

Drought Assistance Initiatives

Name of initiative

Rural Skills Connect Initiative

Description

The Rural Skills Connect Initiative supports the aims of Moving Forward in that it aims to build and maintain business capability in regional Victoria through addressing skills gaps.

The initiative will seek to utilise the transferable skills of the farm related rural sector to meet rural industry skill gaps and employment requirements.

The initiative will:

- engage rural people who have a range of skills which are considered a priority for regional economic growth, but for which formal recognition of these skills may not have been obtained;
- link appropriate employment and associated training opportunities to rural farming workers, owners and operators affected by drought who may be able to meet these needs.

The initiative will operate at two levels:

1. REGIONAL EMPLOYERS will be targeted who have industry skill gap and employment requirements that may be met by the on-farm labour pool – for example welding, transport, machinery operators or aged care.
2. Working with local groups such as Rural Financial Counsellors, the Country Fire Authority and GP's, the initiative will identify and engage with appropriate RURAL WORKERS, OWNERS AND OPERATORS to participate.

An initial assessment of their skills – using initiatives such as the Skills Stores will be followed by individualised professional assistance to obtain formal recognition of skills and where appropriate identify and facilitate appropriate training arrangements to receive this recognition. This would be linked to existing employment opportunities.

There are seven new Skills Stores in regional and rural Victoria that will be opened ahead of schedule in January 2008. The Skills Stores will facilitate recognition of prior leaning towards a vocational qualification. They will be

continued . . .

Drought Assistance Initiatives

**Description
(continued)**

located in Wodonga, Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, South West and East Gippsland and Sunraysia (Mildura) regions.

This initiative recognises the opportunity to utilise the largely untapped on-farm labour pool to meet regional labour and skills shortages. It also gives current farm-based employees, owners and operators the opportunity to consider their long-term career options – both on and off the farm.

The benefits include:

- the flexibility for councils to collaborate and identify the right people and organisations at a local level to participate at each step of the project;
- support for individuals in the farming sector to explore their employment options both on-farm and off farm and provide the necessary training and qualifications; and
- an opportunity for businesses to address their skill gaps in innovative ways through accessing a largely unrecognised but skilled labour pool.

Who is eligible?

Rural Skills Connect Initiative is open to the state's 48 rural and regional Councils.

Councils are encouraged to work in collaboration with other councils and involve local industry, the farming sector and training bodies.

The initiative seeks to establish 10 local government clusters and collaborative council projects that would form the basis for formal applications.

How to apply / access

Contact:

Program Manager, Megan Cotton

Regional Development Victoria

Phone 03 9651 9170

Email: megan.cotton@rdv.vic.gov.au

Updated October 2007