

15 October 2020

WIN FOR TASMANIA'S WOOL INDUSTRY

A new program aimed at enhancing recruitment, training and the retention of shearers and shed hands in the Tasmanian wool industry is about to be launched by Primary Employers Tasmania.

The Workforce Development Project has just received funding from Skills Tasmania to address a critical shortage of workers in the wool industry, partly due to the COVID-19 border restrictions that have prevented shearers from travelling around the nation.

Extensive whole-of-industry consultation revealed the need for a strategic and collaborative approach to attract young people into the industry, provide coaching and mentoring throughout their developmental journey, and support farmers and contractors to improve workplaces to break down retention barriers.

Primary Employers Tasmania President Felicity Richards said many wool growers had been severely hit by the 2020 market slump, but a recent rebound in prices had restored optimism and confidence.

“We have many Tasmanian woolgrowers leading the world in terms of their commitment to sustainability, global accreditation, animal welfare and the quality of their fibre,” Ms Richards said.

“It is essential that we have sufficient and skilled shearers and shed hands to remove the wool ready for our brokers to market Tasmanian wool to the world.”

A Steering Committee comprising representatives from Primary Employers Tasmania, growers, shearing contractors and wool brokers will oversee the program and a part-time Project Manager will be recruited to implement the plan and drive on-ground actions.

Key priorities will be to review shearing workforce requirements, analyse workforce turnover, promote shearing and wool harvesting career options in schools and at career forums, and provide technical coaching and support to shearers and wool handlers in their workplaces.

Primary Employers Tasmania, the longest-established provider of practical and professional workplace relations solutions for Tasmanian farmers, has been delivering wool industry training in Tasmania since 2011.

Ms Richards said it was time for a new approach to better connect with the next generation that will drive innovation, change and efficiencies in the wool industry.

“Primary Employers Tasmania is extremely thankful to Skills Tasmania for the funding, which will enable us to address the skills gap through a new industry-led approach.”

The two-year project is ready to commence. Applications for the Steering Committee and Project Officer are expected to be advertised before the end of October.

For more information, please contact:

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