



final report

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MINTRAC Scholarship Program 2012

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Abbreviations

AMPC	Australian Meat Processor Corporation
EU	Employee Upskilling scholarship
FTE	Full time employment
MINTRAC	National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council
MLA	Meat and Livestock Australia
MSC	MINTRAC Scholarship Committee
MSP	MINTRAC Scholarship Program
PAA	ProAnd Associates Australia
SCHOLAR	A person holding or likely to receive a MINTRAC scholarship of any category.
UG	Undergraduate scholarship

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ProAnd Associates Australia gratefully acknowledges the feedback and comments provided by processors' representatives during the consultation phase in July 2012. Their responses greatly contributed to our evaluation of the MINTRAC Scholarship Program.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report reviews the MINTRAC Scholarship Program (MSP) during the period 2008 - 2012. The Program was introduced to enable employee upskilling and also to encourage entry into the meat processing workforce by first-time graduates with no previous experience in the sector. The program was placed on hold in 2011 to enable a project review to occur.

At one time the program also included postgraduate (mainly Masters and PhD courses) and short project scholarships. The postgraduate scholarship program is now managed by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA). The short project stream was not offered after 2007.

In its present form the Program comprises employee upskilling and undergraduate scholarships and this report focuses on these two streams. There are 12 scholarships currently active at September 2012, of which two are in the undergraduate stream; the other 10 are part of the employee upskilling stream.

MINTRAC has administered the Program efficiently over the period under review and has provided evidence of flexibility and innovation in order to give support to scholars; protect the financial and time-based investments of industry and sponsoring companies; and to further develop and enhance the scholarship program. It has consistently adhered to the main objectives of increasing the skills levels of current employees and also seeking to attract prospective undergraduates with tertiary qualifications.

The findings highlight the need for more information on the present and project capabilities of the meat processing sector employee base in order to provide additional guidance on which disciplines could be encouraged in the future through scholarship awards. It would be highly beneficial for the scholarships program to better understand the capability gaps that currently exist across the industry, so that funds could be applied even more efficiently for the benefit of enterprises and industry over time.

The project also served to emphasise the amount of professional development currently on the drawing board at enterprises throughout the industry, not just those with large annual turnovers. For many companies, professional development (whether employee upskilling or hiring new graduates) is becoming an integral part of their business development and an integral response to the way these companies are responding to the competitive business environment and the demands of their supply chain partners.

The main challenges facing the Scholarship Program are to provide support for employees who are attempting to upskill while working full-time; to ensure undergraduates are fully aware of the many opportunities available through employment in the processing sector; to work with processing companies to ensure appropriate job opportunities are available for scholars (undergraduate and upskillers); and to facilitate professional development throughout the workforce.

The report reviews a range of recommendations from earlier MSP Milestone Reports and audits which could strengthen the Program when it is relaunched in time for the 2013 academic year and provide further indications to industry about the value of the investments being made.

1 INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The MINTRAC Scholarship Program was introduced in 2001 with the aim of encouraging industry personnel to upgrade and improve their skills; facilitating short-term research projects for the processing sector; and attracting recent graduates into the industry at the end of their studies.

The report examines the program's operations for the period 2007-2011. The program was suspended in 2011 by MINTRAC and Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) to enable a review of objectives and achievements and to consider changes to the program which could make the scheme more responsive and effective for industry and scholars.

The report objectives set out in the Terms of Reference are:

- To collate the data previously collected by MINTRAC and report on the progress to date and key outcomes;
- To examine the current needs via discussion with MINTRAC, AMPC and MLA and consider the previous recommendations and whether these still apply;
- To provide a report on the program (evaluation to date); and
- To provide recommendations around enhancements to the program and a likely structure for a refreshed approach to the program.

2 METHODOLOGY

The report methodology consisted of the following:

1. Startup meeting with MLA, MINTRAC and AMPC to discuss project objectives, program history and aims and general observations about progress;
2. Review of Milestone Reports from early stages of the program's existence for context and perspective;
3. Review and analysis of details about the type and number of scholarships granted, completion rates, research focus, and main outcomes for scholarships granted in the period 2007-present;
4. Telephone discussions using a written discussion guide with eight companies to obtain their feedback about their involvement with the MSP; and
5. Analysis (including a SWOT analysis) of the MSP including performance against stated objectives and evaluation of overall impact on industry and employees; and development of recommendations.

3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is structured as follows:

- An overview of the scheme's origins, aims, structure and operating mechanisms including selection criteria for scholarships;
- Review of developments over the three-year period covered by this report, principally based on MINTRAC's annual Milestone Reports;
- Summary of observations and remarks received from companies' human resources and senior management officers;
- Evaluation of the MSP; and

- A set of recommendations to consider in planning the future of the MSP.

4 OVERVIEW OF THE MINTRAC SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

In evaluating the MSP, the project team referred to the program's objectives and selection criteria (set out in section 4.6 below) which the scholarship committee uses when reviewing applications.

4.1 DESCRIPTION

During the period under review four categories of scholarships were on offer from MINTRAC, as indicated in Table 1:

Table 1: Scholarship Categories

Scholarship Stream	Description
Postgraduate research	Available for scholars undertaking a Doctorate, Masters or Honours qualification in a discipline relevant to the meat industry. This stream is now managed by Meat and Livestock Australia and is not included in the current evaluation.
Small projects	A small number of projects received grants under this stream in the period prior to 2008 and it is no longer offered.
International research grant (pilot scheme)	Limited support grant to be matched by applicant's employer. This stream was trialed in 2007/08 and discontinued in 2008/09.
Undergraduate (UG)	Scholars interested in a career in meat industry after obtaining their UG degree. Must study full-time for a relevant qualification. Purpose is to encourage new entrants and benefit the wider industry.
Employee Upskilling (EU)	Available to those who have worked for 2+ years in the meat industry and who are seeking a Diploma or above qualification. Initially the requirement was for 5 years of working in the meat industry. Employee must be a levy payer and qualification must be relevant to industry. Funding for Cert. IV available in special circumstances.

Annually, the MSC reviews the categories of scholarships on offer, the eligibility requirements, the marketing program and the contractual arrangements with scholars. In addition it reviews student progress and considers new applications made to MINTRAC.

4.2 PROGRAM HISTORY

The Scholarship program began operating in 2001 and focused primarily on enabling workers in the meat processing industry to access funds so they could study an approved course on a part-time basis in order to improve their overall skills level. For a few years the program also had a Family Scholarships component with the social equity objective of giving employees' partners some access to funds which would enable them to undertake a higher degree course. The Family Scholarships stream ceased functioning in 2004 and these scholars have now completed their courses.

In total approximately 147 scholarships have been approved since the program's commencement in 2001. This report focuses on 52 scholarships which were either active after that date or approved after that date. There are 12 scholarships currently active, of which two are in the undergraduate stream; the other 10 are part of the employee upskilling stream.

4.3 PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the MINTRAC Scholarship Program (MSP) were identified as follows:

1. To upgrade and improve the skills of personnel in the industry in order to meet skill shortages, build plant capacity, and encourage innovation within the company and industry as a whole;
2. To attract younger people to the industry, and retain these people;
3. To develop the skills and knowledge of potential industry employees via a tertiary education; and
4. To provide models for the support of potential and existing employees who undertake tertiary study.

4.4 DEFINITION OF SCHOLARSHIP

A scholarship is defined as a “form of financial assistance that does not require repayment or employment and which is usually offered to students who show potential for distinction, or who possess certain characteristics, (or meet certain criteria), important to the scholarship provider.”¹

The criteria by which scholars are selected to receive this assistance can vary according to the aims and motivations of the scholarship provider. Criteria can be based on academic merit or on other criteria such as economic hardship.

