A Responsive Training Market: The role of brokers

A report prepared for the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building

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Foreword

This study analyses the features, processes and outcomes of a range of effective broking practices in Australian rural industry, including, but not limited to, the activities of government agencies and industry organisations. It has the potential to bring about significant change in rural industry by identifying new ways to match needs to training and by providing step by step instructions on how to broker effectively. Findings from the study are timely given that a range of options for facilitating training needs to be explored, trialled and implemented prior to the likely cessation of FarmBis funding in 2008.

The study concludes that different broking models do not exist within different organisations, sectors and groups. Rather, all broking activity is underpinned by ten generic principles, and follows a three-stage development process. Different broking contexts call for flexibility in implementing the principles, and determining how much time is spent at each stage of the process.

To foster the development, expansion and sustainability of good broking practices, those involved in developing human resources within rural industry need to provide brokers with necessary skills and supports, and promote awareness and encourage implementation of good practice broking principles. Policymakers and industry bodies need to invest in brokerage, by ensuring the provision and continuity of realistic levels of resourcing.

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Peter O’Brien
Managing Director
Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
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Mark Stanley (PIRSA)
Ian Tarbotton (AgREsearch NZ)

The project would not have been possible without the 100 broking organisations that participated in the telephone survey, and the following six organisations that gave generously of their time to participate in case study interviews: Biodynamic Agriculture Australia; Department of Primary Industries; Water & Environment (Dairy Branch); Fitzroy Basin Association; Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd; Solly Business Services; and the Victorian Grains Industry Training Network.

We would also like to thank the participants in the three workshops for their input into the development of the guidebook, and for their valuable feedback during the analysis phase of the project.
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## Acronyms

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ANTA</td>
<td>Australian National Training Authority (ceased to exist after 30 June 2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>APEN</td>
<td>Australasia Pacific Extension Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQTF</td>
<td>Australian Quality Training Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAA</td>
<td>Biodynamic Agriculture Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRRUPP</td>
<td>Central Highlands Regional Resource Use Planning Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVCB</td>
<td>Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAFF</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEST</td>
<td>Department of Education, Science and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPIWE</td>
<td>Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment (Tasmania)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBA</td>
<td>Fitzroy Basin Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAP</td>
<td>National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFP</td>
<td>Not-for-profit (organisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHT</td>
<td>Natural Heritage Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRM</td>
<td>Natural Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTF</td>
<td>National Training Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTIS</td>
<td>National Training Information Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIRDC</td>
<td>Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RST</td>
<td>Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTO</td>
<td>Registered Training Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VGITN</td>
<td>Victorian Grains Industry Training Network</td>
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**Glossary**

**Agribusiness**
In this report, the term agribusiness has been used to describe those commercial organisations that derive their income from the provision of products and services to the rural sector (e.g. resellers and suppliers, seed companies, food processing companies, rural banks). It does not include training providers or private consultants, each of whom is discussed separately.

**Broker**
See training broker.

**Broking**
According to the *Macquarie Dictionary* this is the correct term to describe the process of negotiating training, or relating to the business of a training broker. The term has been used throughout this report, except when citing material from the North American and Canadian literature, where the term ‘brokering’ appears to be in more common usage. For the purposes of discussion in this report, the two terms are synonymous.

**Client**
Clients are recipients of services provided by others. In this report, two major groups of clients are identified and discussed: clients of training providers, and clients of training brokers. Clients may be individuals, or organisations (e.g. where a government department acts as a broker and commissions a rural consultant to develop and/or deliver training for a specified client target group, the target group is a client of the government organisation, and the government organisation and the client target group are both clients of the rural consultant).

**Commercial organisation**
Organisations that are required to make a profit in order to remain commercially viable. For these organisations, return on investment is critical. This group includes private consultants and private training providers.

**Consultant**
The term consultant is used in this report to refer to any private rural consultant, providing a range of advisory services to the rural sector. In most of the cases discussed in this report, the consultant also engages in the development and delivery of training as part of its core activities. These cases are clearly identified in the report.

**Extension officer**
A person employed either by a government or a private agency, to deliver a range of information, advice and education services to farmers in a planned and systematic way.

**FarmBis**
Funding by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to provide subsidised training to the rural sector, in
primary production business management, and natural resource management. FarmBis 3 began operating in 2005, although most references in this report are to earlier FarmBis programs.

**Government organisation** As the name implies, these are funded by government (State/Territory, or Australian government, or jointly), and include departments responsible for Primary Industry, Education and Training, and Natural Resource Management. These organisations receive ongoing core funding for their activities.

**Industry** Generic term used to describe agricultural sectors (e.g. grains industry, dairy industry etc.).

**Industry association** Peak body responsible for improving production and marketing within own industry, as well as a range of other activities (advocacy, policy etc.) Most also play a key role in assessing education/training needs within their industry, and making provision for these needs to be met.

**Learning culture** Creation of an environment in which learning/training is valued by all. Characteristics of a learning culture include identification of learning pathways for individuals/groups, development of learning networks, and empowering clients as active partners in the learning process.

**Natural resource management** This term is used generically within the report to refer to issues and practices in relation to the management and sustainability of the country’s natural resources. The report clearly specifies where natural resource management practices/training are specifically related to practice within rural industry.

**Networks** Combination of formal and informal linkages and processes for communication with a range of individuals and organisation representatives.

**Not-for-profit organisation** Refers to an organisation that is not commercially driven (i.e. is not required to make a profit in order to remain commercially viable), and that is not a government department/agency. This group includes farmer and NRM associations.

**Other broker** This term is used to describe brokers that do not have a vested interest in training delivery (i.e. they are not training providers but independent, third party brokers). It is used specifically when comparing this group of brokers with training providers acting as brokers.

**Participant** Unless otherwise stated, this term refers to a participant in an organised education/training program.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private consultant</td>
<td>See consultant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Unless otherwise stated in the report, the term refers to a training course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider</td>
<td>See training provider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and development corporation</td>
<td>Industry-specific and generic bodies, often funded by farmer levies that fund research and development, and also facilitate some capacity-building activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural industry</td>
<td>This term is used to describe all rural industry sectors including commercial fishing and aquaculture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training broker</td>
<td>An individual or organisation matching needs to appropriate training. For the purposes of this report, the following definition is used:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A training broker plays an active and purposeful role in identifying training needs. A training broker considers the whole suite of present and potential training opportunities and actively matches needs to training, acting in the best interests of the client.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training provider</td>
<td>Unless otherwise noted, the term training provider is used broadly in this report. It refers both to Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), as well as to other individuals/organisations who are not RTOs but whose function is to provide some form of education and training to the rural and/or NRM sector.</td>
</tr>
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Executive Summary

Background
Previous research by the Principal Investigators indicates the need for better matching of training needs and opportunities in the Australian rural training market, and identifies government agencies and industry organisations (such as farmer commodity groups, research and development corporations, and industry training advisory boards) as being well placed to broker training. This study analyses the features, processes and outcomes of a range of effective broking arrangements including, but not limited to, the activities of government agencies and industry organisations.

Brokerage is still a relatively new concept in training, so the study proposes a clear definition of the role, and analyses broking activity in relation to this definition:

A training broker plays an active and purposeful role in identifying training needs. A training broker considers the whole suite of present and potential training opportunities and actively matches needs to training, acting in the best interests of the client.

Brokerage is a collaborative process involving client, broker and provider, and may include a range of other stakeholders such as natural resource management/catchment groups, agribusiness, extension officers, farmer associations, and FarmBis networkers and coordinators, as well as primary producers themselves. This study is relevant to these groups, as well as to all individuals and organisations with an interest in increasing their responsiveness to client training needs.

This study on the process and outcomes of broking has the potential to bring about significant change in the rural training market. It identifies new ways to match needs to training for rural industry, and provides a detailed analysis of the principles and processes of brokerage. The accompanying manual, Matching training needs and opportunities: A guidebook, is a vital resource that takes brokers through the process step by step. Findings from the study are timely, given that a range of options for facilitating training needs to be explored, trialled and implemented prior to cessation of the current FarmBis program in 2008.

Objectives
The objectives of the study were to:

- Map existing training/learning broking arrangements in Australian primary industry.
- Investigate the outcomes for primary producers of these training/learning broking arrangements.
- Identify features of effective broking arrangements, and inhibitors to effective brokerage from the Australian primary industry experience, and from arrangements in other industries and overseas.
- Derive a series of models of effective broking arrangements that apply to learning activities for various sectors, groups and issues in primary industry (e.g. commodities such as grains, producers from non-English speaking backgrounds, natural resource management).
- Prepare case studies and a user-friendly manual that can be used to promote effective broking arrangements.
Method
Multi-method, multi-site techniques were employed to investigate effective training brokerage arrangements in rural Australia. Features of the methodology included collection of both quantitative (telephone survey) and qualitative (case study) data, as well as the involvement of stakeholders as partners in the research. The study intentionally focussed on good practice models of training brokerage. One of the limitations of the project is that it does not consider examples where brokerage has failed.

The purpose of the telephone survey was to identify existing broking arrangements in Australian primary industry by contacting approximately 100 organisations and agencies of the types that were found to assume the role of broker. Potential participants were identified using the investigators' extensive database of contacts. The sample was expanded using a snowballing technique. Data were analysed with the aid of SPSS computer software.

Six in-depth case studies of good broking practice were prepared. Data for the case studies were collected by interview. The purpose of the case studies was to identify and showcase models of good broking practice, and to encourage adoption of these practices. Subjects for the case studies were selected purposively from the examples of broking arrangements nominated by brokers during the telephone interviews. Potential case studies were identified to represent a variety of broking arrangements, and were not necessarily the most active brokers.

Stakeholder involvement was facilitated by the formation of a project Reference Group, presentation of three interactive stakeholder workshops to validate project findings and provide input into the development of the user-friendly manual, and by the presentation of case studies of good practice brokerage at workshops.

Key findings
Broking arrangements in Australian primary industry
Data were analysed for differences in broking arrangements according to activity, organisation type, location, industry and type of broker (training provider or other).

Cluster analysis revealed that broking activity occurred in three spheres: client activity, provider activity and other stakeholder (network contacts and network behaviour) activity. Only seven of the 98 organisations surveyed were in the most active category for all of these clusters, and so met the criteria of most active training brokers. They included a wide range of organizations: two state industry training bodies; one state farmer association; one commercial training provider; an agricultural college; one government primary industry department commodity section; and a university rural research and development centre that is not focussed on primary industry.

There were three major organisation classifications: not-for-profit (NFP), commercial and government agencies. Approximately half the sample was NFP organisations. There were indications of some variation in the nature of their broking practices. These differences related to how they informed their clients of training, client characteristics, the number of clients serviced annually, the size of the organisation and the focus of the training.
In terms of location and industry, the only statistically significant finding was that organisations in the ‘not primary industry’ sector (i.e. natural resource management) are less likely to be active in broking roles.

The findings suggested three broad arrangements for brokerage, based on whether or not the broker was also a training provider. These arrangements were categorised as: training providers using broking principles in their practice, training providers acting as brokers, and other brokers (i.e. those without a pecuniary interest in the brokerage). All three displayed a strong client focus. Although there were no significant differences, the study found that training providers involved in brokerage focussed more on the value of training to clients and on attracting repeat business, while other brokers had a broader industry-or community-development focus.

**Outcomes of broking arrangements**

Broking activity yields a range of economic and social benefits for individual participants, broking organisations, industries and the NRM sector, and rural communities. Key benefits include: accessibility; affordability; relevance and quality of training; cost effectiveness; growth potential for broking businesses; potential to reach a wider audience; good participation rates; continuity of service; industry/community ownership of the training; and the development of a training culture.

**Features and inhibitors of brokerage**

Specific enhancers were: a supportive environment (networks, organisational infrastructure, policy) underpinned by trust; resources (human and financial); and processes (communication processes, planning and development processes, and evaluation processes). Effective broking is underpinned by 10 generic principles: (1) is learner-centred; (2) has links to local networks; (3) encourages a learning culture; (4) has links to training providers; (5) maintains a continual awareness of training opportunities and gaps; (6) develops and maintains a wide network of stakeholders to identify emerging needs and awareness of other training opportunities; (7) actively matches needs to training; (8) assures the quality of the training provided as a result of brokerage; (9) has appropriate professional standards in place and complies with relevant legislation; (10) evaluates the brokerage process for credibility and quality assurance. The more effective the broker, the stronger their sense of purpose, the greater their understanding of their role, and the greater their understanding of how the broking process works.

**Models of effective broking arrangements**

The study concluded that different broking models did not exist within different organisations, sectors and groups. Rather, all broking activity is underpinned by ten generic principles, and follows a three-stage development process. The generic principles are identified in the previous paragraph. The stages are: getting started; matching needs and opportunities; and evaluating the broking process. Broking is compared to a lifecycle process, moving from a looser, informal structure in the first stage, to a more formalised structure in the later stages. While this process appears to be common to all effective brokers, different broking contexts call for flexibility in implementing the principles, and determine how much time is spent at each stage of the process.
Implications of this research

Benefits will flow from the research because it will facilitate client-focused development of training that implies improved awareness by education and training providers. These providers will recognize opportunities for developing relevant, innovative learning programs, better mechanisms for producers to nominate needs, and better matching of learning needs with provision of learning activities. All Australian primary industries are potential beneficiaries of this research. Adoption of the recommendations will mean that producers and their industry organisations will have information to direct scarce funds in the most effective way, in matching learning needs with provision of activities. Training providers will be able to direct their resources toward the areas of demand. For policymakers, this research will provide an evidence-base for input into policy development on learning activities for natural resource management, and for supporting primary producer and land manager training activities following the end of the current FarmBis program in 2008.

Recommendations

Specific recommendations to foster the development, expansion and sustainability of good broking practices relate to skilling and supporting brokers, promoting awareness and encouraging implementation of good practice broking principles, and resourcing the implementation of good practice brokerage.

Provide brokers with necessary skills and support

Implementation of the following recommendations should be the responsibility of the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building (CVCB), Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), Australasia Pacific Extension Network (APEN), FarmBis, state and territory departments of primary industry, Registered Training Organisations, and others who provide courses to prepare people to work in extension, including universities.

R1: Disseminate the training brokers guidebook as widely as possible

R2: Provide workshops that will showcase models of good practice, equip stakeholders with skills in effective broking of learning activities for primary producers, and promote good practice in brokerage

R3: Develop communities of practice to provide opportunities for support and shared learning about brokerage and its potential for rural industry

R4: Add training brokerage to the curriculum of extension courses

Promote awareness and encourage implementation of good practice broking principles

Implementation of the following recommendations should be the responsibility of the CVCB, RIRDC, APEN, FarmBis, state and territory departments of primary industry, and Registered Training Organisations. Research and development organisations should also be responsible for implementation of R9.

