

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing 2011-12
15 February 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

TOPIC: National Skills Needs List

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Nash

QUESTION No.: AI-59

Refer to reply to Budget Supplementary estimates Question on Notice regarding the National Skills Needs List (NSNL).

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet_ctte/estimates/sup_1112/answers/EW0638_12.pdf

- Can the dept provide a copy of the NSNL prior to November 2007.
- The dept states it will review its skill shortage occupational coverage when data is available from the 2011 census which is expected to be provided by the ABS in late 2012 – is there a more specific timeframe for when this census data will be available?

The dept's own Skills Shortage website lists, under Technicians and Trade Workers, 'agricultural technicians' as an occupation in which there is a shortage.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/LMI/SkillShortages/Documents/SSL_AUS.pdf

- Given the list was last collated in 2010-11, is this shortage of agricultural technicians still the case?
- If so, why is it not listed on the National Skills Needs List? (**NOTE:** 'technicians and trade workers at skill level 3 are part of the NSNL criteria).

Agrifood Skills Australia states in its submission to the Victorian Parliament's Inquiry into Agricultural Education and Training in Victoria

http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/etc/Past_Inquiries/AEV_Inquiry/Submissions/51_Agrifood_Skills_Australia_300911.pdf

(page 3) states 'the industry faces a looming crisis in several sectors' due to a number of challenges including an ageing workforce; the scale of both high skilled and lower skilled labour shortages will accelerate in severity in the near future and longer term; and the potential risk that between 2013 and 2018, Australia's regional workforce will become depleted beyond critical mass.

The submission (page 4) makes a number of recommended actions including attracting and retaining workers at skilled and semi-skilled levels; build skilled and robust labour pools in cooperation with industries in regional areas; and fill the demand for technician and para professional roles.

Why are these challenges and recommendations not reflected in the occupations listed in the National Skills Needs List?

ANSWER

The National Skills Needs List (NSNL) was introduced on 1 July 2007. A copy of the list as at 1 July 2007 which identifies all subsequent additions and deletions to date is at **Attachment A**.

The ABS detailed 2011 Census occupational data is not yet available.

The occupation of agricultural technician was last assessed by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) as part of its skill shortage research in December 2010. At this time, this occupation was found not to be in shortage, although some employers in remote locations did experience difficulty recruiting.

This occupation was not included on the NSNL as it did not meet the NSNL shortage criteria.

Below are the criteria in which an occupation is included on the NSNL:

1. the occupation must be classified under Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) as belonging in skill level 3 and be included in Major Group 3 'Technicians and Trades Workers';
2. at least 1500 people are employed in the occupation, based on 2006 Census data;
and
3. the occupation is assessed as being in national shortage for three of the past five years including one of last two years, as determined by the Department's skills shortage research program.