4.5 COMPOSITION OF THE SCHOLARSHIPS COMMITTEE

The MINTRAC Scholarship Program is administered by the MINTRAC Scholarship Committee which works against written rules as shown in **Appendix 1**. The Committee reports to the MINTRAC Board and consists of a minimum of four members, three of whom must be members of the MINTRAC Board. The MINTRAC Board can appoint a fourth committee member from another organisation relevant to the meat industry. In addition, the chairman of the MINTRAC Board can attend Committee meetings and vote. The Committee can refer a matter for decision to the full MINTRAC Board for guidance and resolution. The committee generally operates on a majority vote basis in handling and assessing applications.

¹ Financial Aid Glossary, <http://www.fastweb.com/financial-aid/articles/815-financial-aid-glossary?page=5>. Accessed 13 July 2012.

4.6 SELECTION CRITERIA

Currently there are two main streams of scholarships available:

4.6.1 Criteria for the Employee Upskilling (EU) Scholarship

To be eligible for this type of scholarship the applicant must:

- Be a meat processing worker employed full-time in the meat industry for a minimum of two years
- Have the support of his/her employer in the industry
- Be enrolling in a qualification in a tertiary establishment at Diploma level or higher which is not eligible for Government funding through traineeships (although Cert. IV qualifications may be accepted in exceptional circumstances)
- Be enrolling in a qualification relevant to their career development plan.

In addition, successful applicants are required to submit to MINTRAC two progress reports in the first year of their study and one report each year for the remainder of the course. They must also provide a written case study to MINTRAC and submit a completed evaluation questionnaire within one month of achieving their final qualification. The format for the evaluation questionnaire is well-structured and is designed to provide MINTRAC and stakeholders with a comprehensive picture of the results of the scholarship for the individual and for the sponsoring company.

Under the EU scholarship, scholars are required to stay in the employ of their sponsor for the grant or within the meat industry.

4.6.2 Criteria for the Undergraduate (UG) Scholarship:

To be eligible for this type of scholarship the applicant must:

- Be undertaking full-time tertiary studies for the first time
- Be studying for a qualification which is relevant to the meat processing industry
- Be a permanent Australian resident
- Agree to work in a meat processing plant for six weeks per annum for the duration of the qualification with the intent to continue employment with the plant on completion of the qualification
- Agree to participate in the MLA Undergraduate Program in the summer break prior to their final year of study
- Have written support from a (levy-paying) meat processing plant which indicates:
 - How the student will be employed throughout their study
 - A proposed career plan for the student
 - Where the student will likely be employed in the company upon completion of their studies
 - How the qualification will benefit the plant and the industry

Successful applicants in the UG stream are also required to present a progress report to MINTRAC each semester and to submit a completed evaluation report after achieving their qualifications. The sponsoring company is also expected to provide a progress report to MINTRAC when the scholar has worked at the plant to meet their work experience obligation of six weeks per annum.

4.7 APPLICATION MECHANISM

At the conclusion of their course of study, scholars were expected to provide a 2-3 page summary of what their course has meant for them, its relevance to their employment, the impact it has had on their skills levels, and suggested improvements for the scholarship scheme. In the past, scholars have usually been paid an additional \$200 bonus incentive after providing the report, over and above their scholarship funding.

4.8 ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS FOR MINTRAC SCHOLARSHIPS

The Scholarship Committee rules state that applications will be assessed and actioned within three weeks of receipt of the complete application. MINTRAC advises that the assessment is usually done electronically i.e. applications and supporting documents are circulated by email, unless the Committee is already meeting for other reasons.

MINTRAC advises that the committee examines each application on a case-by-case basis. The scholarship criteria are used to assess the expected relevance of the course of study and the subsequent likely value to the particular enterprise and to the wider industry. The Committee also looks at the information provided by the processor to substantiate the application, including length of time with the company and their plans, if any have been developed, for the employee's progress through the company. This is not always forthcoming with every application but it assists the committee to get a clearer picture of why the study will be beneficial for the employee and the firm and whether the processing firm has considered 'next steps'.

4.9 EXPECTED LEVEL OF SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING

In the period 2008 to 2011, an estimated \$221,210 was allocated for new scholarships as follows:

Scholarship Stream	Anticipated Value of Scholarships to Completion
Undergraduate	\$60,200.00
Employee Upskilling	\$161,010.00
Grand Total:	\$221,210.00

Source: MINTRAC database

4.10 PROMOTION PROGRAM FOR THE MINTRAC SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME

According to MINTRAC's Milestone reports for the projects in the years 2008-2011, the MSP has been promoted and marketed through the following means:

1. MINTRACer newsletter (monthly or bi-monthly)
2. Presentations at the MINTRAC annual training conference
3. Inviting scholars to attend or present at MINTRAC network meetings
4. Case studies and articles on the MINTRAC website
5. Preparation of scholarship and research outcomes in the Program folder (provided to all meat processing companies).
6. Participation in the Australian Careers Service Advisor Seminars (2010) to promote the extensive range of careers in the Australian meat industry.

5 CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING THE MINTRAC SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Because the MSP is industry-funded and designed to strengthen the capabilities of employees, firms and the wider industry, the Program needs to have a clear system for measuring outcomes and for reporting these results back to industry. In this way, companies can learn about the opportunities available through the Program, modifications to administration and selection processes can be made for future benefit, and the return on the funds invested through the scheme can be demonstrated.

The following assessment criteria were developed from the project's Terms of Reference and after consideration of the overall objectives for the Program. The report has used these criteria to evaluate the program's progress over the past three years and to gain a better understanding of its assets and deficiencies in order to offer conclusions and recommendations about future changes to the program and the way it is promoted and marketed.

Table 2: Evaluation Criteria for the Mintrac Scholarship Program 2008-2012

No.	CRITERIA
1.	Dissemination of results of studies to industry
2.	Relevance of topic areas and projects undertaken by scholar
3.	Completion rates for course of study
4.	Retention rates for scholars
5.	Demographics of scholars and participating companies
6.	Information relating to issues, needs and gaps, utilising former recommendations and current views
7.	Formulation and action on recommendations from milestone reports

5.1 DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS OF STUDIES TO INDUSTRY

MINTRAC has submitted timely and concise Milestone Reports (MR) to MLA and AMPC as a project milestone for the scholarship program's execution for each of the three years in the review period. The Milestone Reports provide good status updates on all current scholarships. The MR also includes the scholars' summaries which are required under the scholarship terms to be submitted at the end of their course of study.

5.1.1 Reports to Plants and other Stakeholders

The MR and associated materials indicate that MINTRAC has made a strong and consistent effort to disseminate the results to industry of the scholars' progress and, where relevant, summaries of their final reports. Since 2008 MINTRAC has used a graphic designer to take the scholars' final report summaries and produce high-quality outcomes brochures for circulation to plants, stakeholders and to industry publications. In earlier years, many of the final reports pertained to Honours and PhD scholars; but progress updates from EU and UG scholars are also included in the summaries distributed to industry.

5.1.2 Awareness-Raising through Conferences and Publications

Industry conferences are an ideal way to market the MSP, to raise its profile among processing companies and to encourage more plants and employees to become involved. In the past, MINTRAC organized to present a summary of scholarship achievements at industry conferences: this initially had limited impact as delegates can sometimes be absent from sessions and not hear the presentation “sell” or the program’s annual results. (This point was actually raised during the project’s consultation phase with industry: company officers recognised the potential to present to this type of audience, but also that conference attendees can be somewhat “mercurial”). MINTRAC now ensures these presentations are scheduled for full plenary sessions so they can maximise exposure about the Program’s progress and highlight the specific achievements of young scholars.

It would be worthwhile in future if presentations at industry events could continue to incorporate an introduction of a recent scholar, not necessarily to give results of their research, but to attest to the positive changes the scholarship has brought about in their work experience and the benefits for their company. The message came through clearly in the consultation phase that MINTRAC should be highlighting and raising the profile of scholars and their progress, providing positive reinforcement and support about the personal effort they are making and how they are applying this experience in their workplace. Along these lines, scholars’ attendance at relevant industry conferences may also be worth considering. MINTRAC can take these steps more readily if conference organisers are receptive and supportive of this wider goal. Fortunately, MINTRAC has strong relationships with other stakeholder groups and can be expected to take advantage of the many forums, seminars and other gatherings that regularly occur throughout the year.