R5: Each CVCB investor should explore the implications of this research specifically for their organisation, and develop implementation strategies for adopting the model of training brokerage into their standard business practices
R6: Refer to good practice principles and incorporate them into everyday practice

R7: Actively seek out brokers and develop networks with them

R8: FarmBis should encourage brokerage along with good practice

R9: Conduct more research into the role of private consultants and public/private training providers as brokers

**Resourcing the implementation of good practice brokerage**

Investment is about valuing brokerage and recognising it as a key part of being effective as an industry or regional body. Implementation of the first three recommendations should be the responsibility of policymakers and industry organisations. R13 is directed towards APEN.

R10: Policymakers and industry bodies to act upon the principles for fostering brokerage identified in this report

R11: Those who fund training need to make adequate provision for implementation of good practice principles

R12: Initiate, trial and implement broking models to create sustainable systems for facilitating training post-FarmBis

R13: Develop mechanisms for fostering communication and coordination among training brokers

(a) Institutional investors to support and facilitate coordination amongst training brokers by a website, forums to promote information exchange, and networking meetings

(b) APEN to form a broking subcommittee.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Background to the study
A project for the FarmBis section of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia, completed in late 2002 (Kilpatrick et al. 2002a), identified two drivers for the development of education and training programs. The first relates to problems or opportunities identified by people and organisations that could be termed ‘scanners’; the second involves the learning needs expressed by individuals or enterprises that want to participate in learning activities (participants). Since information flow in the training market is not perfect, providers of learning activities (education and training programs) are not necessarily aware of the identified problems and opportunities that require a training solution, and are not always aware of participant expressed needs. Further, potential participants are not always aware of available learning activities, nor are they necessarily skilled at articulating needs and negotiating with providers to customise programs to meet their needs.

Findings from a number of research projects conducted by the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia (CRLRA) suggest that many clients in regional areas require help in matching their training needs to available training provision, or in negotiating training customised to their needs. This includes assistance with recognition of skills acquired through experiential learning. Equally, many providers cannot easily identify potential clients in regional areas. Training brokers play a key role in matching clients to appropriate training.

Although brokers have been an integral part of industries such as insurance for much of their history, they are a relatively new concept in the training industry. Kilpatrick and Bound (2001) noted that the evolution of training brokers can be traced to the marketisation of vocational education and training and to the purchaser–provider split, where government is no longer the sole source of funds and provider of services. Marketisation has meant a substantial increase in the number of training providers, both public and private. For clients, this has led to a confusing array of providers and modes of delivery.

Kilpatrick and Bound (2001) suggest there is an enormous range of brokerage models in the Australian training arena: they include private commercial organisations which may organise training for a particular group of clients; group training companies; and various industry based, not-for-profit organisations. To date, however, little research exists into the effectiveness of the varying training brokerage models.

Kilpatrick et al. (2002a) found that industry organisations (such as farmer commodity groups, research and development corporations, and industry training advisory boards) and government agencies can and do act as intermediaries or brokers, linking needs to training. The researchers suggested there is variation from industry sector to industry sector and even organisation to organisation in the level and nature of broking activity, but did not investigate the features of broking arrangements that make them more or less effective. Overall, Kilpatrick et al. found that brokers play a key role in forging a learning culture.
The purpose of this study is to begin to address the research gap on effective broking arrangements. The new FarmBis program (2005–2008) presents a timely opportunity to incorporate research findings from this project on effective interventions in the rural training market.

**Objectives**

The five objectives of this project are to:

- Map existing training/learning brokerage arrangements in Australian primary industry.
- Investigate the outcomes for primary producers of these training/learning brokerage arrangements.
- Identify features of effective broking arrangements and inhibitors to effective brokerage from the Australian primary industry experience, and from arrangements in other industries and overseas.
- Derive a series of models of effective broking arrangements that apply to learning activities for various sectors, groups and issues in primary industry (e.g. commodities such as grains, producers from non-English speaking backgrounds, natural resource management).
- Prepare case studies and a user-friendly manual that can be used to promote effective broking arrangements.

**Defining what we mean by the term ‘training broker’**

While use of the term ‘training broker’ is gradually becoming more common, some of those involved in broking training are uncomfortable with the term, and there is some confusion about how the role of a training broker differs from that of others involved in the training process, such as training providers. Others question whether a broker has to be an independent third party whose sole role is to link participants to relevant training, or whether those involved in training provision can also undertake a broking role.

To cover the range of possible broking activities and roles, but at the same time clearly separate brokerage from other activities such as marketing or training provision, we propose the following definition:

*A training broker plays an active and purposeful role in identifying training needs. A training broker considers the whole suite of present and potential training opportunities and actively matches needs to training, acting in the best interests of the client.*

Clients include individuals and organisations, generally small or medium in size.

The three key phrases in this definition are: ‘active and purposeful’; ‘whole suite of present and potential training opportunities’; and ‘acting in the best interests of the client’.
Of course, a range of other people play an important role in helping to publicise and/or link people to training, although not all could be described as brokers. They fall into two categories:

1. People who disseminate information about training, provide a calendar of training events, or make general referrals to other training providers are not training brokers per se, because they do not *actively* match needs to training.

2. People who consider only a restricted suite of present and potential training opportunities are not full-service training brokers in the way that we have defined the term, because of this restricted focus.

A significant proportion of this second group is training providers. Many training providers actively identify training needs, and match them to training which they, the providers, then deliver. We argue that identifying needs and developing training to match is part of good practice for a training provider, but is not broking according to our definition.

Although the focus of this study is on training brokers, consideration is also given to training providers who use good practice that incorporates broking principles.

**Structure of this report**

Chapter 2 builds on the training brokerage literature review conducted for the 2002 report to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (Kilpatrick et al. 2001), by identifying models, features and benefits of training brokerage, and reviewing how policy arrangements impact on the nature and level of training brokerage within the rural and natural resource management sectors in Australia. Chapter 3 details the multi-method project methodology, and results from the first phase of the project which mapped broking activity (telephone survey) are reported in Chapter 4. Chapters 5 to 10 present results from the second phase, in the form of six training broker case studies. Chapter 11 discusses these results in the light of the project objectives and the literature, while Chapter 12 focusses on the implications of this research and provides a range of recommendations for the various stakeholder groups.
Chapter 2: Review of the literature

Introduction
This literature review focusses on the differing perceptions of the concept of ‘broker’, and on broking arrangements within the rural training sector in Australia and overseas, as well as within other industries. Of particular interest is the way the broking role is positioned within the business activities of different organisations. Differing classifications of broking activity are then reviewed. The chapter continues with an overview of vocational education and training (VET) and other policies and practices that lay the foundations for, or directly support, training brokerage in Australian rural and natural resource management (NRM) sectors. Key processes, enhancers, inhibitors and challenges for developing effective broking partnerships are examined, followed by an overview of the benefits of broking training. The chapter concludes with a summary of the underpinning features of effective broking processes, and identification of issues requiring further attention from researchers and policymakers.

Background: Differing concepts of brokerage
There is evidence within the literature and within everyday usage, that the term ‘broker’ is now used so broadly across a number of sectors and areas of activity, that it can be used to describe any instance where one person links another to a product or service or other person. This muddying of the waters, as well as the less-than-ethical and well-publicised practices of a small number of brokers, has led to criticism and scepticism of brokerage in certain circles.

In today’s rapidly expanding information society, a clear need has emerged for brokers, who have the skills and capacity to work across a number of areas where there is a need to ensure a match between knowledge and those who require it. Thus we read of ‘learning brokers’ working to link homeless and disenfranchised adolescents to appropriate educational opportunities (Midgley 2004); brokers working as intermediaries between the VET and education sectors in the design and development of competency-based training (Mulcahy 2000); and ‘knowledge brokers’ in key public service agencies such as health, whose role is to bring together those involved in the sometimes culturally and philosophically disparate fields of theory and practice (Canadian Health Services Research Foundation 2003).

Most definitions suggest that brokerage is an activity undertaken by an independent third party or intermediary, matching clients to appropriate services or products, without a vested interest in recommending any particular product or service (e.g. Kilpatrick & Bound 2001 re training brokers; Crombie 2002 re learning brokers). However, practice shows that not all brokers are independent—in such cases, however, they are ethically bound to disclose their interest upfront. Hemidy and Cerf (2001, cited in Kilpatrick et al. 2001), acknowledge that brokerage can be undertaken by those who are not completely independent, by describing the broker-like activities of French semi-private advisory centres, which have a dual role of providing some advice/training themselves, as well as referring clients to other learning sources. Another example is the brokerage undertaken by Wide Bay TAFE (Queensland), which uses local coordinators in a number of communities to better match learner
needs to identification, development and delivery of appropriate courses (K. Niblett, pers. comm., 15/5/05). This suggests there is a range of training brokerage arrangements in operation.

In general, brokerage is conducted by individuals or groups of individuals, usually face-to-face, but sometimes electronically. The literature also indicates use of the term ‘educational broking’ to describe how access to appropriate education/training resources is mediated by a tool such as the Internet. Some refer to this form of broking as distributed learning (see, for example, Senge 1990; Anido et al. 2002). This form of educational broking relies on the development of an information management framework that unifies and standardises the publication and location of learning/training resources on the Internet, and assists learners to match their needs to appropriate learning resources. In this case, the broker is not an individual or organisation, as in the earlier examples cited.

Despite differences in the objectives and/or methods of brokerage, what most examples have in common is their focus on bringing individuals and groups together and developing relationships, to ‘communicate and understand each other’s needs and abilities … [and] exchange information and work together … ‘ (Canadian Health Services Research Foundation 2003, p. i). In most instances, brokers are doing much more than linking people to information—they are attempting to find common ground between individuals and groups with different ways of thinking and working, between different cultures and contexts. In many instances they are also acting as advocates for their clients. The key elements of brokerage defined in this way, as opposed to its more general usage outlined earlier in this section, are the ongoing relationship between broker and client, and the role of the broker as a ‘boundary crosser’ (Peirce & Johnson 1997). In this sense, the sort of education/training brokers that are the focus of our current research, are very much agents of change, rather than just providers of a service.

Training brokers
With the increased complexity of the National Training Framework (NTF) within Australia, and an increasing array of training and extension opportunities available, the literature indicates that training developers, deliverers and participants need a better understanding of the system, of how people can be better linked to appropriate, accredited courses, and of how best to match needs to training (Coutts et al. 2005; Andrew et al. 2005; Gientzotis Consulting 2003; Crombie 2002). This suggests the need for brokerage, which might be undertaken by a range of individuals and different organisations.

Drawing on the definitions of brokerage provided earlier, and on findings from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (Kilpatrick et al. 2002a), it is possible to identify some specific areas of knowledge and activity that characterise the role of training brokers. These include: an understanding of training needs and learner requirements; the development of extensive networks; and skills in coordinating training delivery through the generation of long-term partnerships with clients and other stakeholders.
Registered Training Organisations as brokers

Within the last three years or so, the increasing role of registered training organisations (RTOs) as brokers has been identified in the literature (e.g. Gientzotis Consulting 2003), and is evident in practice. Gientzotis Consulting (2003) identified a range of broking or intermediary services offered by RTOs to their clients (in this case, clients were enterprises rather than individual learners). These included the provision of human resource support to enterprises as they identify relevant training for their employees, administrative management of the training process, and assistance with overall navigation of the VET system. These roles are in addition to the delivery of training.

The research identifies a further broking role of RTOs in ‘facilitating partnerships and strategic alliances between government, enterprise, community and/or training providers and linking training opportunities and available funding support to a specific community need. In addition, there are some emerging roles for RTOs as industry, enterprise and community enablers and as brokers and consultants in human resource management’ (Gientzotis Consulting 2003, pp. 1–2). These emerging roles of RTOs, and of others who undertake brokerage, are of particular significance to the current project. Another key finding from Gientzotis Consulting (2003) is the positive link between the attributes of RTOs as brokers and high performing RTOs.

Models of training brokerage

Examples of organisations that identify themselves as ‘training brokers’ as their core activity are small in number, but increasing. Most of those identified in the Internet search were based in the United States. In terms of training brokers working specifically with primary industry, there were no websites found, but there is a small body of research into rural training brokers in the literature. The Internet search identified examples of training brokers working in areas likely to be of relevance to the rural sector, including corporate management training, organisational learning and information technology (IT). The material contained in this section therefore reviews training brokerage models in general, including literature on rural training brokerage models as appropriate.

Brokerage as a three-way partnership

Kilpatrick et al. (2002a) identified a partnership model of effective brokerage for the rural sector, which includes three key stakeholders: client, provider and broker. Acting as a learning community, all partners in the process have responsibility for scanning for new opportunities or problems requiring a training solution. The researchers found that effective broking partnerships involved brokers and the target client group in identifying and articulating learning needs, and that brokers actively sought out providers to articulate the training needs of clients/members, including the use of formal consultation processes.

Characteristics of different broker organisations

Kilpatrick et al. (2002a) identified two particular types of organisations as having the characteristics required of effective brokers in rural industry: industry organisations and government agencies. Both organisations have the ability to facilitate interaction amongst partners by drawing on their extensive networks. Galston and Baehler (1995, cited in Kilpatrick & Bound 2001) also identified industry associations as hubs for the exchange of information and provision of services. In particular, they have a
mediating role, facilitating cooperation amongst producers and others. Specifically, Kilpatrick et al. (2002a) concluded that ‘partnerships where industry [as a broker] is proactive in initiating and maintaining linkages and relationships tend to be the most successful’ (p. v).

The broking role of a national industry organisation is further explored in Miller’s (2001) paper, although this does not have a rural focus. Miller’s research explored brokerage of school-to-work transition initiatives, with the aim of improving learning and career opportunities for young people. He identified two necessary key players in the broking process: local school-to-work intermediaries, which operate in a horizontal sphere within a specific geographical area; and national industry associations, which operate vertically by promoting connections within a single industry or groups of industries across the country.

Miller (2001) encouraged greater collaboration between local intermediaries and national industry associations in order to increase benefits for individuals, communities and industries, and suggested the process is underpinned by a recognition of what each party can bring to the partnership. Local intermediaries have access to local employers and community leaders, local knowledge, and provide a local voice for advocacy. National industry organisations have respected credentials, resources to develop quality materials and programming, broad dissemination networks, and can provide state and national level advocacy to influence policymaking. In particular, national industry associations ‘can help local intermediaries avoid costs in reinventing wheels’ (Miller 2001, p. 12) because of the resources at their disposal to fund research and evaluation, and to facilitate better communication and information exchange. Importantly, one of Miller’s key recommendations was the need for state organisations to form the link between national and local intermediaries, where national bodies provide resources, and local bodies ensure implementation.

