecca Anthony, State Training Centre Manager, Training Services, Hunter State Training Centre. Strong synergies were identified between REAP and the direction of their training program. Their focus now is on regional needs in terms of training and industry partnerships, and re-engaging underutilised sections of the populations and getting people back into the workforce.

TABLE 3. NSW Upper Hunter REAP Project Planning Meetings

Attendee Name and Title	Attendee Organisation	Purpose of Meeting	Sector/ Industry	Date and Place
Project Planning				
Michael Murray – Project Manager	Pegasus Management Group, Singleton, NSW	REAP Upper Hunter NSW Project Planning Meeting	Regional Project Manager for Project	12.3.08 Singleton NSW
Tony Marsh – Compliance Coordinator, Trainer and Assessor				
Chris Rose Trainer and Assessor				
Regional Stakeholders				
Bill Stacey	Landowner & UH Rural Lands Protection Brd member	Industry sector engagement: consultation and discussion with key industry sector representatives re project development and planning	Agriculture	12.3.08 Singleton NSW

⁹ Clive Faro's email to Bev Kliger | April 2008

**Regional Employers Alliance Project
Phase 2 Progress Report Summary By Region**

Attendee Name and Title	Attendee Organisation	Purpose of Meeting	Sector/ Industry	Date and Place
Don Gray Economic Development Officer	Singleton City Council	“	Economic Development for Local Govt	“
Jacqui Christie HR Advisor	Mt Arthur Coal BHP Billiton	“	Mining	“
John Dwyer Project Manager Mining Infrastructure	Leightons	Note: John stated that he was not speaking for Leightons “ <i>I speak for myself</i> ” ¹⁰	Infrastructure	“
Stephen Schmidt Manager Sue James Training Co-ordination	Upper Hunter Skills Development Centre	“	Indigenous Training Programs Consultant	“
David Evans General Manager Member of Regional Organisation of Councils (ROC)	Maitland City Council	Industry sector engagement: consultation and discussion with key industry sector reps re project development and planning	Local Government	13.3.08 Maitland NSW
State Government				
Pat Lange Training Coordination State Training Services Rebecca Anthony State Training Centre Manager, Training Services, Hunter State Training Centre	NSW Department of Education and Training	NSW state government liaison, engagement and investigation of potential for continuation beyond 2008.	NSW State Government Education and Training representatives	13.3.08 Newcastle NSW
Tony Sansom Regional Manager	NSW Dept of State and Regional Development	NSW state govt liaison, engagement and investigation of potential for continuation beyond 2008	NSW State Govt Regional Development representative	13.3.08 Newcastle NSW by phone n conference
Skills Council				
Des Caulfield, CEO Dorothy Rao Operations Manager	Skills DMC Skills Council	Share information & discuss Skills DMC’s rationalisation of training packages re REAP NSW project	National skills council for drilling, mining, quarrying & civil	31.3.08 Sydney

¹⁰ However, John has kept the Leightons management informed regarding the progress of the Upper Hunter REAP Project



**Fig 1. Left to right: Chris Rose and Michael Murray
Upper Hunter REAP Regional Management Team
Newcastle, 13th March**

4.2 CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, QUEENSLAND PILOT PROJECT

The Phase 2 Central Highlands Queensland Project planning meetings were held between 1st and 3rd April 2008 in Brisbane, Emerald and Rubyvale, Queensland.

Information gathered in both the planning meeting and discussions with key stakeholders has led to the development of the project plan, milestones, timelines and a refinement of the project the title and description.

4.2.1. Project Title

Seasonal Workforce Attraction – matching local skill needs to the skill sets and skill development potential of an experienced travelling population

Project Partner Supporter: National Farmers Federation

4.2.2 Geographic Coverage

The REAP Central Highlands, Queensland, project area encompasses the four shires that now comprise the Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC): Bauhinia, Duaringa, Emerald and Peak Downs. These councils were amalgamated on the 15th March 2008 to form the CHRC.