The industry newsletter *Mintracker* was also successfully used to disseminate outcomes of the scholarship program. The newsletter is circulated widely in the industry and strikes the right note for the program’s upskilling stream. Conceivably, this avenue could also be exploited to take the MSP message even further, with a special issue celebrating recent graduates; a profile of their study plan and tips; or as a means of promoting the on-line support services which could become available if the program is re-launched in 2013.

Other means of disseminating information about project results could include the Red Meat Innovation site, guest spots on the AMPC or MLA websites to increase exposure, editorial material for industry news sites, and specialised industry groups that meet quarterly e.g. environmental officers, QA officers, etc.

At present, MSP pays each scholar a bonus of \$200 for submitting a report at the conclusion of his/her studies, discussing what the experience has meant to them and how it will advantage them in their work. Most of the scholars’ end reports which are attached to the MR have been thoughtful and positive as to what the scholarship has meant for them and the impact it has had on their professional development. It is important that scholars understand the importance of these attestations as a means of conveying the benefits of the scholarship and providing encouragement to other prospective students.

It may be worthwhile, given that small projects (where scholars identified a particular problem of issue for further study) are no longer funded through the MSP, to adjust the scholarship conditions in the future so that participating plants assign their undergraduate a specific project which results in a written report during the vacation placement and also provides some further structure for the student’s placement at the processing plant or workplace.

Regular and consistent reporting back to industry, through distribution of outcomes brochures, editorial and notices in industry publications, and presentation at industry events, is continuing to keep stakeholders informed in a timely and concise format about the progress of the scholarship program and the impact of the scholarships' opportunities on the employees and undergraduates.

5.2 RELEVANCE OF TOPIC AREAS AND PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN BY SCHOLAR

The second criterion for evaluation looks at the relevance of the subject and topic areas being undertaken by scholars under the MSP. This is a key assessment criterion when the Scholarship Committee reviews applications and has been consistently tightened over the past ten years of the Program's operation. The task is more straightforward when scholars are undertaking a postgraduate degree or Honours year because these normally require the selection of a specific hypothesis to be researched. By contrast, undergraduates and upskilling employees who enrol in graduate diplomas, diplomas or bachelor's degrees do not normally have to select a research topic, however, it is still important that the committee be satisfied that there is clear value and relevance in the nominated course to the operations of the processing industry.

Having the ability to refer to the results of an industry capability audit would be beneficial in this instance as it would suggest to the scholarships committee which areas have higher priority needs than others. In its absence, the committee is reliant on the judgment of the panel members and also the strength of the endorsement from the processor supporting the application (and who will pay 30% of the course fees).

A diverse range of qualifications and subject specialties has been nominated by the scholars who used the MSP during the review period. Virtually all of the qualifications could be argued to be relevant to businesses in the processing sector, with a high number of scholars nominating a course in business management or business administration, human resource management, occupational health and agribusiness. Courses associated with engineering, maintenance management and information management were less common, as were courses in rural science or animal science.

Table 3: Type of Qualifications Commenced under MSP 2008-2012

Qualification	Undergrad.	Upskilling	Grand Total
Bachelor of Applied Science/Science	4		4
Bachelor of Biological Sciences	1		1
Bachelor of Business		1	1
Bachelor of Business Economics	1		1
Diploma of Business Management		4	4
Diploma of Business Marketing		1	1
Graduate Cert. Business Administration		2	2
Master of Business Administration		2	2
Bachelor of Commerce	2		2
Bachelor of Computer Science		2	2
Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Science	1		1
Diploma in OHS		3	3

Qualification	Undergrad.	Upskilling	Grand Total
Bachelor of Occupational Therapy	1		1
Bachelor of Veterinary Science	1		1
Grad. Diploma in Maintenance Management		1	1
Associate Degree in Engineering		1	1
Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering	1		1
Masters of Environment		1	1
Master Human Resource Management		3	3
Master of Agribusiness or Business		3	3
Cert IV		2	2
Grand Total:	12	26	38

Source: MINTRAC Database

The major investment of time and financial resources by the MSP and the processing companies themselves in funding and supporting the scholars indicates that there should be a clear link between the courses approved and how they will contribute to the industry's progress. Particularly in the case of undergraduate scholarships, where the student usually has no previous contact with the processing sector, there needs to be a strong reason to conclude that the scholar can make a worthwhile contribution during the work experience phase and might elect to enter the industry at the end of the tertiary course. This also underscores the need to ensure that students in the undergraduate stream receive a thoroughly comprehensive introduction to the processing sector and the opportunities which it offers. In the case of employees seeking to upskill, the potential benefits or payback to industry may be easier to see, and this should be apparent from the quality of their scholarship applications.

Mixed feedback was received from the consultation phase about this criterion. Several companies advised they closely scrutinize applications for support in upskilling degrees and require employees to give a written statement of how the course will benefit both parties. Other processors, however, took a longer term view and felt it was important firstly to be positive with employees who wish to improve their qualifications. This group also felt that many employees would quickly spark off the feeling of empowerment that can come with further study and that relevance to the enterprise would quickly be apparent in terms of innovation, application to tasks and mentoring of other personnel.

It is apparent that courses undertaken either by undergraduates or current employees need to offer medium to long term value and relevance to the industry and to the employee. That said, it is also important the industry, like other agricultural and commodities industries, be able to attract new graduates who will also be considering other industries for eventual employment, and not be unnecessarily restrictive about the final outcomes and short term relevance of their course of study.

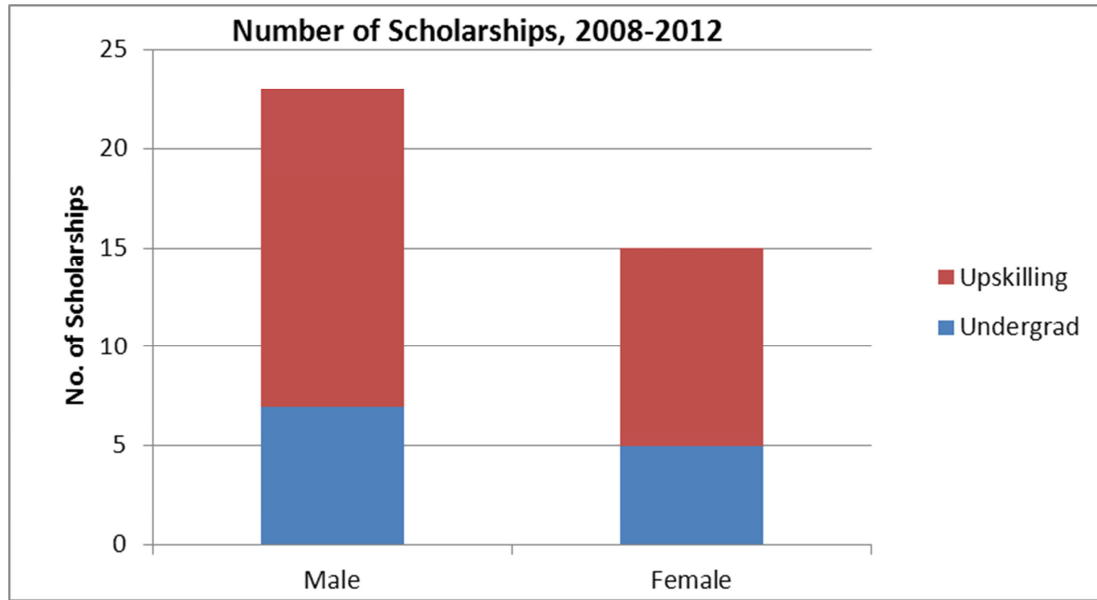
5.3 DEMOGRAPHICS OF SCHOLARS AND PARTICIPATING COMPANIES

This criterion relates to information collected about scholarships in the undergraduate and employee upskilling streams and is designed to provide an overall perspective on how the program is progressing and the likely impact it is having at an industry level.

