



## Relocation is not an easy fix say farmers and forestry

### *The National Farmers Federation and Forestworks see relocation programs as part of the solution to rural and regional skills and labour shortages.*

The National Farmers Federation and Forestworks will appear before the House of Representatives Employment Committee at a public hearing on Thursday, 27 May 2010, at 11.15am in Committee Room 1R3, Parliament House, Canberra.

The House Employment Committee is inquiring into how government employment policies can address skills shortages in regional Australia. The inquiry is focusing on opportunities to support the relocation of unemployed workers from areas of high unemployment to areas experiencing skills shortages.

The National Farmers Federation argues that skills and capacity shortages in regional Australia are not going to be resolved by the introduction of a few employment participation programs. They suggest a broad range of recommendations to tackle the significant issues of skills and capacity shortages in regional Australia which include:

- Maximising participation by the local workforce, especially where spare capacity exists; and
- Attracting and retention of a skilled workforce sourced beyond the region through domestic relocation.

Forestworks, the Industry Skills Council for the forest, wood, paper and timber products industry, has already initiated its own relocation program to help transfer redundant workers from south western Victoria to South Australia in 2009. They suggest that while a regional skills relocation strategy should be part of a policy mix, it should not be an exclusive strategy to meet the next resources boom.

“The House Employment Committee recognises the importance of the agricultural and forestry sectors in providing regional employment and values their input on Australia’s economic well-being into the Committee’s deliberations.” Committee Chair Sharryn Jackson said.

“The seasonal nature of many farming commodities means that meeting the needs of rural industries through relocation provides specific challenges and opportunities to the agricultural sector.”

Interested persons and organisations are invited to make written submissions to the inquiry as the committee will be holding a series of public hearings. This hearing will be webcast live (audio only) on <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

Further details on the inquiry, including the terms of reference, background documents, membership of the Committee and advice on making submissions can be obtained on the Committee’s website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/ewr> or by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4162 or emailing [ewr.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:ewr.reps@aph.gov.au).

**For media comment**, please contact the Committee Chair, Sharryn Jackson, on (02) 6277 4044 or (08) 9359 1188

**For background information**, contact the Committee Secretary, on (02) 6277 4162