FINAL REPORT

Part 1 - Summary Details
Please use your TAB key to complete Parts 1 & 2.

CRDC Project Number: CRDA 1703

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Part 2 – Contact Details

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Part 3 – Final Report

Two workshops were organised by Geoff Hunter with input from Bec Fing and Rick Kowitz. The guest speaker Mark Gardner addressed issues of attracting, retailing and managing staff. Mark has a long history as a consultant with Vanguard Consulting working with agricultural businesses on strategic planning, business management and people management. He has been a regular trainer for the Dairy Australia HR Diploma and has a wide range of experience across agricultural industries. Meetings were held at Maules Creek and Burren Junction.

At each event participants were asked to identify the HR issues they would like addressed. The Maules Creek event was attended by ten growers, who identified the following issues:

• Staff Motivation
• How to have happy and content employees
• Incentives to use to retain staff
• Learning how to be a good employer
• Attracting and retaining staff
• Managing internal staff discontent
• Employer obligations
• Structured feedback mechanisms to manage staff friction
• Communication
• Workplace agreements and getting staff sign off as well as feedback and review.
What is a reasonable level of remuneration

The participants identified that position descriptions were not widely used or value of them understood. Those who are using them are just using templates. While templates are a good start, having a good position description leads to a shared understanding of an employee's roles and responsibilities, and provides a useful reference point for performance reviews and managing disputes.

There was great value in having husbands and wives together as often in the business the wife has fallen into the job of managing employment administration and often wants to follow the rules. The husbands hear and see what other operators are doing and often want to cut corners based on others getting away with it.

There was a lot of discussion around if to use the Award or to use a Common Law Contract. The growers were keen for a follow up meeting and wanted to know if Geoff’s role included supporting growers develop position descriptions.

The Burren Junction meeting also had ten participants. The issues they identified at the start of the meeting were:

- Hourly or Salary
- How do we handle shift work and the pay/work balance
- Individual Flexible Agreements
- Industry Awards
- Other workplace benefits like house, power, fuel and how to manage
- Online induction
- Fatigue Management
- Recruitment and retaining staff
- Communication with staff
- Performance and KPI’s plus feedback (Formal and informal)
- Review of staff performance
- Management of busy and lax periods
- Employer arrangements
- Managing expectations

There was a lot of discussion about legal obligations, employment arrangements and wage rates? In fact it was often hard to get a word in edgeways. Staff attraction is the biggest issue and there is a massive lack of quality applicants, there is often only one choice for positions.

There was great interaction with every single person having input. The the size of the group and everyone knowing each other helped greatly. All participants coming from the same area was also useful as they all faced similar issues.

The two hours scheduled for the meeting was not nearly enough time to cover all the points people wanted to discuss, but provided a good state. They did not spend a lot of time on position descriptions, and the “softer” side of employment. Final feedback was when is the next one?

All participants were encouraged to register for myBMP and access the resources there. In all, five growers were not sure if they were registered of which three were (but had not used it) and two were new registration. All growers were shown the HR checklist items in myBMP and encouraged to operate at at least level 2.