The annual MINTRAC Milestone Reports and the scholarships database also gave the project team a concise means of looking at emerging trends within the program.

Data supplied by MINTRAC indicated active scholarships in the period 2008-2012 were held predominantly by males, particularly in the employee upskilling stream. Results are indicated in Figure 1.

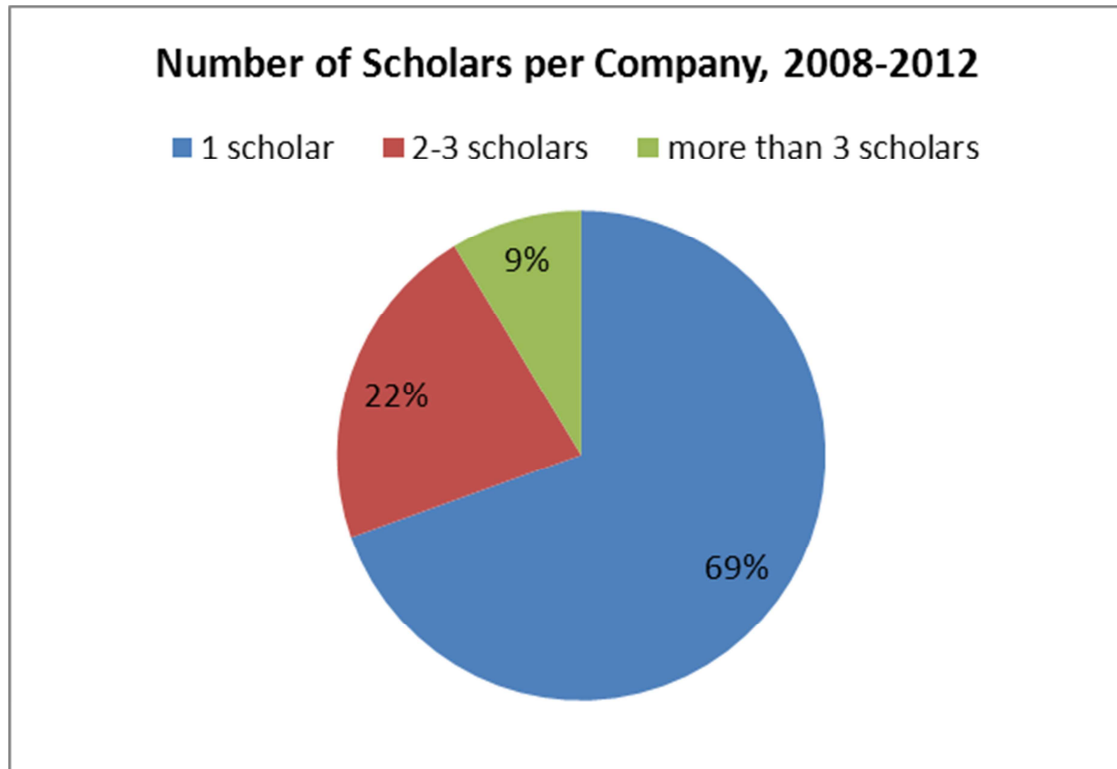
Figure 1: Number of Scholarships by Gender, 2008-2012



This result is probably roughly in proportion to the number of females employed across the meat industry. It is possible however that company management might respond positively to more efforts being made to grant employee upskilling scholarships to females in supervisory, management and operational roles. If the MSP is to be re-launched, it may be beneficial to have a better understanding of the male/female ratio in processing plants and the approximate numbers involved in production, supervisory, ancillary and management sections.

The scholarship program is open to all companies paying the AMPC levy, however, only 23 companies nationwide from a potential pool of over 120 companies actually participated in the MSP in the period under discussion. Fifteen of the companies had only one scholar each in the Programme during the period under review. Two companies had five or more scholars during this period. These figures are presented in Figure 2 and suggest that there is substantial opportunity to encourage more companies and their employees to utilize the funds available under the MSP for professional development and increased capabilities.

Approximately 50 % of the companies participating in the MSP during this period could be classified as major processors (producing in excess of 70,000 mt carcase weight per annum), while medium-scale and small-scale enterprises represented around 32% and 18% respectively of the companies involved in the scheme. This suggests that there is also strong potential to expand awareness and participation rates in the program among smaller processing firms.

Figure 2: Use of the Scholarship Program by Processing Companies, 2008-2012

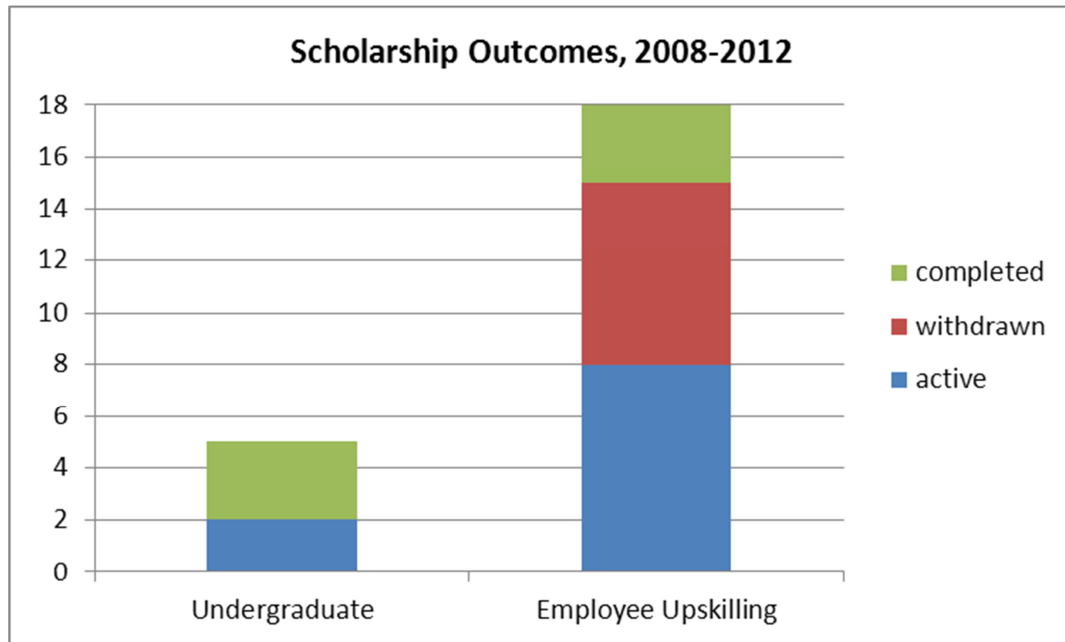
Source: MINTRAC database

5.4 COMPLETION RATES FOR COURSE OF STUDY

The MINTRAC scholarships database contains details relating to the start date and finish dates for all scholarships, in addition to status and outcome (active, withdrawal, completed). Analysis of this data is slightly complicated by the fact that courses may be undertaken on a part-time basis over anything up to 7 or 8 years, while others are full-time scholars (particularly in the undergraduate stream). In addition, scholars in either stream sometimes need to defer for a semester or an entire year due to work or personal commitments. MINTRAC has developed a positive reputation with human resources personnel for keeping in contact about progress (or lack thereof) by the scholar and for offering support and practical solutions to re-engage after study deferrals.

It is interesting to note that approximately 30% of employee upskilling scholarships have eventually resulted in withdrawal from the course; 30% having been completed; and the remaining 40% still in progress. By contrast, the undergraduate stream, operating off a much lower base, has recorded no withdrawals from the study course over the same period, with 84% of scholarships already completed and the balance expected to be completed in 2013.

Completion rates therefore are markedly higher for the undergraduate stream than for the employee upskilling stream: this can be partly attributed to the fact that the UG scholars are normally studying full-time, and are in the main familiar with study skills, report writing and other skills that can sometimes take part-time or mature age scholars longer to either develop or revive. As well, full-time scholars are generally younger than full-time employees who may well have the commitments of paid employment as well as pressing family and financial obligations. Outcomes for scholarships let in the period 2008-2012 are shown at Figure 3.

