

**2006
Conference**

**10th – 14th
October
2006**

**Charles Sturt
University**

Wagga Wagga

3

Correspondence

^ NSWAAAT letter

re: Chemical courses in schools

- Glen Bennett Principal Officer
VET in Schools
Vocational Education in Schools Directorate

^ Response to NSWAAAT letter

- Glen Bennett Principal Officer
- re: DETs position

^ During the recent plague locust outbreak; it was reported that in the Walgett district, thick density bands as high as 3000 nymphs a square metre were common.



N.S.W. Association of Agriculture Teachers Inc



www.nswaat.org.au

ABN Number 81 639 285 642

Glen Bennett
Principal Officer, VET in Schools
Vocational Education in Schools Directorate
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Dear Glen,

20th September 2004

As president of the NSW Agriculture Teachers Association, I wish to have clarified for our members, a number of issues regarding the chemical course that was delivered in schools as part of the Primary Industries course and prior to that the Rural Industries CEC.

At the Agriculture teachers biannual conference held at Armidale in May of this year, members were informed that no longer could the SMARTtrain course be delivered and assessed in schools.

The Department of Education & Training was responsible for training Primary Industries teachers to industry standards which credentialed these professionals to provide adequate resources for delivery & assessment of their students in the SMARTtrain course.

The Department has on record each of these teachers' school & private details. To date we have not received any correspondence from the Department regarding this important issue. We feel this is inadequate as professionals and a lack of clarification.

As a result, Agriculture teachers need to have the following issues regarding the chemical course clarified, as a matter of request and concern.

a. Delivery of Chemical Courses in schools:

^ The SMARTtrain chemical course at AQF3 is no longer an option for Primary Industries teachers to deliver to their students in schools. This we believe is due to:

- The Department of Education & Training is no longer the RTO for the deliverance of the SMARTtrain course in schools. Yet students can enrol in TAFE & be trained in the SMARTtrain chemical course & be taught by their Primary Industries teacher from their schools. This process seems to be questionable and inequitable on the basis that schools have met strict industry guidelines with available resources to be able to deliver such a course.
- The higher order chemical units of competency in the entry level course for Primary Industries have not been included in the 2004 primary Industries syllabus. Yet these competency units were included in the previous Primary Industries syllabus delivered to school students.

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b. ^ Clarification is required on the support that the Department of Education & Training would give to ChemCert qualifications that Primary Industries teachers may contain or pursue through further training.

This would extend the chemical training to certify students with a recognised chemical course. This process would allow access to an RTO for credentialing purposes. This method would indicate no difference to the scenario that has already been identified using TAFE as an RTO for our senior students completing the SMARTtrain course.

c. ^ What specifications are required by industry to deliver the current core unit in Primary Industries pertaining to chemicals: "Apply chemicals under supervision"? In the previous Primary Industries syllabus of 1999, a requirement by DET & industry was to ensure that trainers had industry qualifications at AQF4. DET trained the Primary Industries teachers to meet these requirements.

This was an advantage to deliver the eight chemical components in Primary Industry course regardless whether trainers delivered & assessed students in the SMARTtrain course. If these qualifications are needed for this delivery, the current process for trainers to deliver the chemical core unit in the 2004 Primary Industries course in schools, using SMARTtrain qualifications will soon expire.

It should be mentioned that prior to 1999 Rural Industries teachers were required to be trained as ChemCert instructors for the delivery and assessment of the chemical units to provide students with industry qualifications. This certification was welcomed by industry, teachers and students alike because it gave students a qualification that gave them options in employment opportunities. These qualifications represented evidence that students had a willingness to progress in the industry and by further training provided that edge needed over other candidatures for employment. Students expect their schools & teachers to provide that extra edge in employment opportunities and this is an important function of our education system.

Since 1999 Primary Industries teachers were either trained or retrained by DET as SMARTtrain instructors and once again employment opportunities were extended to students who wished to partake in the course with a successful outcome.

Agriculture & Primary Industries teachers recognise the important benefits that such a chemical course has for their students. Some of these benefits are outlined as followed:

+ Students receive a qualification that has been instructed at an industry level for qualifications provided by industry.

+ Students have an employment edge over their peers for employment application in the rural industry.

+ Professional instruction & assessment by qualified chemical instructors accredited by TAFE/ DET & Dept of Agriculture. This is a certification requirement by DET & industry for teachers to deliver chemical courses.