In discussions the point was made that if the Regional Manager and the Regional Employers' Alliance deem it important for the success of REAP to extend the boundaries of the project, this may occur during the project's term.

4.2.3 Project Tasks and Outcome

The project has three key aims:

1. To identify:
 - the skill needs of local industries;
 - the skills held by Experienced Travellers; and,
 - an appropriate system to match them.
2. To provide work opportunities for an experienced travelling population, especially mature semi-retired travellers, 'Grey Nomads'¹¹, in areas where there are skill and labour shortages.

¹¹ 'Grey Nomads' are people aged over 50 years who travel around Australia.

3. To identify strategies to attract the potential Experienced Traveller market to the region.

The key outcome is: to establish a pool of workers with the potential to engage in a range of work activities that requires minimal employer investment in training and skill development.

The Regional Project Manager Peter Dowling, General Manager, Central Highlands Development Corporation (CHDC) has appointed REAP Phase 1 Queensland Facilitator Liz Alexander of Blue Dog Agribusiness to manage REAP Phase 2. Peter Dowling and Liz Alexander both attended the planning meeting, along with representatives from National Project Manager LGMA, and Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) representative Paul Beerworth, Assistant Director, Industry Skills Section.

The potential data to be collected from the Experienced Travellers' Survey is critical to the success of the Central Highlands project and will inform the project design. The survey will be distributed and collected from May 1 to October 31, aligned with Central Highlands' peak visitor season. It will identify the type of job, the type of traveller and the type of motivation for visiting the Central Highlands. A prize of a \$70 petrol voucher will be given every month as an incentive for travellers to complete the survey and thereby ensure comprehensive data collection.

In preparing the tasks and timelines, consideration was made of the impact of the flood.

4.2.3.1 Project Tasks

The Regional Manger developed a task list by month:

April

- Review existing literature /research (local, state, national), particularly to identify the work already undertaken e.g. Tony Charters' Study
- Design CH travellers' survey and circulate to stakeholders for feedback
- Interview Craig Pressler, 2PH, largest citrus grower in Australia, for a case study

May

- Design agricultural employer survey and circulate to stakeholders for feedback
- Face to face interviews: Central Highlands Regional Council, CH mining companies and earthmoving companies re skills gaps (include as case studies)

June

- Start June: REAP Stakeholder Group Meeting and Review
- Circulate press release supporting agricultural employer survey
- Post agricultural employer survey

July

- 10,11,12 July Ag-Grow Field Days – Hand out survey with local stakeholder support
- 18 July – Agricultural employer surveys close (3 weeks)

August

- Collate all CH employer skills gap information
- Early August – REAP Stakeholder Group Meeting and Review

September

- Central Highlands travellers' survey to conclude end of September
- Report results: skills match, training and other information

October

- Hold REAP Stakeholder Group Meeting and Review
- Prepare attraction strategies / action and investment plan for 2009

November

- Late November – present project to REAP Showcase Forum, Melbourne

December

- Hold REAP Stakeholder Group Meeting and Review
- Identify project partners for roll-out if research indicates demand
- Circulate draft of the final project report to stakeholders for comment and feedback

4.2.3.2 Milestone Reports

Milestone reports of the pilot project process to the National Project Manager have been agreed to for:

1. **Employer Alliance and Project Plan Status Report – 5th May** setting out:
 - Attainment of employer buy-in;
 - Establishment of employer alliance; and,
 - Literature Review
2. **Mid Term Status Report – 11th August** setting out:
 - Employer skills gap survey report
 - CH travellers' survey progress update; and,
 - Preliminary outcomes and assessment of funding requirements as well as barriers, and opportunities for continued implementation after 2008

3. **Completion Report due 8th December** setting out:
- Literature Review, employer needs, CH traveller findings, strategic opportunities/recommendations, action and investment plan; and,
 - Project outcomes including achievements, barriers and proposals for continuation of the pilot project in 2009.

4.2.3.3 Ascertaining skills gaps, occupations, skills and competencies and training requirements

In the Central Highlands project, these elements will be determined during the survey analysis, and are integral to the design phase. More information and direction will be available in the August Mid Term Report.