The second major group of brokers identified by Kilpatrick and Bound (2001) is government agencies. The researchers found the rural development role of relevant government agencies places them in an ideal position to broker training, as they engage with communities in building networks, facilitating access to resources, and fostering learning. Specifically, Kilpatrick and Bound identified the ability of government agencies to build the conditions that allow groups and organisations to collaborate, in a coordinated approach to delivering activities that meet the training needs of clients and employees.

Research (Kilpatrick et al. 1999) identifies a third group: commodity-based farmer organisations that also have the potential to act as important sources of learning and support in the implementation of new rural practices. Less information is available about the specific characteristics of this group that support their broking role.

A rapidly growing but under-researched group which has the potential to significantly impact on the development of capacity within the rural and NRM sectors, is agribusiness (Stone 2005). Agribusiness in Stone’s study is define broadly to include all individuals/organisations that generate ‘income from the sale of a product or service or both, which facilitates the decision making of a farmer or land manager’ (p. vii). Stone includes training providers and consultants in this group. Although not
specifically advocating a training brokerage role for agribusiness, Stone emphasises the value that innovative farmers place on consultants as ‘honest brokers’, in terms of consolidating information and providing independent advice, and suggests that this role is and will increasingly continue to be undertaken by most forms of agribusiness (but not including resellers).

**Purpose or source of impetus of the broker**

Brokers can be classified according to their drivers, with two broad classifications identified in the literature: firstly, market-focussed and client-focussed (Kilpatrick & Bound 2001); and secondly, Gientzotis Consulting’s (2003) enterprise and industry demand, community demand, and government policy and legislative requirements models. It should be noted that Kilpatrick and Bound’s classifications refer to all rural broking arrangements, whereas Gientzotis Consulting is referring specifically to RTOs as brokers, although it is suggested they have broader applicability.

*Market-focussed and client-focussed broking*

As the name implies, market-focussed brokers are commercial operations, for whom brokerage is a core business. They are driven primarily by financial viability and competitiveness, or the requirement to cover costs (e.g. group training companies). Kilpatrick and Bound (2001) found that market-focussed brokers had a more pragmatic orientation in building relationships with stakeholders, motivated by the need to maintain and develop market share. The focus of these brokers was more on delivering the training requested, than on empowering the learning processes of clients. A search of Internet sites indicates market-focussed training brokers are on the increase (a number were established within the last 5–7 years). Some advertise themselves as an extension of the client organisation’s human resources department, to help match employees to training (for example, Business Training Partnership; The Training Broker).

Market-focussed brokers (e.g. GWA; The Training Broker) have a strong customer service focus, and use multiple marketing strategies to secure new clients. These include testimonials from previous satisfied clients, guarantees that they only work with the best training providers in the field (e.g. The Training Broker), and a focus on the cost-effectiveness of their service (e.g. Spectrum). Customer satisfaction and securing repeat business are key features of this model. In addition, Kilpatrick and Bound found that market-focussed brokers were more formal or hierarchical in their relations (e.g. providers were expected to make contact with clients through the broker rather than directly), and that they were more likely to have strong ties with a smaller number of providers. Although this built trust between broker and provider, it also created a relationship of dependency on their providers. Kilpatrick and Bound also found that while clients developed a supportive relationship with the broker and valued this service, the relationship tended to encourage dependency of the client on the broker.

By comparison, client-focussed brokers comprise a diverse range of groups and organisations with a variety of purposes and roles. As such, client-focussed brokers are not an identifiable model in the sense of market-focussed brokers, but more a loose grouping of brokers with a client-driven rather than commercially-driven motivation. Kilpatrick and Bound (2001) described the key driver of this group as capacity building of the target client group, focussing on the process of arriving at the
end result (creating lifelong learners), rather than just the end result itself (acquisition of skills). Included in the grouping are small and large organisations, and not-for-profit as well as government agencies. Although not commercially driven, the activities of many of these organisations are funded through external sources, including government grants and philanthropic sources. They have a high level of accountability for this funding, in terms of ensuring that predetermined client outcomes are met.

Kilpatrick and Bound (2001) found that client-focussed brokers emphasised cooperation and collaboration, and were more likely to display a learning and nurturing orientation, by encouraging and facilitating direct contact between provider and client. In contrast to market-focussed brokers, the researchers also found that customer-focussed brokers had a non-hierarchical arrangement with the parties, facilitating the sharing of information and resources amongst all parties. There were also indications that these brokers had access to a much larger number and variety of providers, because of their broader community networks.

Enterprise and industry demand, community demand, and government policy and legislative requirements
Gientzotis Consulting (2003) briefly described the characteristics of the three types of intermediary or broking services offered by RTOs, in terms of the impetus for development. They cited overseas research that found the three types of service are not mutually exclusive.

The first model describes broking services established in response to enterprise and industry demand, and comprises strategic partnerships and resource sharing. The researchers found that the second model, brokerage driven by community demand, was characterised by a focus on access and equity issues, and in rural and remote areas in particular; also on employment and skills development, which are both critical to community wellbeing.

The third broking model identified by Gientzotis Consulting (2003) has been brought about due to a range of policy and legislative requirements. Drivers for this model include the implementation of a range of changes in the VET system in recent years, such as User Choice and the New Apprenticeships system. Because of the increase in the number of training providers under User Choice, and changed requirements under the New Apprenticeships system, a clear need has arisen for intermediaries (or brokers) to explain and help clients negotiate these changes. The broader issue of policy as a facilitator of training brokerage is addressed in a later section ‘Facilitation of partnerships in training’.

Scope of broking activities
A scan of the Internet suggests that another way of classifying training brokerage arrangements is by scope: one-off project-based brokerage, and ongoing brokerage. In reality, there is probably a third grouping that falls somewhere between the two, where organisations continue to access limited project funding that allows them to broker in an ongoing manner.
The scope of broking activities is largely (but not solely) linked to funding availability. For example, in recent years the Australian government has initiated several VET programs designed to upskill targeted groups within society, such as *Basic IT Enabling Skills for Older Workers* (Department of Education, Science and Training 2002) and *Vocational Education and Training Priority Places* (Department of Education, Science and Training 2004). Both programs are examples of project-based brokerage, characterised by specified, limited-term appointments of training brokers who were also project managers, and clearly defined roles and contractual responsibilities in terms of delivery of outcomes within a specified time frame.

Ongoing training brokerage may be funded from a variety of sources. The model most commonly identified in the literature and Internet search was the commission model, where training providers paid a commission to brokers for each successful client match (e.g. Business Training Partnership; Firstbase Professional Development Solutions; GWA; My Training Broker). This is also the model most commonly associated with other forms of brokerage, such as insurance and finance brokerage.

Research suggests ongoing brokerage may be funded from a range of other sources, including industry associations and government (e.g. in the form of group training companies), or may be undertaken as part of an organisation’s core funding. Research by Gientzotis Consulting (2003) found that where RTOs were offering broking or intermediary services, they did not always charge clients for provision of the service, although there is a growing trend to derive additional income from these intermediary services.

**Policy arrangements supporting training brokerage in Australia**

At the centre of vocational education and training reform in Australia is the policy document *Shaping our future: Australia’s national strategy for vocational education and training 2004-2010* (Australian National Training Authority 2003). This document marks a reorientation of VET in terms of accommodating the interests of a range of stakeholders in training, focussing on the broader role of VET in creating a cohesive society by developing community social capital, and fostering collaboration rather than competition (Wheelan 2003). Specifically, the document identifies four groups of key players: industry; training providers; clients; and training brokers and facilitators, who are the ‘intermediaries between vocational education and training and employment … [m]any training providers also have a brokerage arm’ (Australian National Training Authority 2003, p. 3).

The policy is underpinned by the development of a client-driven culture and a strong market of training providers, which provide greater client choice. A range of strategies is outlined in the policy document that fosters broking arrangements:

- assisting clients as they navigate and interact with vocational education and training
- investing in RTOs to ensure they have the capacity, skills and infrastructure to provide high quality, client-focused services
- enabling training providers and brokers to partner with industry
- strengthening the role of industry in identifying skill needs and developing products and services to meet those needs
• providing flexible and sustainable funding models for training, and
• making learning pathways seamless through encouraging partnership between education and training institutions and a range of other sectors, such as regional development and community services.

Policy direction is influenced by a variety of sources including the Bureau of Rural Sciences, which has responsibility for providing advice on issues related to profitable and sustainable Australian industries. This includes advice on capacity building and integrated natural resource management planning. A Bureau report by Aslin et al. (2002) identified a number of key skills needed to assist NRM groups to effectively participate in planning, such as the ability to analyse and synthesise information from a wide range of sources, and to know where and whom to contact for relevant information. Specifically, they identified a role that could be filled by intermediaries (or brokers)—that is, the need for coordinators to help identify skill needs and match them to appropriate training—and provided a number of recommendations which closely aligned with a training brokerage model.

The Australian government also facilitates the exchange of information on training through the National Training Information Service (NTIS), a web-based searchable database of information on VET courses, qualifications, Training Packages, competency standards and training organisations (Department of Education, Science and Training 2005). Given that training brokerage is about linking people to the best training to meet their needs, a service such as that provided by NTIS would seem to be a key broking tool.

In addition to the overarching VET policy document and NTIS framework, a scan of the literature and Internet revealed there are other policy areas that support some of the underlying principles of training brokerage, such as the development of networks and communities of practice to encourage collaboration for the benefit of learners, although few support the actual practice of training brokerage per se. These policies and initiatives are examined in the following sections: facilitation of partnerships in training; identifying skill needs and supporting skill acquisition for rural Australia; industry policy; and the role of research and development corporations.

Facilitation of partnerships in training
The implementation of the National Training Framework (NTF) within the Australian vocational education and training system has been designed to encourage the development of relationships between RTOs and industry. Additionally, the advent of Training Packages requires closer alignment of training and assessment to industry outcomes (Gientzotis Consulting 2003). Both strategies have the potential to foster better linkages between industry and providers to ensure training is targeted to identified needs. Research has identified the involvement of industry as essential to the training brokerage process (Kilpatrick et al. 2002a).

An environment of collaboration between providers is encouraged by the Australian Quality Training Framework Standards for Registered Training Organisations (Australian National Training Authority 2005). Standard 1.6 allows for the development of partnerships with another provider of education and training, with the main benefit being that it enables those organisations that are not RTOs, to partner with an RTO as a way to accredit their training. The RTO involved is required to take
the lead in managing the partnership, to ensure the quality of training and assessment delivered is to standard.

These arrangements have the potential to foster brokerage because they:

- promote collaboration on meeting training needs
- enable organisations to benefit from RTO status without having to become one, and
- promote high standards of training delivery.

**Identifying skill needs and supporting skill acquisition for rural Australia**

*National coordination and delivery of training in rural and regional Australia*

A range of government departments has responsibility for facilitating capacity building in rural and regional Australia, including the departments of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Transport and Regional Services, and Environment and Heritage.

As part of the Australian government’s rural policy and innovation strategy Agriculture Advancing Australia, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, along with relevant state/territory government departments, funds FarmBis (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 2005a). This program reflects a national approach to creating a responsive training market by resourcing and supporting training brokerage activity, as well as subsidising the cost of training. Eligibility and rates of subsidies are determined on a state by state basis.

FarmBis supports training brokerage by:

- encouraging participation in training and fostering a training culture amongst primary producers
- providing incentives to develop programs
- stimulating training businesses
- promoting the development of training courses in the areas of primary production business management, and
- encouraging the development of clients and understanding of needs.

The new round of FarmBis funding announced in early 2005 includes some proposed key changes from earlier rounds, which are likely to further support training brokerage. These proposed changes include an improved FarmBis website with a searchable database of learning activities and providers, and the introduction of targeted industry initiatives, to implement industry-led responses to learning needs (FarmBis Queensland 2005).

Consistent with the role of brokerage, the long-term aim of FarmBis is to ‘leave a legacy of a learning system that is constantly evaluating and revising its activities and is responsive to internal and external stimuli’ (Kilpatrick et al. 2001, p. 2). This builds on research into on-farm implementation of education and training outcomes from FarmBis courses (Participative Technologies Pty Ltd 2002), which identified the critical importance of FarmBis coordinators (brokers), providers and industry working
together to develop strategies and a culture to encourage and support continuous learning. At the same time, concerns about a culture of dependency created by subsidised training and the post-FarmBis impacts of this, have been expressed by a number of stakeholders in rural and NRM training (G. Godwin Smith, pers. comm., 15/5/05). These concerns need to be addressed before the current cycle of FarmBis funding finishes.

The Agriculture Advancing Australia package also includes the Industry Partnerships Program (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 2005b). Designed to build capacity within agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries, the Program works with industries to:

- highlight the industry’s successes and build on its strengths
- improve the industry’s ability to identify and respond appropriately to threats and risks
- ensure key stakeholders throughout the supply chain and in supporting services contribute to the industry’s vision and directions, and
- develop skills and structures to improve industry and organisational capacity.

The focus on identifying and responding to threats and risks is consistent with the underlying aim of training brokerage: to better identify and match needs to training.

The Department of Transport and Regional Services (2005) funds the operation of Area Consultative Committees located across Australia in rural, regional, remote and metropolitan communities. These non-profit, community-based organisations have the potential to foster training brokerage by facilitating a partnership approach to identifying and meeting local training needs. With membership comprising key regional stakeholders, Area Consultative Committees are well placed to build networks and partnerships to find local solutions to local problems, by bringing together key business, regional and community representatives to identify priorities and opportunities, and develop and implement a three-year strategic plan for regional development.

In terms of industry support for a more responsive rural and regional training market, the recently formed Agri-food Skills Council (Rural Training Council of Australia 2004) replaces the Rural Training Council of Australia. The new Council represents the interests of almost 140 000 businesses, with more than half a million employees, in farming and grazing, including the meat and seafood industries, food and beverage processing, racing, and bloodstock exports. It is part of a growing network of skills councils being formed by the Australian government to create new communication channels between industry and the VET sector, to boost forward planning for the nation’s skill needs. The Agri-food Skills Council will not deliver training, but will be in a strong position to facilitate brokerage, because of its role in assisting industries, enterprises, and their workforce to integrate skill development with business goals, and in supporting high quality, nationally recognised training products and services. As noted earlier in this review, the role of industry at all levels is integral to effective training brokerage (Kilpatrick et al. 2002a).
**National coordination and delivery of NRM activity and training**

A partnership approach between the Australian government and relevant State and Territory governments for investing in natural resource management fosters national coordination and delivery of integrated natural resource management activities. It includes the development of regional integrated natural resource management plans that are jointly accredited by the Australian and relevant state/territory governments, and funded through the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) programs (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 2005c). Funding is provided through the programs for facilitators and coordinators, and for a range of activities to promote sustainable resource management. These include capacity building of rural communities and industries to understand, identify and apply improved natural resource management practices, and application of results of research to improve industry sustainable resource management. The partnership approach to NRM fostered by these programs, in terms of actively linking communities, industry and government to determine local solutions to local issues, has the potential to provide a solid foundation for broking education and training solutions appropriate to local contexts.

