



11 May 2023

## **Growing the NEXTGEN of Food and Fibre Education**

North Central LLEN Project Officer Sue Gould attended the Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA) National Conference in Canberra earlier this month to learn more about "Growing the NEXTGEN of Food and Fibre education" as part of her environmental scan into 21st century careers in agriculture.

The conference was attended by more than 200 delegates – made-up of primary and secondary teachers, tertiary educators, primary industry and government representatives – who heard from innovators leading the way in food and fibre and education, each on a mission to breakdown industry misconceptions, emphasise the vast array of opportunities in our primary industries and the importance of engaging the next generation.

Sue is facilitating a new and innovative partnership to develop "Pathways to a Career in Agriculture in the 21st Century" to build and enhance the quality and currency of agricultural programs and industry partnerships in the North Central region and was keen to see what was happening at a national level.

She was staggered to hear that there are six jobs available for every agriculture graduate with approximately 20-30% of these on-farm, 40-50% rural/regional off-farm, and 20-30% based in the city.

"It was also disappointing to hear that Victoria's agriculture education is underperforming both at school and university level compared to the other states," she said.

Pathways to a Career in Agriculture in the 21st Century will review and scope opportunities for growth in student engagement in agriculture and use this information to develop a framework for an innovative careers education program that explores the many facets of the 21st century agricultural workforce.

It will link student experiences with industry opportunities with the aim of increasing the number of young people engaging in agriculture related pathways while at school.

The project is being undertaken in partnership with 8 North Central Cluster schools - Boort District School, Charlton College, Donald High School, East Loddon P-12 College, Pyramid Hill College, St Arnaud Secondary College, Wedderburn College, Wycheproof P-12 College - and the North Central Trade Training Centre (NCTTC) working Local Government, industry bodies, agriculture and agribusiness.

Sue said she is looking forward to testing, reviewing and evaluating the information and experiences that form part of the project which will result in the development of a framework for "21st Century Pathways to Careers in Agriculture" which we will then pilot in our schools in late 2023/early 2024.

The outcome of the 18-month project will be a transferrable framework for future use in schools promoting educational pathways to a career in Agriculture in the 21st Century which develops locally relevant industry immersion experiences, workplace tours and work experience/immersion opportunities to increase student exposure to the variety of work in agriculture and related areas.

It will also enable better connections to local industry and understanding of local jobs and new industry technologies, and establish a shared practice network of Careers Teachers across North Central Cluster schools and neighbouring areas, to increase the quality of agricultural careers advice.

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