4.2.4 Key Stakeholder Engagement

The initial project planning process included consultations and discussions with local employers within the region as well as with representatives from the relevant state government departments.

4.2.4.1. Local Employer Stakeholders

All REAP sectors were represented at the meeting held with key local employer stakeholders on the 2nd and 3rd of April. Table 4 below sets out the list of meetings held in April regarding the project.

Early on in the discussion on the 2nd of April with the formative Regional Employers' Alliance members there was general agreement to broaden the scope of the project from the original 'Grey Nomads' target group to Experienced Travellers. *"They're not really Grey Nomads, they're experienced travellers who can't afford to stop working."* – Jim Sands, Farmer and Campus Manager, Agricultural College, Emerald

The observation was made that many employers are not members of industry associations, for example AgForce only represents 25% of the industry. It was therefore agreed that it is imperative to work with relevant employers regardless of their membership of employer associations as well as work with the employment associations. There was consensus about the bottom line: everyone wants to grow the workplace pool.

Debbie Hall, Skills Formation Strategy Project Manager, CHDC, outlined the importance of working with the local Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC). *"The council is a mirror ... of the skills shortages in the area, with a big cross section of roles there. Each of the councils has identified skills issues. We've talked about doing skills audits, redesigning job descriptions and using the available workforce. The issue is that the jobs they need done are the jobs everyone needs done."*

The CHRC CEO Bryan Ottone outlined that local councils have a 14% vacancy rate. Jenny Nuss, HR Manager for CHRC, stressed the need for flexibility of approach *“Pull the roles apart and look at the tasks involved. Put systems in place ... and turn the jobs into short-term projects ... We need to put it out there instead of people having to ask ... to put it out there that we’re flexible, family friendly and responsible.”*

An indication of strong stakeholder support for this project is the offer from Craig Pressler, the owner of 2PH citrus and grape farms¹², to provide staff to distribute the experienced traveller surveys at the AgGrow Field Day on 10-12 July, which has more than 20,000 visitors. His staff will also distribute the surveys at the Emerald Show 3-4 June at the 2PH stand.

The strong community support is reflected in Craig Pressler’s comment: *“It’s necessary to support the infrastructure behind it ... Council needs them so you people can get maintenance, etc.”* Craig also stressed the importance of ensuring reasonable work and living conditions and fair treatment as *“a lot of it’s word of mouth on the trail”*.

Michael Gavin, HR Manager, BMA Coal, outlined that although they may not directly use experienced travellers they will support a project that is good for the region. *“If we have, for example a dragline shutdown ... I see this having huge benefit for seasonal agriculture and Shayne [earthmoving business owner]. I’m conscious of not wanting to be seen as dipping into that pool. I want to be involved as it’s good for the region.”*

The infrastructure representative Shayne Shepherd, Civil Contractor/Plant Hire, C&J Excavator Hire, outlined that he had used older workers who were travelling and they had required less training and supervision due to their experience. Shayne also confirmed the need to look at the broad potential pool, that, to consider women travellers. Shayne stated that *“We had lady truck drivers. They’re good. They’re really good.”*

The local employers identified two potential obstacles to the attraction and engagement strategy:

- taxable incomes – impact of income from work particularly in relation to tax effect on self funded retirees; and,
- the pension income test – in relation to increasing income that may lead to a reduction in the pension, as the pension income is assessed in the fortnight it in which it is earned.

¹² It has been stated that 2PH is the largest privately owned citrus farm in Australia
Local Government Managers Australia



**Fig 2. Left to right: Angela Zivkovic, Bev Kliger, Paul Beerworth, Mike McCosker at Codenwarra peanut farm
Emerald, Central Highlands, 3rd April**



**Fig 3. Left to right: Bev Kliger, Shayne Shepherd, Craig Pressler, Paul Beerworth, Jim Sands and Michael Gavin, at stakeholder meeting
Emerald, Central Highlands, 3rd April**

4.2.3.2 Queensland State Government Liaison and Engagement

The meetings between the National Project Manager LGMA, Regional Project Manager Liz Alexander of Blue Dog Agribusiness (for CHDC), and key state government representatives, were held on the 1st of April in Brisbane, establishing the beginnings of good state engagement. See Table 4 below for a list of meetings.