Related to the NAP and NHT initiatives is the National Landcare Program, delivered through Natural Heritage Trust in individual states (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 2005d). The program funds community support activities designed to build capacity at the local level, including improving the skills of NRM managers, promoting best management practice, and better integration of natural resource management into business and property plans. There is also a national component which includes sustainable industry initiatives (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 2005e). It encourages a partnership approach between industry groups, research and development organisations, and the Australian government in identifying and equipping farmers with the knowledge and skills required to act/manage sustainably, and in promoting excellence and innovative approaches to extension and communication. The focus of both the community support and national components of the National Landcare Program have potential to support training brokerage in NRM by linking relevant parties together to plan, develop and deliver initiatives that are locally relevant and appropriate, and based on the latest information and research into natural resource management.

Of particular relevance to the current project is the National Knowledge Broking for Regional NRM initiative, which aims to build stronger connections between research/information providers and NRM planning, implementation and evaluation (Land & Water Australia 2005a). The project will explore a variety of strategies and mechanisms to facilitate knowledge connections, including a national ‘first stop shop’, coordinating meetings between community, research and policy practitioners, and understanding and overcoming barriers to knowledge exchange.

**Industry policy**

As well as a range of government policies and programs that provide resources and support for some level of broking activity, there are examples of policy and strategic documents from industry that support a partnership approach to the identification and coordination of industry needs with appropriate education and training for members. However, they do not specifically target broking activities for funding. For example, Dairy Australia (2005) cites supporting strategies for building industry capability as
coordinating and supporting industry efforts to meet current and projected needs’ and ‘developing and facilitating industry knowledge management, strategy development and scenario planning’ (p. 38). In addition, it identifies how it will enhance its own performance and delivery through ‘leveraging resources through cooperation, partnerships and infrastructure alignment’ (p. 39), which fits neatly with the underlying partnership principle of training brokerage. Grain Growers Australia (2005), in drafting a new blueprint for the future, specifically identifies its role in relation to capacity building as ‘being a facilitator, rather than being involved in building programs and/or delivering programs’ (p. 12). In addition, a number of industry planning documents targeted the development of stronger linkages with research and development organisations as a key priority, to better identify emerging trends and develop industry capacity.

The role of research and development corporations
Initiatives such as the formation of the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building (2004) for Innovation in Rural Industries, as part of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation’s Human Capital, Communications and Information Systems sub-program, place the spotlight firmly on developing effective, accessible, client-centred information, and communication and education systems and processes (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation 2005). Specifically, it emphasises the role of research and development in ensuring an effective rural industries’ research, education and extension system. One of its key target areas is to develop strategies for creating inter- and intra-organisational arrangements to support learning and change. Collaborative efforts such as this would seem to underpin training brokerage. The Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building itself, comprising multiple partners from different sectors, embodies a collaborative approach to continuous capacity building and a forum for members and stakeholders to learn from and assist each other.

Industry-specific research and development corporations variously address the role of research in ensuring training is developed to meet industry and individual needs. For example, the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation (n.d.) identifies that the sorts of projects to be commissioned will address industry priorities and that the adoption of industry research and development initiatives will be facilitated by regional networks. In another example, the Sugar Research and Development Corporation (2005) broadly identifies a key outcome of its program as enhancement of human capacity and partnerships between industry, research and regional communities, in order to underpin change, learning and innovation, laying the ground for training brokerage activities within its industry.

Developing effective broking partnerships
Training brokerage is a partnership between key stakeholders. At the core of the partnership are clients, providers and brokers. Little research exists on the features contributing to effective brokerage, although Kilpatrick and Bound (2001) identify some features of effective rural training brokerage arrangements, and Greer and Scuudds (2004) offer a range of successful case studies of training brokerage in indigenous communities. This lack of information on the process of developing and sustaining effective brokerage is of concern, because ‘broking occurs even without individuals dedicated solely to broking, so it’s important to focus on the activities and processes …’ (Canadian Health Services Research Foundation 2003, p. i). Its call for
the development and sharing of good practice broking cases within the Canadian health sector would seem to reflect a similar need within the education and training sector in Australia and overseas.

In the meantime, the body of broader research on the development of partnerships provides some useful background to the current study.

**Processes**

Research (e.g. Lane & Dorfman 1997; Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b; Falk & Smith 2003) conceptualises partnership development in terms of a lifecycle, moving from a looser, informal structure in the earlier stages to a more formalised structure in the later planning and delivery stages. Building on the work of Kilpatrick et al. 2002b, Johns (2004) identified five stages in the partnership lifecycle: initiation; development; maintenance; critical reflection; and sustainability. A key outcome of the critical reflection stage is consolidation of partnership identity and heightened awareness of partnership impacts. While all partnerships progress through these stages of development, research indicates that they differ in terms of the scope, timing and success of each stage (Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b), and that the level of maturity of the partnership is one of the key factors influencing the extent and rate of partnership development (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b). The most effective partnerships, in terms of delivering outcomes and ensuring sustainability, are those with a capacity to recognise the stage they have reached in the partnership lifecycle (Shortell et al. 2002), and which place importance on the critical reflection (Johns 2004) and sustainability (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b; Johns 2004) stages. This includes recognition and celebration of partnership successes, and the formal process of evaluating partnership goals and processes, and scanning the horizon for new opportunities and threats.

**Enhancers**

Research in education and training (e.g. Kilpatrick et al. 2002b; Falk & Smith 2003; Johns 2004), and health (e.g. Shortell et al. 2002; Canadian Health Services Research Foundation 2003) identifies some of the attributes and conditions necessary for developing and sustaining effective partnerships. These include the importance of shared norms and values; development of and commitment to a shared vision; trusting relationships and social support in the learning process; skills in working together and with others; and appropriate interactional infrastructure. These attributes have also been found to underpin training brokerage partnerships (e.g. Kilpatrick & Bound 2001; Greer & Scudds 2004 re training brokerage in indigenous communities).

Mutual trust is identified as a critical element of partnerships in general, and of broking partnerships in particular, with trust between client–broker–provider identified as a key attribute of effective brokerage across the range of broking industries and contexts (e.g. Pettersen 2005 re insurance brokerage; Greer & Scudds 2004 re training brokerage in indigenous communities; Canadian Health Services Research Foundation 2004 re knowledge broking in the health sector; Crombie 2002 re learning brokers in the NRM and rural production sectors). The Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (2004) expands on the issue of trust, highlighting the importance of brokers needing to trust, ‘because broking will only really be able to function … if there is a true network of brokers reaching out, sharing information, and offering tips on best practices’ (pp. 2–3). Effective brokers have been found to build
trust by displaying a good understanding of the different contexts and cultures of stakeholders (Kilpatrick & Bound 2001) and developing skills in working across the different producer–industry–education sectors (Kilpatrick et al. 2002a). Sensitivity to the needs of learners is a critical part of the trust relationship (Crombie 2002).

Diversity of the membership base is identified as crucial to effective partnerships (e.g. Kilpatrick et al. 2002b). This means making sure relevant groups within the community are included. The literature indicates that effective partnerships use multiple methods to ensure community input (Shortell et al. 2002) and have realistic expectations of the time and resources needed to develop relationships (Greer & Scudds 2004). As Greer and Scudds noted, realistic expectations are particularly important when brokering training in indigenous communities.

The Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (2003) identifies the features of a supportive environment for brokering: ‘one where there is a collaborative environment, sufficient resources for the job, processes to identify and capture knowledge generated by both employees and outside parties, and a desire to build intellectual capital’ (p. i). Expanding on these characteristics, Mitchell (2004) identified four key enablers of effective networks: high level facilitation skills and a thorough knowledge of the VET system; processes for sharing ideas; processes for accessing information and resources; and evaluation of network outcomes using a range of strategies including reflection. Evaluation and reflection were also identified earlier in this chapter as a key stage in the partnership lifecycle. These enablers are effectively key attributes of brokers and broking organisations, although the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (2003) noted that the fourth enabler, evaluation, was not specifically identified in the literature on knowledge brokering.

While there is clearly a range of generic broking attributes described above, the literature suggests that there is no ‘one size fits all’ model of brokerage—brokerage is very much context specific (Canadian Health Services Research Foundation 2003). Similarly, there is no generic job description for a broker, although from the literature we can identify a range of core broker skills and competencies that effective brokers should possess. These are summarised by the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (2003) as skills in evidence gathering, critical appraisal, relationship management, mediation, and communication. The authors also included personal attributes such as curiosity, imagination, flexibility, and ability to see the big picture.

At a broader policy level, the literature calls for policy flexibility in order to provide a better match between needs and training (e.g. Greer & Scudds 2004, discussed earlier). In addition to keeping the spotlight on issues of resourcing for brokerage, those involved in developing a broking culture call for support at a national level, in the form of a brokers’ network to ‘build commitment to broking and keep crucial energy from being wasted reinventing wheels’ (Canadian Health Services Research Foundation 2003, p. i). This would seem to align well with research into communities of practice which focusses on the developmental aspects of people working together to facilitate their learning (Wenger 1998). Communities of practice are developed between groups of people who ‘share a common interest and passion, and who continually interact’ (Young & Mitchell 2003, p. 1). Research identifies a number of strategies designed to stimulate group reflection on their practice, including group
forums and workshops, and the use of experts to stimulate the development of knowledge by the community (Young & Mitchell 2003).

Inhibitors and challenges
Absence of the attributes of effective partnerships (described in the previous section) will inhibit partnership development. Inhibitors to effective partnerships fall within four broad categories: resources; structures for participation; leadership; and capacity for change. The impact of policy in inhibiting or challenging the development of partnerships is discussed separately, later in this section. The inhibiting effects of inadequate resources on broking partnerships include lack of time and other resources (Shortell et al. 2002; Greer & Scudds 2004), lack of continuity of staff and programs (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b), as well as too great a focus on technical work (Kilpatrick et al. 2001).

A survey forming part of the National Knowledge Broking for Regional NRM initiative identified areas of concern as: accessibility and availability of information; relevance of information to regional context; two-way flow of information; inadequate individual search and retrieval skills; and lack of information sharing across regions and between departments (Land & Water Australia 2005b).

Shortell et al. (2002) outlined a range of factors that characterised less successful community health partnerships, including:

- insufficient mechanisms for managing member input and focussing collective action, which resulted in difficulties in overcoming issues of trust
- limited depth and breadth of leadership for the partnership
- lack of vision or lack of commitment to the vision, and
- inability and/or unwillingness of the partnership to adapt and change to better meet changing needs and priorities.

In addition to the above issues, for RTOs acting as brokers, Gientzotis Consulting (2003) identified specific inhibitors as distraction from core business, and a range of issues relating to financial liability and accountability.

Key challenges to effective collaboration are identified by Miller (2001) as differing stakeholder priorities and the need to balance stakeholder priorities with partnership priorities. Strategies to overcome these challenges include: focussing on common goals; understanding each other’s needs; identifying opportunities to assist each other; and ensuring a balance between the interests of the community and the needs of each industry.

Policy is viewed in the literature as a double-edged sword, in that it can enhance the development of partnerships (see earlier section ‘Policy arrangements supporting training brokerage in rural Australia’), as well as present a range of challenges to collaborative training arrangements. Kilpatrick and Bound (2001) considered the effects of competition policy in Australian training provision, and how it impacted differently depending on the model of training brokerage adopted. They found that competition policy encouraged market-focussed brokers to protect their markets by putting in place arrangements with competitors, while it encouraged customer-focussed brokers to actively bring providers together in a spirit of cooperation,
especially where markets were thin. There is also evidence that some government policies for rural community development have negatively affected community empowerment and leadership, and the development of networks (which are all facilitators of effective training brokerage), by focussing on providing technical assistance rather than building community capacity (Cavaye 1999, cited in Kilpatrick et al. 2001).

In other cases, certain aspects of training policy have the potential to impact negatively on broking activity. However, the literature indicates ways in which this impact has been minimised by a flexible approach and effective communication between policymakers and practitioners. A good example is Greer and Scudds (2004), who describe the experience of FarmBis networkers broking training in indigenous communities in Victoria. Although FarmBis funding within Victoria is directed toward AQTF level 4 training, it was recognised that training pitched at this level may be unsuitable for some indigenous participants. FarmBis networkers worked with communities and the funding body to identify mutually acceptable and cooperative solutions. Training was developed at largely AQTF level 3 with some level 4 components, with the broker providing evidence to the funding body that no other subsidised course was available that would address the training needs identified.

### Benefits of training brokerage

The literature and a review of Internet training broker sites, highlight a range of benefits of brokerage, for individuals, broking organisations, training providers, rural industry and natural resource management sectors, and rural communities as a whole. Some of this is based on more general research into partnerships and capacity building, and most is reviewed in earlier research into training brokerage (Kilpatrick & Bound 2001; Kilpatrick et al. 2001). All of these benefits are increased when training brokerage is underpinned by a strong client focus and learning orientation (Kilpatrick & Bound 2001).

In addition to the clear benefits of a better skilled and more responsive workforce for rural Australia, other benefits of brokerage include cost effectiveness and often cost savings for clients, providers and funding bodies (Kilpatrick & Bound 2001; Business Training Partnership; Firstbase Professional Development Solutions); wider choice and assured quality of training providers (Firstbase Professional Development Solutions); widely recognised and valued qualifications at both local and national level (Miller 2001); an increase in business for training providers (Kilpatrick & Bound 2001); empowerment of learners and development of learning networks (Kilpatrick et al. 2001); and increased social and economic community wellbeing through increased cooperation and collaboration (Kilpatrick et al. 2001). Where RTOs are acting as brokers or intermediaries, Gientzotis Consulting (2003) identifies three additional benefits for the RTO: increased awareness of industry need and increased links with industry; professional development of RTO employees; and improvements in quality delivery and a service culture.

Research by Kilpatrick et al. (2001) highlights the particular benefits for industry, of joint approaches to learning/ training. The researchers found that a collaborative approach in which brokers play a key role, delivers outcomes that contribute to a more innovative and competitive rural sector. Specifically, they noted that...
‘[p]artnerships where industry is proactive in initiating and maintaining linkages and relationships tend to be the most successful’ (p. v).