Figure 3: Scholarship Outcomes by Stream, 2008-2012

Source: MINTRAC database

The relatively high level of withdrawals from the course suggests that scholars may be in need of more support or better information about what to expect in the course of their studies. The MSP recognised this fact in 2009 and introduced a study skills course for upskilling employees to acquaint them with different techniques and approaches for handling the demands of course assignments, note-taking, deadlines etc while also working full-time and possibly also being responsible for a family. This was a pro-active step on the part of MINTRAC and was a resounding success as evidenced by the feedback from scholars on the day at the workshops and in their subsequent reports. Other examples of this kind should be considered as it is a positive and practical means of supporting upskilling employees and helping them to make their best efforts in their study for their own benefit and for their employer.

5.5 RETENTION RATES FOR SCHOLARS

5.5.1 Retention rates for Undergraduate scholars

The retention to industry rate for scholars from the undergraduate stream is low and has been throughout the program's commencement. Only 2 scholars from the UG stream in the past four years have entered full-time employment in the industry after completing their qualifications.

Few scholars at the end of their course of study have evinced strong interest in staying in the meat industry and working with their sponsorship company. This may also reflect the relative lack of preparation or planning by their sponsors who are not always sure what to do with a recent graduate or whether their company structure can accommodate him/her. Feedback provided by undergraduate stream scholars after their final work assignment tends to confirm this: they are often unaware of the diverse nature of the industry and may have only been exposed to one or two components of the processing business e.g. animal handling, laboratory work or environmental tasks.

For this reason a comprehensive program to show scholars at the beginning and during their studies the many facets of the industry could be highly beneficial. MINTRAC is ideally placed to coordinate and prepare this type of presentation which could also dovetail with similar schemes organized by Meat and Livestock Australia's graduate program.

The low retention rate for undergraduate scholars however should not be seen as a failure of the MSP or suggest that the UG stream is a futile effort. What it suggests instead is that the marketing pitch for the UG stream needs to be adjusted in line with offerings from other industries and sectors and, in particular, that it should offer prospective scholars a clear indication of how the scholarship program will assist them to 'transition' into full-time employment in the meat processing industry after completing their qualification.

It was also suggested during the course of the project that in this respect the MINTRAC programme should require prospective scholars to attend the 5-day the Intercollegiate Meat Judging Program (ICMJ) and in particular the careers day in the ICMJ. This is a sound idea because it is an efficient and effective way of introducing students to the industry's many facets and the opportunities it presents. The ICMJ program has the advantage of being a highly developed scheme with excellent access to numerous facilities and events in Australia and internationally. It enables young students to meet industry leaders and researchers and to discuss myriad topics relating to meat production and marketing. This type of program, running in parallel with the MSP, can bring perspective and encouragement to prospective UG scholars because it demonstrates the possibilities that exist in the meat industry after graduation.

5.5.2 Retention rates for Employee Upskilling scholars

MINTRAC maintains if possible a watching brief for 12 months on career moves of EU scholars after completing their qualification. A high proportion of these scholars stay with the company which sponsored their studies for the first 12 months. Few scholars leave the meat industry during this period, despite the fact that typically these qualifications would be equally attractive to employers in other industries such as agriculture, mining, environmental management or manufacturing. It seems reasonable to assume that the high rate of retention currently observed for EU scholars indicates that employee and employer have benefitted from the opportunities afforded by the scholarship being granted.

It may be valuable if MINTRAC were able to maintain contact with scholars after they finish their qualification, not simply to record any changes in employer or industry, but also to note changes in role and responsibilities and to identify if the scholars have started to mentor other employees and encourage their professional development. Over time this information will assist the overall understanding of the scholarship uptake process and will enable a stronger marketing presence to be developed.

5.6 INFORMATION RELATING TO ISSUES, NEEDS AND GAPS

This section of the report addresses a range of issues and factors which are thought to have an effect on the flexibility and uptake rate for the MSP.

5.6.1 Current capability status of processing companies' workforce

As noted earlier, the completion of an industry capability audit will assist the effectiveness of the MINTRAC scholarship program by enabling the selection committee to consider capability gaps and to potentially recommend changes to the nominated course of study where appropriate.

5.6.2 Career development paths and succession planning

There is currently little information available on the degree to which management at processing companies considers succession planning, hiring policies (internal vs external hires) and the level of professional development required for their workforce.

It was identified in the MSP objectives that few scholars enter the processing sector after their graduation, however, the reasons for this are still not yet clearly understood and it has been suggested that it is often related to the fact that the sponsoring firm sometimes fail to follow up with discussions about future employment after graduation; potential roles and responsibilities in the organisation for the scholar; and may be unsure as to whether there is a place for the graduate in their hierarchy.

MINTRAC may wish to address this by revisiting the proposed career plan which is submitted by the firm with the scholar's initial application in the last year of the scholar's course of study. In this way, there may be sufficient time for the processing firm to assess whether there is a role there for the graduate and to make relevant preparations.

If this aspect of the program is further strengthened (mostly by the sponsoring companies), the MSP could attain a higher success and retention rate and industry stakeholders will increasingly see the value in the scholarship program.

5.6.3 Industry Outlook for Professional Development

During the course of the project the consultants contacted eight companies and obtained feedback on the scholarship scheme and related issues about training and development.

Industry seems highly pleased with how the scheme has been administered and developed to date. Spokespeople provided complimentary feedback about the efficiency, response time and MINTRAC's overall conduct of the program. This level of service has presumably also made the enterprise's human resources role easier in managing their scholars.

The decision in 2010-2011 to suspend the letting of new scholarships was a disappointment to management at most of the companies contacted because it negatively impacted their plans for the professional development of current staff. Companies are keen to have the scheme reinstated and there were few suggestions as to how to improve the scheme's structure and operations. Suggestions made for improvements are largely in line with the recommendations provided in the MR and referred to in Section 5.7.

5.6.3.1 UPSKILLING STREAM

Respondents noted that their experience with the MSP has been overwhelmingly positive, particularly for the upskilling scholarship component. The MSP is an effective and cost-efficient way for these companies to reward and re-train employees in their organisation who have shown promise as supervisors and managers.

Professional development of staff is important to processing companies because their businesses are increasingly required by government and customers to implement programs, systems and processes in a wide range of areas – animal welfare, product testing, environmental and supply chain compliance. These companies want better educated employees to properly undertake these tasks and they believe their company can more effectively respond to these requirements if they receive training and development. This assertion was made both by companies with large annual turnover and by smaller enterprises.

Overall companies were highly aware of the factors which could contribute to scholars failing subjects or withdrawing altogether from their course of study. These were identified as conflicting demands from work, family and study; loss of focus; loss of interest in the course of study; the sense of isolation which scholars may feel when completing a course by distance education; and the lack of research and report writing skills. While management was often aware of these factors, there was a strong belief that the company could only do so much to support the student in this regard. It was widely agreed that strengthening the MINTRAC scheme through development of an online support component was a sound idea. Any measures which potentially assist the scholar to finish the course of study would be equally beneficial to the company. In the past, scholars who prevaricate, withdraw or continually postpone their course components are a source of frustration to managers, not just because of the delay and inconvenience, but also it makes companies reluctant to support other upskilling scholarship applications in the future.

The scholarship database indicates that the number of scholars suspending or withdrawing from their courses has declined over the past six years.

It was apparent from these discussions that companies already do a reasonable amount of pre-screening of applicants before they support the scholarship application, in order to determine if the employee is sincere and committed; is likely to be a long-term asset to the company; has chosen a study course of some relevance to the firm; and whether the associated changes in rosters, fill-in labour for study time away and other factors are likely to be too costly or disruptive. Several companies stated that they are reluctant to have more than a few staff at one time on upskilling scholarships because it becomes too difficult to factor absences into the overall work routine.