Discussions were held with state departments Tourism Queensland, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPIF), and local government representatives of LGMA Queensland and LGA Queensland, regarding compatibility with other state based projects, and project continuation beyond 2008.

Tourism Queensland commented that there was a 2% decline statewide in Grey Nomads' visitor statistics. However the Central Highlands region has experienced a 25% increase in tourism. Tourism Queensland also suggested that Grey Nomads could act as locums for small businesses.

John Bird and Greg Crossan from DPIF suggested that the REAP Central Highlands pilot project has the capacity to provide a framework for developing industry collaborations and would mark the beginning of a cooperative approach. DPIF representatives gave a strong message of support for the REAP Project as it fits with their focus on place based projects. Moreover, they supported the concept and development of a regional employers' alliance. They are interested in the project but have adopted a 'wait and see approach'. They appear to want to see if the collaboration works and can be embedded in order that a range of activities can be carried out in a collaborative manner.

At the meeting of a range of state government representatives raised questions regarding whether 2008 funding is the end of the project. This prompted discussion of how the REAP project ties in with other workforce development projects and activities in the region.

Table 4. List of REAP Queensland Meetings

Attendee Name	Attendee Organisation	Purpose of Meeting	Sector / Industry	Date & Place
State Government				
Lynne Banford Regional Director Bundaberg, Gladstone & Capricorn Sarina Hobbin Manager Industry Development Destination Qld	Tourism Queensland	Queensland State government liaison and engagement	Tourism	1.4.2008 Brisbane
Sue Ryan Executive Director Industry Development John Bird General Manager Rural Skills Training & Labour Strategy, Industry & Investment Greg Crossan Manager Skills Formation Strategies Rural Labour & Skilling	Qld Dept of Primary Industries & Fisheries (DPIF)	Queensland State government liaison, engagement, and continuation beyond 2008	Qld state govt – agriculture, horticulture	1.4.2008 Brisbane
Dan Galligan QFF representative & Policy & Advocacy Advisor Cotton Australia	Queensland Federated Farmers	Queensland state project partner liaison and engagement	Agriculture	1.4.2008 Brisbane
Beth Welden School to Industry Liaison Officer	AgForce Queensland	Queensland state agriculture industry association industry and engagement	Agriculture	1.4.2008 Brisbane
Local Government Organisations				
Peta Irvine CEO Gabrielle Dorward Project Manager Skills Formation Strategy	Local Govt Managers Australia, Queensland Local Govt Australia, Queensland	Queensland state project partner liaison and engagement	Local government	1.4.2008 Brisbane

**Regional Employers Alliance Project
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Attendee Name	Attendee Organisation	Purpose of Meeting	Sector / Industry	Date & Place
Project Planning				
Peter Dowling General Manager REAP Central Highlands Regional Project Manager	Central Highlands Development Corporation Ltd	REAP Central Highlands planning meeting	Regional economic development	2.4.2008 Emerald
Liz Alexander CHDC Contracted REAP Regional Manager	Blue Dog Agribusiness		Regional consultant	
Paul Beerworth Assistant Director Industry Skills Section	DEEWR observer		Federal Government	
Debbie Hall Skills Formation Strategy Project Manager	Central Highlands Development Corporation Ltd		Regional economic development	
Regional Stakeholders				
Bryan Ottone CEO	Central Highlands Regional Council, Emerald	Local stakeholder liaison and engagement	Local government	2.4.2008 Emerald
Jenny Nuss HR Manager				
Ross Rolfe Councillor				
Pamela White Youth Officer				
Paul Beerworth Assistant Director Industry Skills Section	DEEWR observer			
Craig Pressler Owner	2PH, citrus and grape grower	Local stakeholder liaison and engagement	Agriculture	3.4.2008 Emerald
Michael Gavin HR Manager	BMA Coal		Mining	
Jim Sands Farmer and Campus Manager	Agricultural College, Emerald		Agriculture & Education & Training	
Shayne Shepherd Civil Contractor/Plant Hire	C&J Excavator Hire		Civil Construction	