**Conclusion**

The literature reviewed provides a good overview of the unique role of training brokers in rural and regional Australia in contributing significantly to the development of individual and community capacity. This role extends well beyond traditional views of the role of brokers as commercially-driven providers of a service, and suggests far more needs to be known about how brokers operate. The literature emphasises that the relationship the broker establishes with clients and training providers is critical to the extent to which the needs of the client are met. Trust (or lack of it) underpins the client–broker–provider relationship. In addition, the matching of needs to training is underpinned by a strong client focus and learning orientation. Such an orientation focusses not only on meeting immediate and perceived training needs, but also provides ongoing support and develops lifelong learners.

While training brokerage is a broad concept that can be used to describe multiple types of arrangements, all brokers rely on having substantial networks on which they draw for delivering clients’ training needs. For brokers to operate effectively, processes need to be in place for sharing ideas and accessing information and resources, and these processes need to be supported by a culture of collaboration. However, the review of the literature indicates that far more needs to be known about how to actually develop and sustain effective broking arrangements.

Within Australian rural industry and natural resource management sectors, there are a number of policy initiatives and strategies for facilitating collaboration in order to make the rural training market more responsive. However, in addition to FarmBis and specific references to broking in the *Shaping our Future* VET policy document, there would appear to be an urgent need for increased and specific support by government and industry at a policy level, to foster the adoption, implementation and evaluation of training brokerage activities on a far broader scale than exists at present.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction
The project uses multi-method, multi-site techniques to investigate effective training brokerage arrangements in rural Australia. Features of the methodology include collection of both quantitative (telephone survey) and qualitative (telephone survey and case study) data, as well as stakeholder workshops to ensure project relevance and stakeholder ownership of the project and its findings. The following list shows how each project objective is linked to one or more research techniques by:

- Mapping existing training/learning brokerage arrangements in Australian primary industry (telephone survey).
- Investigating the outcomes for primary producers of these training/learning brokerage arrangements (telephone survey/case studies/workshop 1).
- Identifying features of effective broking arrangements and inhibitors to effective brokerage from the Australian primary industry experience and from arrangements in other industries and overseas (telephone survey/case studies/workshop 1).
- Deriving a series of models of effective broking arrangements that apply to learning activities for various sectors, groups and issues in primary industry (case studies/workshop 2).
- Preparing case studies and a user-friendly manual that can be used to promote effective broking arrangements (case studies/workshops 1, 2 and 3).

Involvement of stakeholders
A key feature of the methodology is the involvement of stakeholders as partners in the research. Stakeholder involvement was facilitated by:

- the formation of a project Reference Group
- presentation of three interactive stakeholder workshops to validate project findings and provide input into the development of the user-friendly manual
- presentation of case studies of good practice brokerage at workshops
- publication of case studies, and a step by step manual of how to establish effective broking arrangements, and
- provision of reports to stakeholders.

Reference group
The Reference Group comprised representatives from a variety of stakeholder groups including a private rural consultant; public training provider; catchment management authority; Department of Primary Industry; FarmBis coordinator; and the Rural Training Council of Australia. Representatives were also drawn from an agricultural research organisation in New Zealand, and from the project sponsoring bodies CVCB and RIRDC.

The Reference Group was consulted at all key stages of the research: development of the survey instruments; identification of telephone survey participants and selection of case study sites; and development of principles for effective broking. Members also reviewed and provided comment on themes arising from the telephone survey and
case studies, and on the content of this final report and the user-friendly manual, *Matching training needs and opportunities: A guidebook*.

It is anticipated that the networks of Reference Group members will also assist with dissemination and adoption of project findings.

**Stakeholder workshops**
Three workshops were held as part of the project. The aims of the workshops were to:

- seek input from stakeholders into the development of good practice brokerage principles and guidelines
- give ownership to people in key positions to act as brokers
- provide an opportunity to ensure that organisations resource a broking function in accordance with good practice
- help build a network of brokers that could become a community for learning and support beyond the life of the project, and
- ensure that the implications for the role of brokers, in terms of any changes to funding and organisational arrangements, are incorporated as part of good practice brokerage.

Written reports on workshop outcomes were compiled and disseminated to stakeholders (workshop participants, reference group) at the conclusion of Workshops 1 and 2 (see Appendixes A and B). The specific purpose of Workshop 3 was to trial the manual, *Matching training needs and opportunities: A guidebook*. Feedback from workshop participants was incorporated into the final draft of the guidebook.

**Telephone survey**
The purpose of the telephone survey was to identify existing broking arrangements in Australian primary industry by contacting approximately 100 organisations and agencies of the types that were found to play the role of broker (i.e. with a focus on matching education and training to clients’ needs).

**Participant selection**
Potential participants were identified using the investigators’ extensive database of contacts, derived in part from a previous related project (Kilpatrick et al. 2002a). The database was updated over the course of the survey. It contained details of training providers; commodity groups; state/territory farmer organizations; government primary industry and education and training agencies; regional bodies and groups relevant to primary industry and natural resource management; former industry training advisory boards; and research and development corporations. In addition, the sample was expanded using a snowballing technique, whereby interviewees suggested further organisations to contact. While this process was effective in generating useful contacts, it did however bias the sample in terms of industries, location and the types of organisations interviewed (e.g. over half the sample comprised not-for-profit organisations).

**Survey instrument**
A telephone survey instrument was designed, with input from the Reference Group (see Appendix C). The survey instrument was designed using a Microsoft Access database system, which meant responses from interviewees were entered directly. There was a total of 45 items, but depending on their responses, some participants
were only requested to answer 41 of these. In addition, not all respondents were able to answer the final nine questions, relating to an example of a broking activity they had undertaken.

Questions were grouped into five main areas:

- general details about the organisation/business
- general information about their involvement in training (length of time, how many employees involved, how clients were informed about training, representation on training committees)
- specific information about their role in arranging training (number of events per year, approach to organising training, method/s for analysing, reviewing and acting on needs, funding sources for training)
- questions about their training brokerage activities (type of training organised and in which industry area/s and location/s, target client group/s, extent and usefulness of networks with others such as training providers, agribusiness, producer organisations, NRM organisations, regional development groups, government agencies, research bodies)
- questions about a specific example of training brokerage activity in which they had been involved.

Nearly all questions required respondents to select one answer from a list of options, with several permitting selection of multiple responses. The final set of questions about a specific example of training brokerage activity was largely open ended, and responses were entered into the MS Access database verbatim where possible, otherwise a summary of key points was entered.

The final draft of the survey instrument was trialled with a FarmBis coordinator and a State Department of Primary Industry representative. Minor modifications were made to the wording of some questions following the trial.

Telephone surveys took approximately 45 minutes to complete per respondent and were undertaken by two project staff members. Each staff member was responsible for undertaking approximately 50 telephone surveys. Regular meetings and discussions were held to ensure the quality and consistency of the coding.

**Analysis of telephone survey data**

The survey data were analysed with the aid of SPSS statistical software, comprising frequencies, cross-tabulation and cluster analysis.

There were three types of organisation targeted for survey: not-for-profit organisations, commercial organisations and government organisations. Approximately half the sample was not-for-profit organisations. Attributes of the organisations surveyed are summarised in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Summary attributes of the organisations interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major activities undertaken</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation (30%), research (15%), extension (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform clients about training?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top three ways clients informed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of employees involved in training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of training events per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do they organise training?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do they directly or indirectly organise training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do they analyse skills needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do they organise funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the top three areas they work in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the top three industries they work in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are they located</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who are their clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many clients do they service annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have they been involved in training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*these activities were ranked by the organisations as being their main activity*
A two-step cluster analysis procedure was employed to analyse common patterns of broking behaviour by the sampled organisations. Two-step cluster analysis is an exploratory tool designed to reveal natural groupings (or clusters) within a data set that would otherwise not be apparent (SPSS Version 12.0 Help File). The results of this analysis are reported in Chapter 4.

Data from questions 28 to 36 were qualitative, relating to an example of broking activity in which the organisation had been involved. These data were analysed with the aid of SPSS, and were used to inform the write-up of mini case studies and vignettes (presented in Chapter 4).

**Validation of survey findings**

Results of the survey, including three mini case studies, were presented to the Reference Group, and also to a workshop of approximately 30 stakeholders who were participants in the survey. The workshop, held in Sydney in July 2004, was used to validate the results, and to begin to build a picture of the attributes of effective broking arrangements.

**Case studies**

Six in-depth case studies of good broking practice were prepared (Chapters 5 to 10), as well as two additional vignettes (Chapter 4). Data for the case studies were collected by interview. The purpose of the case studies was to identify and showcase models of good broking practice, and to encourage adoption of these practices.

**Case and participant selection**

Subjects for the case studies were selected purposively from the examples of broking arrangements nominated by brokers during the telephone interviews. Criteria for selection were developed by cross-tabulating results of the two-step cluster analysis of survey data. Results of the two-step cluster analysis are reported in detail in Chapter 4. Cluster analysis revealed three spheres of broking activity: broker-active, client-active, and stakeholder-active (wide networks, active networkers and informers). These results were cross-tabulated to determine which organisations were strong in certain spheres but weak in others. The cross-tabulation produced a listing of 31 potential case study organisations. Potential case studies were therefore identified to represent a variety of broking arrangements, and were not necessarily the most active brokers (i.e. not necessarily active in all three spheres of broking activity).

A list of six case study sites, with backup selections for each, was prepared in consultation with the Reference Group. In some cases the first choice was unable to participate, so backup organisations were approached. Approximately 10 organisations were approached, resulting in six acceptances.

Selection of the six cases reflected a range of broker activity, based on the extent to which broking was a core activity, and the sphere of activity (broker-active, client-active, stakeholder-active). Cases also reflected diversity in terms of: organisation type (not-for-profit, commercial, government); range of primary industry sectors and the NRM sector; and the scope of activity (single state/territory, regional or national).

Table 2 summarises the attributes of each of the six selected sites.
Table 2. Characteristics of six case study sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of case</th>
<th>Broking a core activity</th>
<th>Main sphere of broker activity</th>
<th>Type of organisation</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Scope of activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biodynamic Agriculture Australia</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Client active</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd</td>
<td>No (brokers its own programs)</td>
<td>Stakeholder active</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Grain, sheep, beef, other livestock, equine</td>
<td>Regional/multi state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPIWE Dairy Branch</td>
<td>One of a number of activities</td>
<td>Stakeholder active</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>Regional/single state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solly Business Services</td>
<td>One of a number of activities</td>
<td>Broker &amp; provider active</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Grain, sheep, beef, other livestock</td>
<td>Regional/single state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy Basin Association</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Client active</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>NRM</td>
<td>Regional/single state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Grains Industry Training Network</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Client &amp; stakeholder active</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>Grain</td>
<td>Regional/single state</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each case study, the broker, training provider/s and client/s who had participated in the brokered training were identified and approached to participate in an interview. Where relevant, other key stakeholder/s in the broking process were also approached for interview. The purpose of the interview was to gain an understanding of the processes used to identify learning needs and to match them with effective training, and of the outcomes for primary producers of these broking arrangements.

Survey instrument

With input from the Reference Group, semi-structured interview schedules were developed for each of the three target groups: brokers, training providers/other stakeholders, and participants in the training (see Appendix D). All questions were open ended, and participants were prompted to provide further details as appropriate. Interview schedules were slightly different for each of the three target groups.

Brokers were questioned about two specific examples of broking activity: an earlier one, and then a more recent one. For each, they were asked a range of questions about the broking process, including: what triggered the need; who was involved; whether it met client needs; and factors that influenced (and inhibited) its effectiveness. Training providers/other stakeholders were questioned about their role in developing the second (more recent) training program mentioned by the broker. Participants in the brokered training were questioned in two areas: firstly, about their involvement in and satisfaction with the second (more recent) training program mentioned by the broker, and then about their general impressions of how training courses can be developed to
best meet their needs (e.g. way in which an organisation establishes training needs, type of marketing etc.).

The broker interview schedule contained more items (35) than schedules for the two other groups (13 items), and took approximately one hour to complete. Questionnaires for other interviewees took approximately 45 minutes. All interviews were recorded with the participants’ permission, and later transcribed. Interviews for Biodynamic Agriculture Australia and Fitzroy Basin Association were conducted by telephone due to lack of time. The remaining case study interviews were conducted face-to-face. All four project staff were involved in collection of case study data: two staff completed one case study each, and two staff completed two case studies each. Where possible, staff who conducted interviews also wrote the case study for the site.

**Analysis of case study data**

Case study data were analysed manually, using the following broad framework to capture the broking process: identifying training needs; engaging people; identifying and negotiating appropriate training; evaluation and further training; and factors which enhance and inhibit effective brokerage.

The framework was derived from key themes identified in the data and from the literature on the development of client-focussed training (Kilpatrick et al. 2002a). These themes were developed and refined by the project team during the course of their meetings, and through individual consultation.

Once project team members had written draft case studies, they were circulated amongst other team members for review. A project team meeting then determined a case study format for consistent presentation of findings.

**Validation of case study findings**

Final drafts of the six case studies were forwarded to interview participants for checking and comment. Requested changes were subsequently incorporated into the case studies.

From the case studies, a set of draft criteria for effective brokerage was developed. These criteria were also informed by the telephone survey and the literature review. The case studies and resulting criteria for effective broking were presented to the project Reference Group for comment, and the changes made related largely to the format and readability of the case studies.

The case studies and criteria were then presented to a workshop of approximately 30 invited stakeholders, including key client stakeholders and researchers, telephone survey participants and two case study participants. Workshop 2 was held in Melbourne in June 2005. Approximately one-third of these workshop participants had also participated in Workshop 1.

The workshop was used to showcase the six models of good practice, to validate the results further, and to provide further input into the development of the manual, *Matching training needs and opportunities: A guidebook.*
A guidebook for developing good practice for training brokerage

A web-based user-friendly guidebook for training brokers was developed, incorporating data from the telephone survey and case studies, as well as material from stakeholder Workshops 1 and 2. The draft guidebook was reviewed by the project Reference Group and their comments incorporated into the final design.

The guidebook was then trialled at a workshop of approximately 30 invited participants. Workshop 3 was held in September 2005 in Toowoomba, as a pre-symposium activity for the APEN-sponsored natural resource management conference *Building capacity for sustainable resource management: moving wheelbarrows full of frogs!* The workshop was also used to validate the final set of principles for effective brokerage, which had been amended following Workshop 2. In accordance with feedback from Workshop 2, the guidebook was also produced in PDF and CD-ROM formats.