Overall, company spokespeople were matter-of-fact about scholars moving to other processors or other industries after completing their study course, observing that many of these employees are self-starters anyway and are generally aware of other opportunities becoming available at other plants. Understandably, management stated they would feel perturbed if a worker left their employment for another plant before finishing their study course and that they would not support a scholar who was not genuine in motivation. There did emerge, however, from several managers the view that the processing industry as a whole must be determined to improve the professional development of its workforce across the board, and that resignations and defections are part of the risks in achieving this overall goal.

5.6.3.2 UNDERGRADUATE STREAM

The issue of undergraduate scholarships (that is, students commencing a 3 or 4 year undergraduate degree, with minimal or no work experience in the meat industry) was slightly more problematic. Under the current rules of the MSP, scholars can receive funding for up to 70% of their course costs for full-time or part-time study once the scholar reaches an agreement with a processor and also agrees to take paid employment at the company for six weeks (typically during the long university break in the period November – February).

As noted in the point immediately above, managers agree with the objective of attracting new blood into the industry and that attaining a tertiary degree in any one of a number of fields will be beneficial at an enterprise and an industry level. The stumbling block for some firms, however, seems to be deciding what to do with the scholar during the work experience period; how to keep the scholar on track; how to provide supervision (often during the Christmas/New Year period when senior staff are on leave), and how best to maximise the investment in the scholarship at the end of the course. Employers may be reluctant to offer

employment as a graduate at the start of the scholarship, not certain of how the relationship with the scholar will develop, whether he/she will be suited to the firm, and also being uncertain (except in larger organisations that have a consistent focus on succession planning, staff development and business expansion) what the company’s needs might be in 3 or 4 years’ time.

At the same time, these firms acknowledge that support for undergraduates in the form of scholarships and worthwhile employment tasks during summer holidays could actually result in an effective and relatively efficient way of (i) introducing new blood into their organisations, (ii) injecting new approaches and methodologies into diverse sections of the company, and (iii) being able to have a specific challenge or task thoroughly researched and followed up, which permanent employees might not have either the skills or time available to do.

Despite the fact that the MSP has been suspended, it was interesting to note that some companies will proceed with their own undergraduate selection and mentoring program regardless of whether or when the MSP is re-activated. These processors have introduced and refined their own talent identification processes within their businesses and among prospective undergraduate workers; they are keen to support the professional development of these workers and students (across a range of aptitudes and skill-sets); and they advise the program’s suspension has slowed, but not stopped, their efforts in regard to staff’s professional development.

5.7 REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations have formed an important part of each year’s Milestone Report and generally reflect the consideration that the MINTRAC scholarship committee and MINTRAC staff have given to ensuring the program stays current, is responsive to scholars’ and employers’ needs and requests, and maximises the return on investment to the industry. In particular the recommendations are positive responses to the fact that undergraduate students (and, to a lesser extent employees looking to upskill) often have numerous potential opportunities open to them for financial support and employment placement at the end of their studies. Many of these recommendations should be incorporated into the recommended re-launch of the Program for 2013.

Table 4: Recommendations from Milestone Reports

Recommendation	Action/Comment
2007/08 Milestone Report Recommendations	
Continuing with the open application period with no closing date to further encourage applications.	Recommendation was actioned. Overall impact was good as it encouraged applications early in the new academic year. Shows flexibility for students commencing a new course and presumably does not interfere with budget forecasts.

Recommendation	Action/Comment		
<p>Promote the MSP through MINTRAC newsletter, MINTRACker, Training Manager and QA Manager Networks, MLA publications and MINTRAC National Conference.</p> <p>Engage with the MLA UG programme and liaise with the projects officer about specific promotional activities.</p> <p>Arrange a study skills workshop with an industry networking session with representatives from industry discussing their role and possible alternative career paths.</p>	<p>Actioned; positive response obtained from industry and stakeholders. All efforts to raise profile are normally worthwhile and have to be continually sustained.</p> <p>Outcome – not known</p> <p>Actioned; study skills workshop was highly successful and should be incorporated into any online presence for the MSP.</p>		
2008/09 Milestone Report Recommendations			
<p>Set up an online network forum.</p> <p>Engage with the MLA UG programme and liaise with the projects officer about specific promotional activities.</p>	<p>Not actioned. See below.</p> <p>Outcome unknown.</p>		
2009/10 Milestone Report Recommendations			
<p style="text-align: center;">A number of these recommendations emanated from the MINTRAC program audit conducted in 2009/2010. The audit was well organized and the report highlighted a number of questions about the actual focus and objective of the MSP for resolution.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td data-bbox="233 1209 776 1862" style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Undergraduate pre-attendance at an introductory workshop on the meat industry.</p> </td> <td data-bbox="776 1209 1380 1862" style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Would be beneficial for all parties: enable MINTRAC to identify strong candidates for scholarship; attune UG students to the diverse requirements and activities in the meat industry; contributes to the overall professional development tasks which the industry has already commenced.</p> <p>This could be developed in conjunction with AMPC and MLA and participants (companies and prospective scholars) should receive some recognition through the usual marketing, promotion and news feature avenues.</p> <p>Similarly, a comprehensive but longer program could be developed at the same time for UG when they embark on their 6 weeks of in-plant work to get a closer picture of the numerous divisions involved in a typical plant.</p> </td> </tr> </table>		<p>Undergraduate pre-attendance at an introductory workshop on the meat industry.</p>	<p>Would be beneficial for all parties: enable MINTRAC to identify strong candidates for scholarship; attune UG students to the diverse requirements and activities in the meat industry; contributes to the overall professional development tasks which the industry has already commenced.</p> <p>This could be developed in conjunction with AMPC and MLA and participants (companies and prospective scholars) should receive some recognition through the usual marketing, promotion and news feature avenues.</p> <p>Similarly, a comprehensive but longer program could be developed at the same time for UG when they embark on their 6 weeks of in-plant work to get a closer picture of the numerous divisions involved in a typical plant.</p>
<p>Undergraduate pre-attendance at an introductory workshop on the meat industry.</p>	<p>Would be beneficial for all parties: enable MINTRAC to identify strong candidates for scholarship; attune UG students to the diverse requirements and activities in the meat industry; contributes to the overall professional development tasks which the industry has already commenced.</p> <p>This could be developed in conjunction with AMPC and MLA and participants (companies and prospective scholars) should receive some recognition through the usual marketing, promotion and news feature avenues.</p> <p>Similarly, a comprehensive but longer program could be developed at the same time for UG when they embark on their 6 weeks of in-plant work to get a closer picture of the numerous divisions involved in a typical plant.</p>		

Recommendation	Action/Comment
<p data-bbox="358 422 651 449">Interviews for selection.</p> <p data-bbox="280 1041 732 1108">Set qualifications that the scholarship program will support.</p>	<p data-bbox="792 258 1377 455">Would be beneficial for UG and EU applicants. Applicants and MINTRAC become better acquainted; prospective scholars they can defend their funding request and articulate the potential benefits for employer and themselves in further education.</p> <p data-bbox="792 485 1377 617">The MSP will be strengthened by developing this type of relationship and adding some prestige to the scholars’ appointment from either stream.</p> <p data-bbox="792 646 1377 779">The 2010 audit identified the UG scholarship criteria might be too loosely interpreted and actually contribute to the low number of graduates entering the industry after graduation.</p> <p data-bbox="792 869 1377 1136">Two options were proposed: that the selection committee work annually to an agreed list of qualifications which the industry needs (this could be augmented by the results of the skills capability audit); or work in conjunction with MLA and specific processors to identify a specific skills need and fill it through a tailor-made scholarship.</p> <p data-bbox="792 1226 1377 1493">Both these options have great merit and will serve to: identify skills that are currently lacking in the industry; encourage processors to think about not only supporting a scholar but also employing a graduate; and provide the scholarship selection committee with a more structured point of reference when assessing applications.</p>