**Regional Employers Alliance Project
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Attendee Name	Attendee Organisation	Purpose of Meeting	Sector / Industry	Date & Place
Mike McCosker Owner & QRITC & DPIF Skilling the Future member, ACGRA	Peanut farmer Codewarra farm	Local stakeholder liaison and engagement, and site visit	Agriculture	3.4.2008 Emerald
Peter Brown Owner and Winner 2007 Australian Tourism Awards – Specialised Tourism Services	Rubyvale Gem Gallery, Sapphire	Local stakeholder liaison and engagement, and site visit	Specialised: Gems, Fossicking & Tourism	3.4.2008 Rubyvale
Pauline Farlow Volunteer Coordinator	Emerald Tourism Information Centre	Tourism centre liaison and engagement regarding Experienced Traveller Survey distribution in project design phase	Tourism & Info Centre for Experienced Travellers visiting area	3.4.2008 Emerald

4.3 NORTHERN TASMANIA PILOT PROJECT

The Phase 2 Northern Tasmania Project planning meetings were held between 26th and 28th March 2008 in Launceston, Carrick, Longford and Hobart, Tasmania.

Information gathered in the planning meeting, and in discussions with key stakeholders, has led to the development of the project plan, milestones, timelines and a refinement of the project title and description.

4.3.1 Project Title

A common skills project for support workers in industries involved with agriculture, land and environmental management.

Project Partner Supporter: Local Government Managers Australia

4.3.2 Geographic Coverage

The REAP Northern Tasmania project coverage encompasses the following local government areas: Devonport, Dorset, George Town, Kentish, Latrobe, Launceston, Meander Valley, Northern Midlands and West Tamar.

4.3.3 Project Tasks and Outcomes

The project has two primary objectives:

1. To create career and training pathways that make the Northern Tasmania region attractive as a location for industries, as well as for people seeking retraining, upskilling and/or relocation.
2. To have a working pilot, and to upskill existing employees and engage new employees, within the term of the project.

These objectives translate into different outcomes for government, industry and workers.

For government the project outcomes will be:

- To develop skills clusters/pathway to employment; and
- To encourage investing in growth and agribusiness.

For industry the project outcomes will be:

- To promote workforce development; and
- To get and keep workers with initial skills by upskilling and skill recognition.

For workers the project outcomes will be to create careers and a job environment within the region.

4.3.3.1 Project Tasks

- May** Formation of the Regional Employers' Alliance (REA) Advisory Group
- June - July** Mapping and Accreditation of Skill Sets
- Define range of skills required across targeted targeted sectors through consultation with employers;
 - Map skills required to VET units and/or licensing requirements;
 - Note any differences across sectors ensuring pathways;
 - Review skill sets with advisory panel; and
 - Match skill sets to appropriate training dollars.
- August - September** Selection of training partners
- Identify training partners;
 - Develop learning and assessment strategies with training partners and employers; and,
 - Review draft finalised training program with REA advisory panel.
- Identify existing or potential workforce
- Engage with employers and job networks;
 - Identify barriers and implement mitigation strategies; and
 - Review project with REA advisory group.
- October** Commence project trial
- Commence training with initial workforce;
 - Identify stakeholders for ongoing functioning of program; and
 - Review implementation with advisory group.
- November** Showcase Forum
Final Report

4.3.3.2 Milestone Reports

Milestone reporting to the National Project Manager regarding the pilot project process has been agreed to as follows:

- I. **Employer Alliance and Project Plan Status Report – 15th May** setting out:
 - Attainment of employer buy-in; and,
 - Establishment of employer alliance.