Participant information, consent and post-contact

In accordance with University of Tasmania ethics procedures, subjects for both the telephone survey and case studies were sent a project information sheet and then telephoned or emailed to ascertain whether they were willing to participate. Case study interviewees were also emailed or faxed a consent form and asked to sign and fax or post it back. They were asked on the consent form whether they were prepared to have the name of their organisation identified in the case study. Participants in the telephone survey were not required to complete a consent form, as their agreement to take part in the telephone survey was deemed to signify consent. Copies of both information sheets, and the informed consent form for case study participants are provided in Appendix E.

All six case studies gave permission for their organisations to be named. In accordance with University of Tasmania ethics, every effort was made in writing up the case studies to ensure that individual interviewees were not identifiable, for example, by using generic position and status titles such as ‘trainer’, ‘farmer’, ‘farmer organisation representative’, or ‘government agency representative’. Since case studies were chosen as examples of good practice, it is not anticipated that any harm or discomfort would follow should one of the members or employees of an organisation be identifiable.

To ensure anonymity of subjects, telephone survey response sheets and interviews were coded numerically, and the list connecting the codes to identifying information kept in a separate location from the completed surveys and interview transcripts. In addition, telephone survey data have been reported in grouped, numerical form only (tables and charts).

In terms of post-contact, participants in the telephone survey were invited to the three workshops, and case study interviewees were invited to Workshops 2 and 3.

Limitation of the data

This project intentionally focusses on good practice models of training brokerage. One of the limitations of the project is that it does not consider examples where brokerage has failed. We expect that practitioners should evaluate any brokerage
arrangements in which they participate. They should ascertain that brokers with whom 
they work meet the good practice principles set out in Chapter 11.

**Summary**

This multi-method, multi-site approach to investigating effective training brokerage 
arrangements in rural Australia had, at its core, extensive stakeholder involvement. 
This approach facilitated the validation of telephone survey and case study data, and 
ensured project relevance and stakeholder ownership of the project and its findings.

The results from the telephone survey, and an introduction to case study findings, are 
presented in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction
This chapter reports key results from the statistical analysis of telephone survey data using SPSS statistical analysis software. Appendix F provides a summary of frequencies for questions 1 to 27c.

Statistical results are presented in relation to three areas of enquiry:
- Clustering of broking activity
- Mapping of broking activity
- Type of broker.

Findings from the preliminary qualitative analysis of survey data are then reported under the following headings:
- Key attributes of brokerage
- Mini case studies of broking activity

The survey findings are complemented by two additional training brokerage vignettes at the end of this chapter, and by six in-depth case studies which are presented in the following Chapters 5 to 10.

Clustering of broking activity
Using a two-step cluster analysis (described in Chapter 3), results from the telephone survey of 100 organisations that were considered to undertake a training broker role to some extent, were analysed. Results showed that training brokers can be expected to be active in three spheres:
- client sphere,
- provider sphere, and
- sphere of other stakeholders who may be able to provide useful input into training needs analysis, and whom the brokers can inform about various aspects of training.

Each sphere comprises a number of clusters of activity. The activities and characteristics of organisations within each cluster are also identified. The following three sections consider each of the three clusters of activity in turn.

Client activity clusters
Interactions with clients, defined here as potential training participants, can be grouped into five clusters:
- Client-active A
- Client-active B
- Needs-aware
- Disseminators
- Removed from clients.
These clusters are based on ways of analysing client needs and on modes of contact with clients. The clusters are described in Table 3, with the first two representing the most comprehensive needs analysis and contact behaviours in the sample.

**Provider activity clusters**
Interactions with providers can be grouped into four clusters:

- Provider-active
- Broker–provider active
- Self-contained provider
- Isolated from providers

The clusters are based on range of providers contacted, the frequency of contact, and the reported usefulness of interactions with providers. They are described in Table 4, with the first representing the most comprehensive range of interactions and reported use of information gained in interactions. Use of information considered is both input into the training brokered by the organisation and into training development more broadly.

**Other stakeholder activity clusters**
A key finding from a previous project on client-focussed education and training (Kilpatrick et al. 2002a), was that good practice in the development of training programs requires active use of a wide range of networks. It is reasonable to expect that broking practice will be enhanced by networking activity with non-client and provider bodies that could assist, for example, in identifying emerging training needs, sourcing funding and increasing awareness of suitable training providers for meeting client needs.

The survey identified two aspects of networking. The first is the types of organisation and individual contacts relevant to training brokerage (network contacts). The second is the formality or otherwise of these relationships and the use made of networking interactions (network behaviour).

*Network contacts*
Organisation non-client or provider contacts relevant to training fell into three clusters:

- Wide networks
- Government orientated
- Limited networks.

These clusters are described in Table 5. As the name indicates, the first of these had the widest range of networks.

*Network behaviour*
The organisations’ networking behaviour can be grouped into six clusters:

- Active networkers and informers A
- Active networkers and informers B
- Active networkers
- Active informers
- Proactive re own provision
- Sedentary in training networks.
Table 6 provides a description of the clusters. Just over half the sample fell into the first two groups, which were proactive in networking and informing others about training. These organisations were active in networking on all aspects of training development and provision, including having formal input via membership of committees dealing with training issues.

**Mapping of broking activity**

Appendix G (Tables A1–A10) sets out findings from the telephone survey in terms of the industry and geographic coverage of the surveyed government, commercial and not-for-profit organisations, according to their categorisation in the client, provider and networking clusters. The totals columns of the tables show the number of organisations operating in each industry (e.g. Table A1) and state/territory (e.g. Table A5).

Many organisations operate in multiple industries and states/territories. Nineteen organisations operate nationally and 15 others operate in more than one state. The number of organisations active in each industry and state roughly reflects the size of the industries and states. For example, around 50 organisations operate in each of the sheep/wool, grain and beef industries, but only 12 in sugar and 15 in cotton. Aquaculture and commercial fishing were represented by 15 and 12 respectively and there were only six organisations in the survey that did not cover production aspects of primary industry (identified as ‘not primary industry’). The scope of most of these was natural resource management.

Organisations that operate in only a part of one state/territory (24 of those surveyed) are less likely to be in the Client active A or B categorisations. There were no other significant differences in levels of broking activity according to geographic location.

Organisations that operate in the ‘not primary industry’ sector are less likely to be active in broking roles. They are less likely to be either Provider active or Broker–provider active, more likely to be Isolated from clients, have Limited networks and more likely to be Proactive re own provision, but not otherwise active in networks. These organisations are mainly focussed on natural resource management.

There are few other statistically significant variations in broking behaviour from industry to industry. In terms of client activity, organisations operating in the dairy and pig industries are more likely to be Needs aware and Disseminators, and less likely to be Isolated. Organisations operating in these two industries, as well as those in grain and sheep/wool industries, are more likely to have wide networks. Sugar targeting organisations are more likely to be Sedentary in networks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster(^1) (number in cluster)</th>
<th>Needs analysis summary</th>
<th>Client contact summary</th>
<th>Organisation's activities(^2)</th>
<th>Characteristics summary(^3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client active A (30)</td>
<td>targeted, comprehensive range of sources, highly interactive</td>
<td>diverse range of information and advice methods</td>
<td>research/training, extension/political</td>
<td>representative of sample, though none are non-primary industry focussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client active B (27)</td>
<td>targeted, comprehensive interactive</td>
<td>comprehensive range of information and advice methods</td>
<td>heavy training emphasis, also extension/community development/research</td>
<td>representative of sample, though includes more organisations with larger numbers of employees, more of all agricultural industries than sample and none non-primary industry focussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs aware (14)</td>
<td>targeted, comprehensive interactive</td>
<td>limited range of information and advice methods</td>
<td>training, extension/community development/political/NRM</td>
<td>few government organisations, tend to be longer established and smaller (in terms of employees and client base) than sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disseminators (12)</td>
<td>informal methods</td>
<td>diverse range of information and advice methods</td>
<td>training/political/some NRM</td>
<td>representative of sample, though none are non-primary industry focussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removed from clients (15)</td>
<td>do not analyse needs</td>
<td>limited range of information methods</td>
<td>extension/advice/NRM/research/community development</td>
<td>generally representative of sample, though includes most non-primary industry focussed organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Client clusters are based on survey questions 5, 11, 12, 22a. There were 98 organisations that answered most questions.

\(^2\) Based on top ranked 3 activities.

\(^3\) Considers organisation type, employee and client numbers, length of establishment, focus industry, and topics of training resulting from brokerage activity.
Table 4. Provider broking activity clusters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster(^1) (number in cluster)</th>
<th>Provision activity and interaction</th>
<th>Organisation’s activities(^2)</th>
<th>Characteristics summary(^3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provider active (41)</td>
<td>self provision, wide range of 2-way outside interactions with (other) providers</td>
<td>wide spread of activities</td>
<td>primary industry training orientated, more likely to broker/provider unaccredited training, includes most commercial organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broker-provider active (16)</td>
<td>some providers, some removed from provision, many have wide range of 2-way outside interactions with (other) providers</td>
<td>wide spread of activities, more lobbying, policy, advice, extension than sample norm</td>
<td>biased toward government organisations, more likely to be removed from training provision or delivering extension rather than training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-contained provider (32)</td>
<td>self-contained provision, some input into others’ training, little outside input into own</td>
<td>typical range of activities as per sample</td>
<td>representative of sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolated from providers (9)</td>
<td>isolated, few are providers</td>
<td>more community development, NRM, and representation than sample, little training, or policy</td>
<td>non primary industry and non-training focus, many not-for-profit, many unaware of training topics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Provider clusters are based on survey questions 8, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22c, 25, 27c, 27f. There were 98 organisations that answered most questions.

\(^2\) Based on top ranked 3 activities.

\(^3\) Considers organisation type, employee and client numbers, length of establishment, focus industry, and topics of training resulting from brokerage activity.
Table 5. Network contact activity clusters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster¹ (number in cluster)</th>
<th>Networking contacts</th>
<th>Organisation’s activities²</th>
<th>Characteristics summary³</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wide networks (24)</td>
<td>wide range of contacts; targets organisations as well as potential training participants in brokerage</td>
<td>wide spread of activities, more research, less representation and NRM</td>
<td>more government and larger organisations, longer established, all industries and training topics covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government orientated (44)</td>
<td>government contacts, some other contacts, limited non participant targets in brokerage</td>
<td>typical spread of activities, with more NRM</td>
<td>typical characteristics, plus has all small client base organisations, typical training topic and industry spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited networks (30)</td>
<td>some non-government contacts, negligible govt contacts, very limited non participant targets in brokerage</td>
<td>more extension and funding, less training and lobbying than typical of sample</td>
<td>more not-for-profit, less government, smaller employees and client base, includes all non primary industry, more horticulture, typical topics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Network contact clusters are based on survey questions 22, 26, 27. There were 98 organisations that answered most questions.
² Based on top ranked 3 activities.
³ Considers organisation type, employee and client numbers, length of establishment, focus industry, and topics of training resulting from brokerage activity.
### Table 6. Network behaviour activity clusters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster(^1) (number in cluster)</th>
<th>Networking behaviour</th>
<th>Organisation’s activities(^2)</th>
<th>Characteristics summary(^3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active networkers and informers A</td>
<td>active in all aspects of training; have representative roles on committees re training; have frequent contact with providers/brokers</td>
<td>training and extension focus</td>
<td>commercial and government organisations strong primary production focus; all primary industries included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(27)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active networkers and informers B</td>
<td>active in all aspects of training; have representative roles on committees re training; have occasional contact with providers/brokers</td>
<td>lobbying, policy, funding focus</td>
<td>commercial and government organisations; tend to be removed form provision and tend to have business training bias; all primary industries included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active networkers</td>
<td>active networking in all aspects of training, but do not have representative roles on committees</td>
<td>community development, research, representation and lobbying</td>
<td>commercial and not-for-profit organisations only, smaller, business training, with some production and NRM; all primary industries included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active informers</td>
<td>input into others’ training, contact with providers/brokers, some represent, but no gathering of information on needs via non client or provider networks</td>
<td>wide range, more advice, extension, NRM</td>
<td>typical of sample, slightly more business training; less likely to cover horticulture than sample as a whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive re own provision</td>
<td>gather information re training needs, contact other brokers/providers, represent on committees, but no input into others' training</td>
<td>community development, NRM and training focus</td>
<td>non commercial, longer established, otherwise typical of sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedentary in training networks</td>
<td>very limited networking, yet half are on committees dealing with training</td>
<td>extension, advice and NRM focus</td>
<td>not-for-profit dominated, smaller, less production and business training topics, includes most non primary industry focussed organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Network behaviour clusters are based on survey questions 6, 14, 17, 24. There were 98 organisations that answered most questions.

\(^2\) Based on top ranked 3 activities.

\(^3\) Considers organisation type, employee and client numbers, length of establishment, focus industry, and topics of training resulting from brokerage activity.
Most active training brokers
From the survey of government, commercial and not-for-profit organisations, it was proposed that the most active training brokers could be expected to be in all the following clusters:

- Client-active A or B
- Provider-active
- Wide networks
- Active networkers and informers A or B.

Only seven of the 98 organisations surveyed were in all these clusters and so met the criteria of most active training brokers. They included a wide range of organisations: two state industry training bodies; one state farmer association; one commercial training provider; an agricultural college; one government primary industry department commodity section; and a university rural research and development centre that is not focussed on primary industry.

Table A9 shows that none of the seven most active brokers identified in the survey operates nationwide, and none operates in only part of one state or territory. All are either single state focussed (five of the seven) or operate in more than one state and/or territory, but not all states and territories (two). None operates in Western Australia or South Australia. Tasmania has three of the seven active brokers.

The most active brokers were present in all primary industry groupings, but not in the ‘not primary industry’ category (see Table A10). The dairy and grains industries were represented by the most brokers (all seven in dairy and six of the seven in grains).

Least active training brokers
Conversely, the least active training brokers could be expected to be in these clusters:

- Removed from clients
- Isolated from providers
- Limited networks
- Sedentary in training networks

Four of the 98 organisations surveyed were in all these clusters and so met the criteria for least active training brokers. These were a catchment management authority, a regional NRM body, one agricultural commodity peak body, and an agricultural youth organisation.

Type of broker
The findings suggest three broad arrangements for training brokerage in Australian rural industry. These arrangements are based on whether or not the broker was also a training provider. Training providers include individuals and organisations, both private and public, providing accredited or non-accredited training or learning opportunities. These three arrangements are described below and summarised in Table 7.
Training providers using broking principles in their practice
Examples include training providers who employ local coordinators to facilitate a better match between client needs and training opportunities, and/or those who develop a wide network of stakeholders to help identify training needs, including other training providers, industry associations and government agency representatives. Use of broking principles ensures high quality training provision and a good match between needs and opportunities. This is not brokerage according to the definition in Chapter 1, because the principles are applied to matching the provider’s own programs to their own clients’ needs. This category includes private consultants, and public and private training providers.