Recommendation	Action/Comment
<p data-bbox="310 590 699 621">Set up an online network forum.</p> <p data-bbox="298 1402 714 1434">Professional development support.</p>	<p data-bbox="787 254 1377 495">Strongly recommended and likely to be of great benefit to all scholars, particularly those in the EU stream who complete their studies externally. The online forum could be run off the MINTRAC site or another stakeholders' website and will need some moderation and supervision, aside from the webmaster tasks.</p> <p data-bbox="787 522 1377 863">Potential facets of the forum could be student blogs, Q and A, study skills, reminders of reports due, spotlight on scholars, job opportunities for graduates, visits by past scholars who are in the workforce, links to mentors, templates to assist scholars, apps and calculators commonly used by students, ad links to sponsoring processing companies, ad links to rural / industry events, links to e-news services (MeatNet, Beef Central, etc).</p> <p data-bbox="787 890 1377 953">This recommendation was supported by the Scholarships Committee in the MR for 2010.</p> <p data-bbox="787 980 1377 1148">The MR for 2010 noted that more could be done to support scholars' professional development in terms of invitations to professional network meetings and to expand their knowledge of the industry.</p> <p data-bbox="787 1176 1377 1381">This is a positive goal for MINTRAC to pursue because it reinforces the primary objectives of the MSP. Moreover it contributes to the improvement in professional development and training levels which the wider industry is increasingly seeking to accomplish.</p> <p data-bbox="787 1409 1377 1787">There are numerous industry events in regional centres which would enable virtually all scholars to attend at least one conference/presentation per annum or possibly per semester. It is further recommended that funding be made available to achieve this level of exposure for scholars and that the employee also be acknowledged for allowing this to occur. In this way both the scholar and the sponsor achieve recognition for the contribution they are expecting to be making to the industry.</p> <p data-bbox="787 1814 1377 1877">It is intended for the Final Report to include a proposed list of events to support this</p>

Recommendation	Action/Comment
<p>Post-qualification commitment to the industry.</p>	<p>recommendation.</p> <p>Not actioned prior to MSP's suspension.</p> <p>This recommendation was made to strengthen the chances of UG scholars seeking employment in the industry after graduation. Currently the scholarship criteria encourage this but leave the prospect open-ended.</p> <p>This is part and parcel of raising the overall professional development levels in the processing sector and improving the image of the meat industry as a dynamic environment with many job opportunities for the recent graduate.</p> <p>MINTRAC staff have attended careers adviser events in the past two years to advertise the types of opportunities available through the UG scholarship stream. This recommendation is a logical progression from attracting more and higher-quality applicants for the MSP.</p> <p>MINTRAC's 2009/10 scholarship audit highlighted instances of other industries which have built cadetship programs; this could be a useful template for further investigation. It seems that scholars need encouragement to look closely at job prospects in meat processing, and the processing sector overall needs to redouble its efforts to lift the standards of professional development and training. Scholars will look at industries which offer easy and smooth transition from studies to employment and these are currently offered in other sectors.</p> <p>Another way of pursuing this goal may be to work with the careers advisers at say 5 – 10 tertiary educational institutions across the country to develop a scholarship program that is competitive and offers successful applicants a strong chance of employment at the end of their studies.</p>

Recommendation	Action/Comment
<p>Postgraduate applications be reviewed by industry experts.</p>	<p>Unknown outcome. Postgraduate applications no longer part of MSP coverage.</p> <p>This recommendation relates mainly to the postgraduate stream which it is understood is no longer being offered.</p> <p>It would have limited benefit in regard to considering applications for the UG and EU streams. To date the decisions by the Scholarship Committee appear to have been made with diligence and have had reasonably good outcomes, particularly for the EU streams. The lower rate of retention/industry employment for UG is probably less related to the composition of the Scholarship Committee than to fact that scholars' interests and focus can change considerably over a 3 or 4 year course. This cannot necessarily be predicted at the start of the academic course.</p> <p>MINTRAC administrative staff already appear to have good rapport with industry's human resources and management personnel and are able to translate this into effective and efficient management of the scholarship program. If the Committee were to receive updated guidelines as to skills gaps as discussed in earlier recommendations, this would likely lead to even tighter selection of successful candidates.</p>
<p align="center">2010/11 Milestone Report Recommendations</p> <p align="center">Nil –The MSP was placed on hold, pending project evaluation.</p>	

6 SWOT ANALYSIS FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

An analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relevant to the MSP are presented in Figure 4 below. The individual points were derived from review of the MR reports; the reports from scholars provided as part of their contractual requirements; feedback from human resources and management spokespeople at processing companies; and current information about staff training and development in the processing sector.

Figure 4: SWOT Analysis for the Scholarship Program

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Strong support by companies of all sizes.</p> <p>Assessment criteria are described as inclusive, encouraging and constructive.</p> <p>Responses to applications are timely and straightforward.</p> <p>Healthy availability of funds.</p> <p>Applications can be submitted on-line.</p> <p>Industry in favour of re-introducing the program.</p> <p>Processors currently undertake the majority of screening of applicants for upskilling scholarships.</p> <p>Administrative process has been efficient and organized, which benefits industry and applicants.</p> <p>Companies which have participated in the UG and EU streams are supportive and want to introduce new candidates for the scholarships.</p> <p>Responsible for enabling an increased proportion of meat industry personnel start to obtain tertiary qualifications or further education, who already have extensive experience in processing situations.</p> <p>Selection criteria for EU stream are not based on academic merit, enabling access to employees with no previous formal qualifications.</p> <p>A clear path for professional development in the industry will over time attract the attention of proactive scholars and</p>	<p>Currently under-subscribed.</p> <p>No binding obligations for undergraduates to enter the meat industry or to stay a 'reasonable' length of time.</p> <p>Currently there is no matching of scholarship grants to capability shortages in the processing industry as evidenced by gap analysis.</p> <p>Meaningful mentoring is sometimes difficult to initiate and to sustain.</p> <p>Scholars are not 'bonded' to stay with an employer or in the industry, so the return on investment over 3 or 4 years may be perceived as high risk.</p> <p>Some companies are keen to see the scholarship program concentrate on Cert. IV training rather than upskilling and undergraduate awards.</p> <p>There is a narrow perception about what working in the meat industry might entail, with school-leavers and careers advisers sometimes unable to envisage other than the retail sector or slaughter tasks.</p> <p>In-plant issues potentially stifle uptake of the EU offers, with concerns about time away from operational roles, the need for other workers to cover for them and the potential for upskilled workers to move elsewhere.</p> <p>There is anecdotal evidence that management sometimes does not maximise the 4-6 weeks of UG working at the site, which might negatively affect scholars' prospects for staying in the industry after achieving their</p>

<p>employees.</p>	<p>degree.</p> <p>Currently there is a perception that undergraduates, new to the industry, do not have a sufficiently strong understanding of the industry’s many facets.</p> <p>MINTRAC and processors can only influence some of the factors which cause scholars to suspend or withdraw from their studies.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>Increasing awareness of the scholarship will encourage more applications and will help worthwhile applicants to overcome financial inability to afford cost of university; develop professional perspective; and generally lift the professional profile of the meat industry.</p> <p>Advertise the program at career days, school newsletters.</p> <p>Report writing skills – exploit this before scholars start their courses.</p> <p>In line with the results of the skills audit for the processing sector, MINTRAC could short-list competencies/areas where scholarships are more actively promoted.</p> <p>For MINTRAC to design a structured program for the six weeks that scholars and companies adhere to, providing insight into all facets and tasks and responsibilities incl environmental, documentation, marketing, production areas.</p> <p>Opportunity to engage through social media.</p> <p>Develop a strong, online network presence particularly to support students who are doing external studies and feel the impact of isolation.</p> <p>There is good potential to set up a ‘meaningful mentoring’ program online or through a closed system of social media which recognises mentors’ experience and encourages completions of scholarships.</p> <p>Chance to work with high school vocational</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <p>Processors can perceive investment as wasted if scholar employee leaves their employ unreasonably soon after commencing or completing studies.</p> <p>An under-utilised and underpublicized scholarship program will not negate the perception of the industry as a dead-end job.</p> <p>Potential decline in companies willing to support the scholar through flexible working arrangements, work placements, funding etc.</p> <p>Ongoing resistance in giving scholars access to on-plant work. This will only perpetuate problems in uptake of scholarships. Perceived low rate of retention for undergrad scholarships may potentially weaken industry’s support for the program in the future.</p> <p>Withdrawing support for the undergraduate scholarship stream potentially sends a negative message to scholars and to industry about the prospects in the industry for professional development.</p> <p>Private colleges and TAFES which offer industry-based training formats for undergraduate degrees from 2012 are not being exploited for this.</p> <p>Perception that the approval process can be manipulated to favour specific companies based on their size, connections, funding contributions, or other factors.</p> <p>A strong case needs to be developed to show</p>