2. Mid Term Status Report – 15th August setting out:

- Identification of common skills and competencies across the sectors and training packages, including common OH&S requirements, and consideration of the potential for RPL and RCC for upskilling;
- Status of development of a training trial; and,
- Preliminary outcomes and assessment of funding requirements as well as barriers, and opportunities for continued implementation after 2008.

3. Completion Report – 28th November setting out:

- Pilot project activities, including status and outcome of trial training of common skill set with training organisations; and other potential programs for delivery of training in the workplace and to under-utilised populations; and,
- Project outcomes including achievements, barriers and proposals for continuation of the pilot project in 2009.

4.3.3.3 Ascertaining skills gaps, occupations, competencies and training requirements

Ascertaining specific occupations, skills and competencies and training requirements for consideration, including details of relevant training packages and training providers, is a major part of the pilot project. The August Mid Term Report in August will have more clarity and direction regarding these issues.

The Regional Project Manager (SED Consulting) and the National Project Manager (LGMA) held a phone conference with David Greentree, Industry Manager for the Agri-food Industry Skills Council and manager of their reform process.

David identified strong similarities between the Agri-Foods Skills Council's approach to agri-food industry training reforms and the REAP project. Regarding the widespread perceived difficulty of understanding the training language he commented "*We talk about it coming from mystery island ... The idea is to demystify the process, simplify the packages, and get down to skilling without referencing training packages. That's Agri-Foods' agenda.... We're making an effort to reduce duplication in units of competency so we don't describe the same body of work differently.*"

David Greentree did not think the development of REAP Northern Tasmania would be in contradiction to the Agri-Foods' reform process "*as long as you avoid talking about 'training packages'*", which REAP is not doing. David added "*You just need to be mindful of where we're going and the potential to pick up on different products at the end of your project.*" It was agreed that Agri-Foods would be kept updated regarding the development of the REAP Northern Tasmania project.

To a degree REAP Northern Tasmania will be piloting what the Agri-Foods Skills Council is trying to do. REAP will be implementing a common skill set before the Agri-Foods Skills Council have an opportunity to implement it. Nonetheless, it is important to mindful that the REAP encompasses several sectors and is therefore related to a number of skills councils.

4.3.4 Key Stakeholder Engagement

The initial project planning process included consultations and discussions with local employers within the region as well as representatives from relevant State government departments.

4.3.4.1 Local Employer Stakeholders

Zich Woinarski, a well respected Tasmanian agricultural policy expert, made the following observations: *“In the rural sector people are going into just-in-time contracting.”* One of the obstacles in the sector is *“Access to work. It’s a huge problem in Tasmania.”* Keeton Miles, farmer and President of Primary Employers’ Tasmania, stressed the importance of basic skills: *“We want work-ready people in the form of workplace health and safety, ... common sense and aptitude.”*

A strategic collaboration with Northern Tasmania Development is being developed and formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) due to be signed in May 2008. The signatories to the MOU will be National Project Manager Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA), Northern Tasmania Development (NTD), and Regional Project Manager SED Consulting – Tasmania.

Robert Wallace, CEO of Northern Tasmania Development, pointed out that the Northern Tasmania REAP is timely as there are two major projects in development in the northern area that will stimulate the growth of agribusiness and ecotourism:

- The construction of Meander Dam will provide water resources for high value product in horticulture, such as cherries and apricots; and,
- The funding of small irrigation schemes in the North East.

Bronwyn Grimditch from Forestry Tasmania outlined that the REAP project will assist them. Forestry Tasmania is experiencing a shortage of forest workers especially workers with appropriate skills including fire management, windrowing, silviculture¹³ and GIS/GPS operation.

Liz Gillam, Executive Officer of Local Government Managers Australia – Tasmania, suggested that the REAP Regional Project Manager could liaise with the newly appointed

¹³ Silviculture is the growing and cultivation of saplings
Local Government Managers Australia

Local Government Association Tasmania (LGAT) Career Advisor. Together REAP and the LGAT Careers Advisor could work to respond to Tasmanian local governments' workforce development needs. It was agreed that the REAP Regional Project Manager should hold ongoing discussions with LGMA Tasmania and LGAT.