Training providers acting as training brokers
These include training providers involved in compiling a program that uses other providers, or those who specifically refer clients to other providers who will be able to meet their needs, for example, as part of the clients’ learning pathway at the end of a course. When acting as a broker, the training provider considers the whole suite of present and potential training opportunities and actively matches needs to training, acting in the best interests of the client. This ensures clients are provided with the best possible learning pathway. Private consultants and private training providers fall within this category.

Other brokers
These are independent third parties who have no pecuniary interest in the training brokered. They could be termed full service training brokers. This group includes a wide range of largely not-for-profit organisations, such as industry, farmer, and NRM/catchment organisations.

Table 7. Broking roles of training providers compared with other brokers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Training provider using broking principles</th>
<th>Training provider acting as broker</th>
<th>Other broker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify needs of my client group</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify needs of all broker client groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify/develop my training opportunities</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify all training opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find best match of my training to my client group</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find best match of all training to my client groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver the training</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate delivery of the training</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key attributes of brokerage
Below is a list of attributes of different parts of the training brokerage process, identified from the telephone survey and validated by participants during Workshop 1. They are categorised into project development; project management; managing stakeholders; clients; assessment of needs; program delivery; and evaluation. Listed
under each of these headings are some of the key points within the broking process that contributed to a program’s success. These points were identified by respondents in the survey interview process. The list represents a synthesis of responses regarding effective training brokerage characteristics.

**Project development**

- Involving all relevant stakeholders in the development of the package.
- Designing a program that can be managed with an adaptable capacity so that it is able to meet the participants’ needs—a very flexible program.
- Using local knowledge and expertise whenever possible but identifying when to bring in outside help.
- Knowledge and networking through FarmBis, having the knowledge of who should be involved in the entire process.
- Good understanding and contact with what is occurring in Australia—a broad history base, with advisors having been involved over many years and having a good understanding of clients and their needs.
- Familiarity with where to obtain resources (funding, networks, trainers, evaluators).
- Including in programs a professional development element for the trainers.

**Project management**

- Ownership and leadership within the steering group that leads the program.
- Organising the backing of four government agencies at the start of project development so that resources are not compromised—facilities, staff and reputations.
- Planning and developing business and communications strategies through a consultative process.
- Reputation for running high quality activities that are well organised and attended.
- Having systems for tracking people to commit to opportunities so that courses have 90% enrolment.
- Ensuring relevance of the course activity.
- A broker having a number of hubs and working with a network, not just from one central point. The way the network is designed then ensures training can meet local needs along with regional and national needs. It should work well at different scales.
- Broking needs to have systems for listening and responding to clients’ needs to ensure they are able to deliver what the clients are asking for. Addressing childcare needs, or open online forums that are always available.
- Coordinating a process with trainers who are qualified industry specialists, courses funded with FarmBis and conducted in an environment suitable to rural producers. Ensuring the processes are in place, with the right timing and coordination, so that courses are top quality.
- Ensuring events are well publicised and highlighting the requirement of participation, good course content and good delivery with a rural focus.
- Networking, having a large database to promote the program extensively.
- Capitalising and maintaining networks and previous training relationships.
Managing stakeholders

- Existing relationships with large organisations with status, and strong industry and community support (e.g. Rabobank).
- Having the information available to all stakeholders who could potentially be involved, having someone to answer any questions at a systemic level.
- Personal networks, high level of trust and reliability.
- Involvement of industry at all stages of development and delivery.
- Involving leading producers to ‘talking the show up’ and to sell the credibility of deliverers.
- Having a cooperative approach with stakeholders.
- Working together in partnership with the supply chain manager to develop a program.
- Determining the depth of involvement of all the organisations, contribution between industry and government, sharing of resources.
- Regular contact between stakeholders and discussion groups.

Clients

- Having a holistic strategy that enables participants to continue the program after it has finished.
- Openness to a wide range of ideas and a partnership approach to working with potential clients.
- Knowing your clients as part of your job.
- Having a good working relationship with farmers. Understanding the farming business so that when training is organised farmers can attend.
- Clients possibly becoming brokers themselves, offering their properties for demonstration purposes, promoting and even subsidising courses.
- Ensuring that communication between the people delivering the training, and the broker, is effective. 50% formal and 50% informal, but with regularity being the key.
- Significant effort on the part of program coordinators to encourage clients to participate.

Assessment of needs

- Recognising a timely idea, and having training conducted by the organisation.
- Ensuring the needs of all stakeholders are met in the process.
- Having contact with what is occurring in Australia—a broad history base, advisors having been involved over many years, and having a good understanding of clients and their needs.
- Attempting to select trainers who understand the participants’ business—city-based trainers may not be warmly welcomed by the rural community.
- Selecting the right trainers. Building a relationship between the participants and the trainers.

Delivery

- Organising skilled trainers with the required resources.
- Providing support on an on-going basis.
- Organising training in line with other events and providing financial incentives, e.g. rebates.
• Identifying and using deliverers who have their own following so that people are more likely to attend.
• Identifying an appropriate training style—taking it to people’s farms and making it relevant, appealing to different learning styles.

Evaluation
• An extensive evaluation strategy.
• Developing systems for obtaining feedback from farmers who were attracted to the course.
• Always conducting a pilot program.
• Evaluating using an independent organisation.

Mini case studies of broking activity
From the qualitative data provided in the telephone surveys, three mini cases were prepared (see following pages). These mini cases provide specific illustrations of the range of organisations involved in broking, and the various combinations of behaviour and activities that can be employed in brokerage processes. The mini cases are not intended to represent the typical broking arrangements of these types of organisations.

Mini Case study 1. Not-for-profit organisation

Program
Fungicide diagnostic field school

Program in operation
August 2003

Broking role of the organisation
The broker organisation identified the need, developed the program, sourced trainers, advertised, administered and reported on project outcomes.

Need identified
Lack of skills and knowledge relevant to the products available, and the appropriate use of fungicide within broadacre production.

Who was involved and what was their role?
The need was identified through a survey of organisation members, and research and feedback from field days that they conducted. Staff within the organisation developed a concept and contacted the Foundation for Arable Research, the expert in this field, which then helped prepare the content of the program along with local farmers and agribusiness. Grains Research and Development Corporation provided funding for an expert consultant to help develop the program further. A co-delivery process was set up between the expert consultant and the broking organisation.

How did they know it met their clients’ needs?
Formal evaluation was carried out. A two-page questionnaire was developed and a very positive response to the program was received.
How did the broking process contribute to the program’s success?
The program would not have been as successful if the broker had merely brought the expert consultant in to deliver a course. Having the program applied at the local level ensured that it was grounded in local reality. However, it was necessary to source the expertise, as it is not available here. Engaging an agronomic consultant for the practical side and having a farmer committee as a ‘sounding board’ for the program concept and content was useful, as was conducting a pilot of the program with them. Also, the broker organisation attempted to deliver in local areas so farmers did not have to travel long distances.

Mini Case study 2. Commercial organisation

Program
Achieving through leadership

Program in operation
2003-2004

Broking role of the organisation
Identifying the opportunity for a course on leadership, program development, and delivery and marketing to customers. The need for the program was informally identified. The broker identified and organised an accredited training facilitator.

Need identified
The need was identified by the organisation, using its knowledge of its clients. The leadership step was needed for those clients who were considered to be high achievers. The program was developed ‘on a hunch’, through awareness that it was offered in the city, and was identified as an opportunity which could be offered to its farming clientele.

Who was involved and what was their role?
The organisation developed the content by purchasing the tool used for another leadership program. The broker organisation then contracted an outside accredited deliverer. The broker organisation obtained FarmBis funding to reduce the costs to farmers participating in the course.

How did they know it met their client’s needs?
Formal evaluation was conducted and all courses were sold out.

How did the broking process contribute to the program’s success?
Identifying an opportunity outside agriculture—bringing a program used by city companies to rural Australia. Increasing the opportunity for primary producers to have access to training. Using FarmBis meant that it was very affordable to participate. Ensuring that delivery of the training was professional, and always conducted by the best trainers. The broker organisation also ensured the facilitators were representing rural industries, so they identified with participants and created a safe learning environment. In addition, the course was held at a resort so participants could have a holiday, making the experience even more enjoyable.
Mini Case study 3. Government organisation

Program
Environmental Management Systems pilot program

Program in operation
July 2003 to 2004

Broking role of the organisation
The broker organisation worked to facilitate and coordinate multiple stakeholder input to developing the project. The organisation also provided a representative on the steering committee that maintained the program.

Need identified
Natural resource management—a major issue nationally.

Who was involved and what was their role?
Eleven collaborators provided input for the program: Apple & Pear Growers; Adelaide Hills wine region; Cherry Growers of South Australia linked with EPA Watershed Protection Office; Department of Land & Water; CSIRO Land & Water; Department of Biodiversity & Conservation; CRC for viticulture; Adelaide Hills Council; Adelaide Hills Regional Development Board; and Primary Industry South Australia. Funding was provided by Department of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (DAFF) and other participants on a cash or in-kind basis. It was a $1.4 million project that required the broking organisation to coordinate monthly reports to DAFF. The broking organisation also coordinated the activities of the participants in the program. The participants represented 32 properties from across three commodity groups—apples, pears and cherries. Coordination of these activities was achieved using two part-time staff. They organised two workshops for the participants, as well as providing one-on-one training on properties. The broker organisation was aiming for a template that could be used nationally.

How did they know it met their clients’ needs?
Formal evaluation was conducted and a monthly reporting system was also used.

How did the broking process contribute to the program’s success?
Coordination enabled a significant depth of involvement from all the organisations. It generated a significant collaboration between industry and government, and also the sharing of resources.

Case studies and vignettes
The six in-depth case studies are featured in Chapters 5 to 10. To supplement the case studies, a further two vignettes were prepared, featuring the role of other organisations as brokers. The purpose of the vignettes was to illustrate that not all organisations have the time, resources or capacity to undertake training brokerage in the same way or at the same level described in some of the case studies. However, such organisations are still able to play a role in helping to match training to training needs for their members/clients, with some less proactive, and others more proactive in the role.
Vignette 1

A professional development coordinator employed on a rural campus of a tertiary institution in Victoria was approached by a group of women to organise a one-day workshop on capacity building for rural women in the local community. She organised the venue, catering, presenters, funding and promotion, and undertook a formal evaluation of the workshop. Women also networked by email to promote the workshop, and to keep costs down. The workshop was delivered by a national women’s organisation, and funded by the State government. Formal evaluation of the program indicated its effectiveness, particularly in terms of making training available within the local area. Without this, a number of the women would have been unable to attend.

Vignette 2

A fruit growers’ organisation with national membership, identified through a formal member survey that its members required training in all aspects of exporting and marketing their produce. It organised a national marketing forum to coincide with its annual conference. Registration fees for the conference helped to fund the forum. The fruit growers’ organisation advertised the forum on its website and in flyers; approached researchers, exporters and marketers to provide a training session each during the forum, and conducted a formal evaluation of the activity afterwards. The evaluation indicated that the forum had been effective because it had disseminated information that the growers had requested. It was also effective because it brought all the parties together to discuss issues.
Chapter 5: Biodynamic Agriculture Australia

Case summary

- Association of farmers and others interested in biodynamics
- Uses farmer members to broker training for local/regional communities
- Main funding source is FarmBis, but beginning to explore different funding sources including fee for service

Background

Biodynamic Agriculture Australia is a not-for-profit association formed some 15 years ago to make and sell biodynamic preparations and provide guidance in their use to its members. The organisation has its base in rural New South Wales, and employs three full-time staff (a Chief Executive Officer, Education Officer, and Operations Administrator) and three part-time staff. It has a number of regional groups in each state, and in excess of 1200 members nationwide, with an additional 173 people subscribing to the newsletter only. Membership is diverse, including producers from all primary industry sectors, home gardeners, and those for whom biodynamic production is part of a wider concern for social and environmental issues.

Workshops conducted by Biodynamic Agriculture Australia staff are largely of an introductory nature, comprising the Introduction to Biodynamic Farming Practices workshop. This is a two-day workshop run in various locations in all states except Tasmania, depending on sufficient participant numbers and the availability of presenters. The workshop is designed to give participants the basic principles behind, and the techniques to practice, sustainable natural resource management on their properties. Workshops cover some of the competencies of the Agricultural and Horticultural Training Packages. Successful completion provides participants with a Certificate of Attainment for the competencies achieved, from a Registered Training Organisation in New South Wales.

Identifying training needs

When the Introduction to Biodynamic Farming Practices workshop was first offered in several locations in rural Queensland in 2000, it was initiated by Biodynamic Agriculture Australia in the belief that sufficient people would be interested in attending. Since then, as more people have participated in many more workshops and have begun to implement biodynamic practices on their own farms, interest in the workshop has grown considerably and workshops are now run largely on demand.

This is where the role of local farmers as training brokers comes into play. One farmer broker is a beef producer in a small rural community north-west of Brisbane. He is an active member of Biodynamic Agriculture Australia and has extensive informal and formal networks both within and outside his local area. He is frequently approached for advice and information by locals, and those outside the region, and is listed in the Biodynamic Agriculture Australia newsletter as a contact person for his area.
Although he provides this advice on an individual basis, he is also active in organising training for farmers. These activities are undertaken on a voluntary basis.

The farmer broker participated in one of the first Introduction to Biodynamic Farming Practices workshops offered by the organisation several years ago in another rural location. He now works with the organisation’s Education Officer, to coordinate workshops in his local area, the most recent one being held in February 2005 on his property. The farmer broker reflected on the workshop:

*The last workshop that we had here I knew we needed it because we have a rather diverse sort of community here...it’s not just cattle, there’s a lot of orchards, grape growers, crop farmers, dairy farmers.*

The use of biodynamic practices was seen as an environmentally sustainable way for each group to address its particular problems (e.g. bird problems in vineyards, control of weeds in broadacre crops). After identifying a group of approximately 25 farmers, he contacted the Education Officer to initiate the delivery of an Introduction to Biodynamic Farming Practices workshop, suggesting a suitable date.