<p>programs in all states and territories to increase awareness of the fund and to portray Meat industry as a reliable employment prospect across many fields of endeavour.</p> <p>There are numerous career paths open to employees in the meat industry.</p> <p>Careers advisory services are expanding and this sector is hungry for more programs to offer school leavers.</p> <p>Training and development are moving to more advanced levels through national education standards: the meat industry can get on board with this momentum.</p> <p>The processing sector will likely grow in terms of revenue, career opportunities and profile. It needs more personnel for these responsibilities.</p> <p>Provision of scholarships for Cert. IV applications.</p> <p>Development of an online and social media presence for the MSP could help strengthen the scholarship program and potentially reduce the number of scholars who withdraw from the program.</p> <p>The online program could address some of the factors which cause scholars to suspend their studies or withdraw early from their course.</p>	<p>scholars and advisers the numerous ways to ‘transition’ from degree to gainful employment in the industry.</p>
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7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The report has evaluated the MINTRAC scholarship program (MSP) as operated in the period 2008-2011. As noted there are some anomalies in this period given that some scholarships commenced before this period, however, this did not significantly impact the results of the analysis.

The MSP has been well-administered and pro-active during this time and has followed on in a constructive fashion over the previous period when the scholarship program was becoming established. The Program's goals and objectives have been clearly articulated and are an integral part of the way in which the application, candidate selection and follow-up stages have been managed.

During this period MINTRAC has maintained consistently good reporting standards to industry and to other stakeholders. Selection criteria have been clear-cut and occasional instances of non-performance by scholars have been tactfully followed up.

The Program is designed to improve the skills of personnel currently in the industry as well as attract younger people with tertiary qualifications into the industry which will also assist industry with succession planning. While the level of new graduates entering the industry through the scholarship programme has been somewhat disappointing, this can be due to a number of factors, not all of which are under the control of the MSP.

Modifications and changes to the scheme's operations during the period under review have certainly led to a stronger and more flexible program which is well regarded by industry and, indeed, an important component of the professional development plans that many companies have themselves introduced over the past decade. Increasingly, processing firms are aware that their workforce needs more training, needs to acquire a better range of skills and needs to be drawn from a wider pool of employment than might have existed in previous years.

The decision to cease postgraduate and small projects has likely enabled MINTRAC through the MSP to focus more clearly on attracting and supporting high caliber undergraduate students and upskillers from operations and management areas. The hiatus in granting new scholarships has brought into sharp focus the need to continue the drive for more scholars by means of a revitalized program that calls on all parties to do more to showcase the possibilities that can flow from employment in the processing sector.

In particular, the undergraduate stream for the MSP should not be abandoned but should instead be the focus of revised criteria that enable the selection committee to improve the chances of sponsoring students with strong motivation to eventually enter the processing industry once their qualifications are completed.

The report therefore makes the following recommendations:

As discussed earlier in the report, the main challenge for the undergraduate stream (UG) seems to be attracting recent graduates to 'transition' into the industry – both by cultivating an interest in the numerous career avenues, as well as encouraging processing companies to work more pro-actively to this end. Some of the feedback received from the undergraduates in the MSP suggest that companies need to be more focused in developing a comprehensive

and thorough introduction to their businesses, to explain exactly what opportunities may arise and give more thought to the possible career path for the undergraduate. Currently, some graduates are allowed to 'drift' away because management either has no confidence in taking on another employee or has never given much thought as to the 'next steps' once their undergraduate student is finally available to enter the workforce on a full-time basis.

Meanwhile, the challenge for the employee upskilling (EU) component of the Scholarship Program can be summarised as supporting the scholars to obtain their qualifications in the face of existing commitments (financial, family, work) and negative factors (distance, isolation, dislocation, poor or out-of-date study skills). If these can be tackled effectively, In cooperation with the sponsoring company, the completion rate for this scholarship stream can likely be increased significantly.

- 1) The MINTRAC scholarship program should be re-commissioned in time for the 2013 academic year.
- 2) The results of the recent industry capability audit and gap analysis be finalised in order to assist the Scholarship committee, together with processing companies which sponsor the scholars, to focus on the areas of greatest need
- 3) Strengthen the Mentoring Program already proposed by the Milestone Report and Review. There is scope within the online support system currently under discussion to co-opt positive-minded middle level and senior level managers for mentoring roles with undergraduates and also with upskilling scholars. This could encompass perspective on research tasks, information sources and industry introductions.
- 4) Give recognition to recent scholars at industry events, meetings, through media coverage for those who have successfully completed their studies.
- 5) Encourage participation by more plants in placement activities and orientation to enable UG to get a clearer picture of the opportunities afforded by the processing sector
- 6) Increase awareness of the MSP through advertising, website promotion, cross-promotion with other industry entities, websites, careers advice services
- 7) Work with processors to develop a comprehensive introduction package about the industry for prospective scholarship holders
- 8) Develop a strong online support mechanism for the scholar community
- 9) Involve scholars in regional events and conferences related to the industry so that they are recognised and encouraged.
- 10) Work with processors well ahead of qualifications being completed to establish what type of role and responsibilities could be developed for the scholar upon graduation.

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APPENDIX

9 APPENDIX 1 –RULES FOR THE MINTRAC SCHOLARSHIPS COMMITTEE

1. The Scholarships Committee

The Scholarships Committee shall report to and be responsible to the MINTRAC Board.

The Scholarships Committee shall consist of a minimum of four members, three of whom must be members of the MINTRAC Board. The Board may appoint a fourth member from another organisation relevant to the meat industry.

The MINTRAC Board Chairman may attend a MINTRAC Scholarship Committee meeting at any time.

All positions on the Scholarship Committee shall be declared vacant, and members appointed at the first MINTRAC Board meeting immediately following the Annual General Meeting. Retiring members of the Scholarships Committee may be re-appointed.

The Scholarships Committee shall elect a Chairperson. The Chairperson must also be a member of the MINTRAC Board.

The MINTRAC Chief Executive Officer and the MINTRAC Project Officer responsible for management of the MINTRAC Scholarships Program shall be in attendance at all Scholarship Committee meetings, and will provide secretarial support to the Committee.

Decisions of the Scholarships Committee shall be determined by a majority vote of all members (not including MINTRAC staff). If the Board Chairman is in attendance, he/she has a right to a vote. The Scholarships Committee can refer a matter for decision to the full MINTRAC Board at any time.

Scholarship Committee meetings shall be minuted and the minutes provided to the MINTRAC Board at the next scheduled Board meeting.

2. Role of the Scholarships Committee

The Scholarships Committee shall:

- act within the Constitution and agreed Business Plan of the MINTRAC Board
- ensure that MINTRAC meets all contractual obligations associated with the MINTRAC Scholarships program
- review the progress and outcomes of the MINTRAC Scholarships program on an annual basis and report to the MINTRAC Board
- recommend changes in Scholarships categories, eligibility and contractual requirements to the MINTRAC Board
- make decisions on applications to MINTRAC for scholarships within three weeks of receipt of the complete application, unless the decision has been referred to the full MINTRAC Board
- monitor the progress of MINTRAC Scholarship recipients
- cancel Scholarships when:
 - the progress of the scholarship holder is unsatisfactory

APPENDIX

- the Scholarship holder has consistently failed to meet MINTRAC reporting and contractual requirements
- insufficient industry funds are available to support the continuation of the scholarship
- consider other matters related to the MINTRAC Scholarship program at the request of the MINTRAC Board.