+ Deliverance & assessment of a nationally recognised competency based course in schools with a variety of resources.

+ Instructors qualified in Certificate IV in Assessment & Workplace Learning.

+ An environment conducive to student learning in familiar surrounds. The course is conducted to suit both the students and school time management issues while delivering to a peer group of similar age and scholastic year at the students' school.

+ Financially affordable for students, as resource books and workshop manuals were required at a minimal cost. No exorbitant instructor fees applied or great distances for participants to travel for the course.

+ Comprehensive training and practical applications of the following:

- The workplace environment: pests & pesticides at home/ farm.
- Legislation in the workplace.
- Safe use of farm chemicals. Label & MSDS reading exercises.
- Occupational Health & Safety.
- Safe usage of Application equipment: Calibration of machines.
- Residue & Persistent Chemical Management.
- Procedures for record & reviewing the use of chemicals.

These enrich the students learning and development in readiness for rural application.

+ Many of the clientele undertaking the chemical course are students from a rural background. These students have in most cases grown up on family farms and have been exposed to the application and storage of chemicals for many years. The chemical course assists in training students with the correct industry knowledge regarding selection, transporting, application, storage, and disposal of all farm chemicals. In most cases these students return to the family farm.

+ The course assists in teaching the "best practice" in farming procedures when applied to chemical usage & application. Students may have adopted over time on their family farms, a chemical practice that does not reflect industry standards. The course assists in correcting students with these practices & assists in demonstrating current industry practices that meet current standard operating procedures. Added to this, these safe procedures are then implemented on their family farms and in some cases chemical use practices & safety principles demonstrated to their parents.

+ The course provides a vehicle for current education, current industry knowledge and application of chemicals on farm.

+ On successful completion of the course students are certified as chemical practitioners for a period of five years while possessing sound knowledge that is applicable to all aspects of chemical usage.

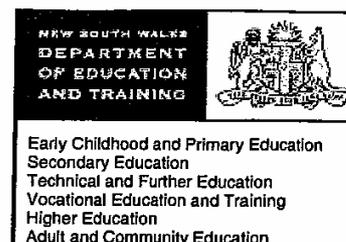
+ Adequate resources for teaching and deliverance of the chemical course were required by VETAB & as part of the RTO requirements. These resources were either purchased by schools or accessed from the community or provided privately to satisfy course accreditation in schools across the State.

The chemical course consolidates the students learning in chemical usage at the completion of their schooling year. Many students have been exposed to chemicals on farm and school by their exposure in studying Agriculture at school. This reflects the importance of such courses in schools. On behalf of members I await your reply.

Yours Sincerely,

Tony Butler

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS DIRECTORATE



Tony Butler
President
N.S.W. Association of Agriculture Teachers Inc
C/ Tumut High School
Bogong Place
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Dear Tony

Thank you for your letter dated 20th September regarding concerns raised by members of the NSW Association of Agriculture Teachers about the withdrawal of the SMARTtrain Course in Chemical Application Risk Management (Chemical Application) from the secondary curriculum.

Teachers will soon be formally advised by the Retraining Unit of requirements to maintain accreditation to deliver chemical units in the Primary Industries Curriculum Framework. As you are aware, the upgrading of teacher training in the field of chemicals and pesticides was provided to support the delivery of Higher School Certificate courses such as Rural Industries prior to 1999 and since then, the Primary Industries Curriculum Framework. Funding is no longer available to support this level of training as it is no longer required to deliver the current framework.

ChemCert (NSW) Ltd is a private RTO that can provide the level of training your teachers request. However, the cost of such training cannot be borne by the Department nor is it desirable that a credential, no longer an essential element of an HSC course, be delivered by school teachers during school hours, using school equipment and resources. The Department's risk management policy would question the risk associated with any accidents that might occur post training when the requirement for the training is not associated with a compulsory aspect of an HSC course.

The new training package upon which the current Primary Industries framework is based has now placed in Certificate III many of the chemical units previously compulsory at Certificate II level. This is an implicit acknowledgement by industry that these units are now considered inappropriate for entry level delivery. As you are aware, the SMARTtrain Card provides evidence of proof of training and allows those holding it to purchase restricted chemicals. In the letter accompanying their TAFE NSW Testamur for completion of the Course in SMARTtrain (Chemical Application) students are advised that as these chemicals are highly dangerous, "the EPA advises that you should also complete the SMARTtrain Chemical Risk Management

course if required to purchase or use these chemicals as part of your work.” The accredited person is meant to take on the supervisory role when chemicals are used. It is inappropriate that entry level students take on such a role.