4.3.3.5 Tasmania State Government Liaison and Engagement

Discussions were initiated with Tasmania's Department of Economic Development and Skills Tasmania regarding compatibility with other state based projects, and continuation beyond 2008.

After an initial misunderstanding the relationship with Skills Tasmania is developing productively. The REAP National Project Manager representatives, and Regional Project Manager Trevor Forshaw, will meet with Skills Tasmania's General Manager, Mark Sayer, in Hobart on 13 May. It is anticipated that this meeting will consolidate the various synergies between Skills Tasmania's direction and REAP Northern Tasmania in a positive manner.

This will continue the constructive dialogue established between the REAP North Tasmania National Project Manager and Regional Project Manager in their meeting with Keith Thompson and Ian Paterson from Skills Tasmania in Hobart on 28 March 2008.

A synchronous development in Tasmania is the signing of the Aboriginal Land Management Team Regional Partnership Agreement on 29 February 2008. It gives the Aboriginal community the opportunity to undertake formal training and, in the longer term, to work in the area of Conservation and Land Management. The purpose of the agreement is to maximise opportunities for the aboriginal community for training and ongoing employment in this sector. The training programme encompasses many of the elements that are likely to be covered in Northern Tasmania REAP.



**Fig 4. Left to right: Robert Winter, Trevor Forshaw, and Angela Zivkovic
Roberts Seed and Grain
Carrick, 26th March**



**Fig 5. Donna James
North Midlands Council
Longford, 27th March**

TABLE 5. List of REAP Tasmania Meetings

Attendee Name	Attendee Organisation	Purpose of Meeting	Sector/ Industry	Date & Place
Project Planning				
Phill Bevan Consultant Regional Project Manager	Sed Consulting – Tasmania	REAP Nth Tasmania Planning Meeting	Regional Project Manager	26.3.2008 Launceston
Trevor Forshaw Consultant Regional Project Manager				
Regional Stakeholders				
Zich Woinarski Agricultural policy advisor & former ED of Tasmanian Rural Industry Training Board (1984-2004)		Local stakeholder liaison and engagement	Agriculture	26.3.2008 Launceston
Robert Winter Manager	Roberts Seed and Grain	Local stakeholder liaison and engagement and site visit	Horticulture	26.3.2008 Carrick
Robert Wallace CEO	Northern Tasmania Development	Local stakeholder liaison, engagement and continuation beyond 2008	Regional economic development	27.3.08 Launceston
Doug Chequer Senior Apprenticeship Coordinator Skilled Apprenticeship Services	Skilled	Local stakeholder liaison and engagement	Civil and local government RTO	27.3.08 Launceston
Bronwyn Grimditch Business Manager	Forestry Tasmania	Local stakeholder liaison and engagement	Forestry	27.3.08 Launceston
Donna James Human Resources/ OHS Officer	Northern Midlands Council	Local stakeholder liaison and engagement	Local Government	27.3.08 Longford
Keith Rice Chief Executive	Primary Employers Tasmania	Local stakeholder liaison and engagement	Agriculture	27.3.08 Launceston
Keeton Miles President and Farmer				
Skills Council				
David Greentree Industry Manager	Agri-Food Skills Council, Canberra	National skills council liaison and engagement	Agriculture	26.3.08 Phone conference
Local Government Organizations				
Liz Gillam Executive Officer	Local Government Managers Australia Tasmania	Local stakeholder liaison, engagement and continuation beyond 2008	Local Government	28.3.08 Hobart

**Regional Employers Alliance Project
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Attendee Name	Attendee Organisation	Purpose of Meeting	Sector/ Industry	Date & Place
State Government				
Keith Thompson Manager – Strategic Directions	Skills Tasmania	Tasmanian state government liaison, engagement and continuation beyond 2008	Tasmanian Government	28.3.08 Hobart
Ian Paterson Manager – Workforce Development				