It is acknowledged that students still need to have their awareness of chemical usage raised. The new framework addresses the issue of risk management but discourages the previous level of involvement in chemical application. This does not preclude local communities choosing to pursue a higher level of training where it is deemed necessary. It is not, however, the role of the Department to provide such training when it is no longer necessary to support a compulsory aspect of an HSC course.

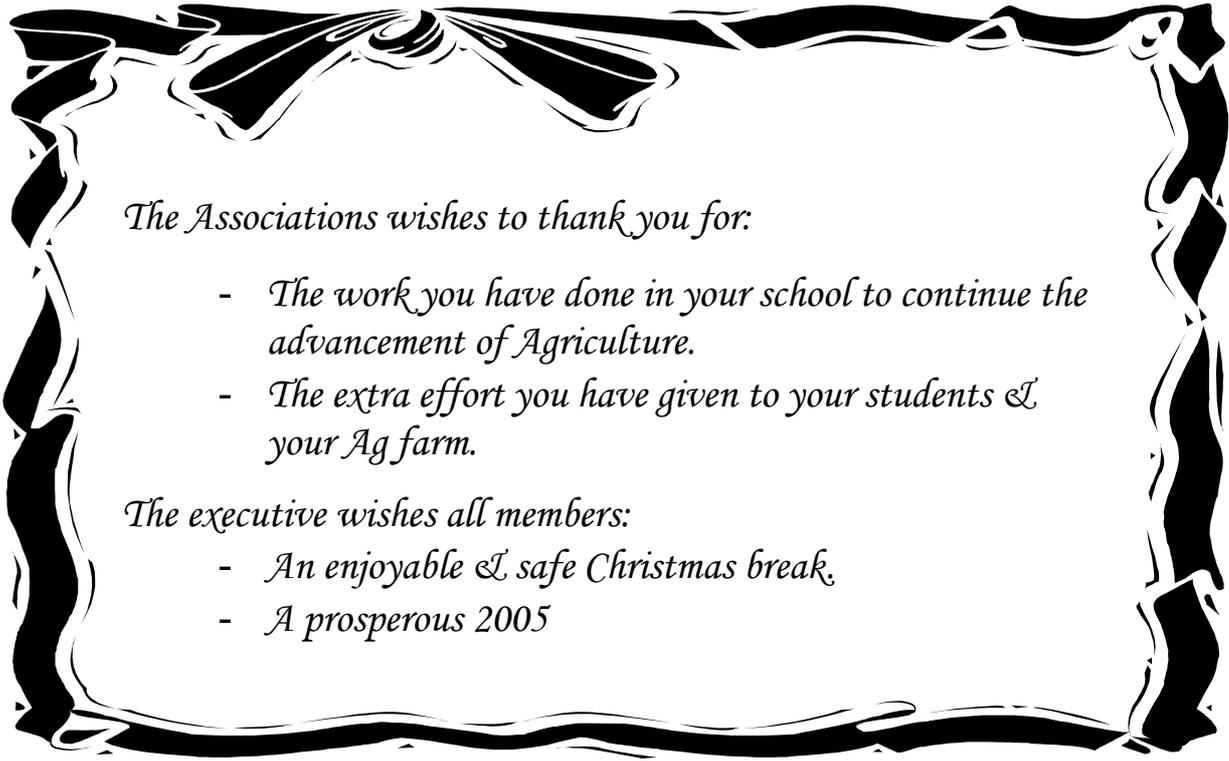
I hope this helps to clarify the issues that have led to the withdrawal of the SMARTtrain Course in Chemical Application Risk Management (Chemical Application) from the secondary curriculum.

Yours sincerely



Glen Bennett
Leader, VET in Schools Unit,
Vocational Education in Schools Directorate

6 October 2004



The Associations wishes to thank you for:

- *The work you have done in your school to continue the advancement of Agriculture.*
- *The extra effort you have given to your students & your Ag farm.*

The executive wishes all members:

- *An enjoyable & safe Christmas break,*
- *A prosperous 2005*