### Engaging people

Once organised, the workshop was advertised by Biodynamic Agriculture Australia via its website and a mailout to members in the region, and by the farmer broker through word of mouth, using his extensive farmer and natural resource management networks. Personal contact with others was important in generating participation, as he noted: ‘...the fact that they know we’re up and going with it [biodynamic production] does help to bring people in [to the workshops]’. Also important were the farmer broker’s links with the reporter on the local community newspaper, who provided both pre- and post-workshop publicity.

### Identifying and negotiating appropriate training

### Planning and developing a training program

The farmer broker and organisation’s Education Officer jointly identified appropriate topics and devised a plan for the February workshop that would be relevant to the needs of the group. This process drew on the Education Officer’s knowledge of program content and skills in program planning and delivery, and the farmer broker’s knowledge of the particular needs of the group and of local conditions. Although most workshops were FarmBis-funded, the February 2005 workshop was funded through participant fees, which were kept as low as possible. Nevertheless, the farmer broker noted that he knew of ‘at least six or eight farmers’ who would have benefited from the training but could not afford to attend.

Participants in this and other workshops commented favourably on the format, beginning with a session on the basics ‘which everyone needs’, and followed by a range of sessions throughout the day on different topics related to biodynamics, such as weed and insect and bird management and the effect of biodynamic preparations on the root systems of plants. Workshops were delivered by two presenters: the Education Officer from Biodynamic Agriculture Australia, and one other person who focusses on a specialist area of biodynamics (e.g. the use of broadcasters to distribute biodynamic preparation).
Evaluation and further training

The organisation’s Education Officer noted that formal evaluations undertaken by participants in the Introduction to Biodynamic Farming Practices workshops indicated satisfaction, in terms of workshop content and delivery. For the February 2005 workshop, another indication of success was that all course participants subsequently became financial members of the organisation; no previous workshop had reported a 100% enrolment of new members.

Following participation in Biodynamic Agriculture Australia workshops, there are several options regarding further information and training. All participants are encouraged to maintain contact with the Education Officer who provides an extension service by telephone. Some participants continue to seek advice and clarification from the farmer broker who is happy to provide this, noting ‘that’s where our local contacts come into their own’. Some choose to form or become part of an existing regional Biodynamic Agriculture Australia group.

Members of the organisation, such as the farmer broker, continue to actively seek additional training opportunities for themselves and others. For example, through his contacts with farmers outside his local area, the farmer broker became aware of a workshop on radionics being offered in another part of Queensland later in 2005, which he and four others from his area attended. While at the workshop, the farmer broker negotiated with the presenter to deliver a session in his local area. He offered to put together a group of interested participants and assist with organisation of the course, as he does for the Biodynamic Agriculture Australia workshops.

Profile of the broking process

- Local knowledge by a farmer and his willingness to use his property as a training venue, provided an opportunity for training brokerage.
- Trusted and respected local farmer had knowledge of needs of other farmers and local conditions and worked with the broker organisation to plan a program to meet those requirements.
- Local farmer used his extensive networks to ensure participation in the program, and to organise further training opportunities for himself and others.
- Broker organisation used newsletter and website to refer participants to other training as opportunities arose, on an ongoing basis.
- Depending on need, subsequent follow-up support provided on an individual basis by both the broker organisation and the local farmer.
- Main funding source is FarmBis, but beginning to explore different funding sources including fee for service.

What makes this a successful broking model?

While Biodynamic Agriculture Australia has a small broking role in addition to its core activities of training provision and sale of preparations, an interesting variation of the model is that organisation members themselves also act as brokers. Using members as brokers is an effective tool, because it allows the organisation to direct its limited human and financial resources towards delivery of training and provision of individual support, while at the same time matching training to training needs. The farmer does not see himself as a broker, but as a community-minded individual with a passion for biodynamic practices.
The features of the model are:

*Identifying and supporting a local ‘champion’*

The farmer broker is enthusiastic, committed, and willing to use his knowledge and networks to secure and promote training for the benefit of his community. The Education Officer values the farmer broker, and the two maintain a positive and supportive relationship, with regular and ongoing communication.

*Understanding local conditions and learners’ needs*

The farmer broker has lived in his community for many years and has a thorough knowledge of local conditions and the needs of farmers. He uses this knowledge to identify and engage potential course participants, and works closely with the Education Officer to negotiate and develop courses appropriate to their needs.
Chapter 6: Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd

Case summary

- A small but growing private Registered Training Organisation with a strong regional focus
- Trusted and credible regional coordinators as brokers are integral to the planning process
- Strong focus on accredited training largely funded by FarmBis, with some cost savings through local community support

Background

Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd is a private Registered Training Organisation (RTO), with the majority of activity based in various rural locations in South Australia, but with an increasing presence in most other states. It works primarily with the grain, sheep, beef, other livestock and equine industries.

A relatively new organisation, it has a staff of approximately 15, comprising employees and consultants, which is increasing as new opportunities and markets are developed. Its philosophy is to deliver cost-effective training; to be as flexible as possible by addressing issues relating to location, venue, childcare and other barriers to participation, particularly for females; and to ensure outcomes for individuals are relevant to their business. Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd uses local infrastructure such as community halls and schools as training venues, and relies on the goodwill of local communities to help provide other facilities and equipment.

Approximately 90% of the organisation’s training courses are accredited and most are funded by FarmBis (AQF 4–6) or User Choice (AQF 2–3). Courses include: Certificate II in Agriculture and Certificate II in Horse Industries (school-based new apprenticeships); Certificate III in Agriculture; Certificate IV in Rural Business; Diploma in Agriculture; Diploma in Rural Business Management; and Advanced Diploma in Rural Business Management. It also offers non-accredited short courses in a range of areas, and facilitates good practice groups. Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd services up to 250 clients annually (accredited training) and 3000 clients annually (non-accredited training).

Identifying training needs

In general, the training needs of potential clients are identified through largely informal means, including face-to-face meetings with clients and information received from key clients or associates. As the managing director noted: ‘People doing Cert IV’s and Diplomas are all in a business, they know what they need’.

The approach was different for the newly introduced Certificate II in Agriculture, because, as the managing director explained, ‘these kids really don’t know what they want do they?’ Individual needs must be matched to employment opportunities, and
course design needs to take account of changing local economic conditions. This requires the managing director to be ‘out there in the community’ and in contact with key industry and government representatives. The organisation’s regional coordinators are also a key part of the process, in terms of being aware of opportunities and threats in their regions and feeding this information to the managing director. Identification of course competencies is determined after consultation with participants, employers, schools and the local community.

### Engaging people
The organisation is a training provider that uses brokering concepts to engage participants, by employing regional coordinators. One regional coordinator in the mid-north area of South Australia has her own farm business and was a former course participant in the Advanced Diploma in Rural Business Management. Her role includes identifying those within her local area who would benefit from the proposed training, and sourcing enough potential participants to make the course viable.

In the case of the Certificate IV in Rural Business, she was aware of the need in her community for business management training, particularly for female members of farm businesses. The regional coordinator made a short presentation at a kindergarten parents’ meeting. Together with a Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd lecturer, she then organised a community information session, and promoted it through personalised flyers, school newsletters, community noticeboards and ‘a bit of word of mouth’. Although a small number of people attended the first meeting, they were enthusiastic and undertook to target others they knew would benefit from participation in the course.

The leadership style and flat organisational structure of Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd encourage all staff to seek opportunities and ‘create their own jobs because everybody is capable of making decisions and so we are always growing and having exciting new things happening …’ (managing director). This is an incentive for staff, including regional coordinators, to continue to scan the horizon for new areas of training need.

### Identifying and negotiating appropriate training
The organisation develops and delivers its own training programs that are responsive to clients’ needs in terms of location, timing and frequency. External experts are contracted to deliver modules as required (e.g. in the areas of human resource training and family meetings).

### Planning and developing a training program
Regional coordinators are important in ensuring responsiveness to client needs. For example, they negotiate appropriate course times and venues, so they do not clash with other school and community events, and identify childcare options for course participants. They also have responsibility for providing information to lecturers on the appropriate mix of units of competence for first semester. This is coupled with the process of lecturers profiling participants at the beginning of each course to determine their skill and knowledge levels, and preferred learning style.

Although lecturers have ultimate responsibility for course design, delivery and assessment, they draw on the local knowledge of regional coordinators in the process.
For example, proposed participant assessments are discussed with regional coordinators who ‘actually give me that really critical feedback … as to where the objections [from a participant’s perspective] might be and where the positives are’ (lecturer’s comment).

**Evaluation and further training**
Evaluation of courses indicates overall participant satisfaction. A course participant in Certificate IV in Rural Business described the course as relevant and specific to the needs of the group, ‘when they’re planning they’ll take into account everyone’s needs … they didn’t want to cover anything that we can find out ourselves or have access to already …’. In addition, participants appreciate the way that assessment tasks become tools they can use in their own farm businesses.

Following completion of a course, the organisation undertakes a broking role by finding out what participants would like to do next and providing a pathway to other training programs. For participants in short courses, this could mean undertaking an accredited program. For others, it could mean facilitating their entry into courses not offered by Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd, such as degree programs. The managing director noted that ‘…any participant can approach me about negotiating credit into a degree and I’ll actually go into bat for them …’. In another example, the organisation developed the Certificate II (school-based new apprenticeship) program in such a way that ‘they can get up to 50% credit … into full-time … on-farm traineeships when they finish’ (managing director).

**Profile of the broking process**
- High-level training provision incorporates aspects of training brokerage.
- Regional coordinators employed by the organisation identify training needs, engage participants, and facilitate participation by removing barriers such as childcare. Coordinators are trusted and credible members of the community with extensive local and external networks.
- All members of the broker organisation have responsibility for identifying and matching local training and employment opportunities.
- Course participants drive the development of training programs, in terms of location, time, venue and frequency.
- Organisation works closely with participants to identify their further training needs and facilitate access to that training.
- Relevance of assessment tasks to farm businesses.
- FarmBis is major funding source, but the organisations utilises community support to keep costs down.

**What makes this a successful broking model?**
Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd is a high-level training provider that uses broking concepts to identify training needs and engage participants. Regional coordinators are employed to make training as accessible as possible to farmers, particularly females, and to work with lecturers to ensure the needs of course participants are met. The features of the model are:

*Selection and appointment of paid regional coordinators*
These positions provide a critical link in matching training needs to training provision, by drawing on the local knowledge and networks of coordinators to target
and engage course participants. The fact that these are paid positions ensures continuity and reflects the importance of the role to the organisation. Selection of the right people, who were enthusiastic and proactive in identifying and engaging participants, contributed to the success of the model.

Organisational structure and leadership is an incentive
Organisational structure and leadership within Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd encourage staff to create their own jobs, including the number of hours they wish to work. This is an incentive for all staff, including regional coordinators, to continue to scan the horizon for new areas of training need, and to match that need to appropriate training provision.

Understanding learners’ needs
As the first point of contact for participants, regional coordinators are well placed to collect initial information about learning needs and feed this through to lecturers. They are also well placed to provide feedback to lecturers on the appropriateness to participant needs of the mix of units of competence, and on the usefulness and relevance to students of assessment tasks.
Chapter 7: Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment (Dairy Branch)

Case summary

- State government primary industry branch
- Brokerage is a team process built on trusting relationships with stakeholders from the early planning stages
- Availability and appropriate allocation of resources to planning is important

Background

The Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment (DPIWE)’s Primary Industries Division comprises eight Branches, of which Dairy is one. The Dairy Branch is based on the north-west coast of Tasmania, and employs eight professional staff. Its role is to assist dairy farmers by providing services that stimulate, encourage and support development and growth in an environmentally responsible manner. It services up to 400 farmer clients and many more industry clients per year.

The Dairy Branch works in partnership with, and obtains funding for programs from several government and industry sources, including FarmBis and Dairy Australia, and also contributes financially to the development of programs. Staff deliver short-term training courses, coordinate field days, undertake benchmarking, and facilitate discussion groups and the production of a newsletter for dairy farmers. In keeping with institutional policy, Dairy Branch staff develop and deliver much of the training themselves, engaging external expertise as needed, and dependent upon the availability of funding.

Identifying training needs

In 2004, a two-day dairy industry strategic planning workshop organised by the DPIWE Dairy Branch, and involving all relevant dairy stakeholders, identified that there were not enough young people achieving in the industry. To address this issue, staff from the Dairy Branch facilitated an extensive process of needs analysis to determine the sort of training required.

Early in the process the Dairy Branch secured financial support from the DairyTas Strategic Advisory Committee (DSAC) which administers the Targeting Our Profitability (TOP) research and extension funding from Dairy Australia. Dairy Branch staff convened a planning meeting with DSAC members, and the young farmers who had attended the strategic planning workshop. Input was sought from the Share Farmers Association, and from farmer discussion groups facilitated by Dairy Branch staff. Information about what was happening in other states was also collected and presented for consideration.
At this meeting stakeholders began to develop an outline of the issues for young farmers that needed to be addressed. Notes were taken and later circulated for comment to all those who had attended. These notes became the draft outline for the proposed new program *Making progress for young dairy farmers*.

**Engaging people**

Advertising for the program was undertaken by the Dairy Branch, and included accessing databases of participants from previous young farmer training programs; the monthly newsletter; discussion groups facilitated by Dairy Branch staff; and one-to-one contact between Dairy Branch staff and farmers. Individual farmers who would benefit from the program were also targeted. In addition, paid advertisements were placed in the local popular rural press. The private consultant who was employed to work with Dairy Branch staff to develop and deliver *Making progress*, acted in a sub-brokering role by recommending the program to some of his clients.

*Making progress for young dairy farmers* was also designed as a one-day workshop. Aware of the barriers preventing dairy farmers from participating in training, the Dairy Branch followed its usual practice of planning to deliver sessions in four different regional centres to cut down on travelling time, and running them between 11am and 3pm to accommodate milking schedules.

A total of 64 farmers participated in the program in four locations. The programs covered the following topics: the business environment; creating wealth; building skills; and net worth.

**Identifying and negotiating appropriate training**

A number of the issues that farmers and other stakeholders identified as being needed in the training program were outside the expertise of Dairy Branch staff, in particular, the focus on business management issues. They sought this expertise from a local private consultant with relevant expertise. As the training broker noted, involving the consultant in the very early stages of the project meant ‘you get investment and commitment right from the start’.

The broker and private consultant had worked together over a period of some years in the development and delivery of a number of training programs for dairy farmers, and had built a substantial long-term relationship based on shared understandings and expectations, and mutual trust and respect for each other’s knowledge and expertise. At one stage, the consultant had been an employee of DPIWE. The credibility of the private consultant reflected on the credibility of the Dairy Branch, which made selection of the right consultant important:

> ...people think they can deliver without being expert in the subject and I don’t agree with that. If you get asked one question from farmers that you can’t answer then you’re totally discredited as a presenter ... we don’t want to get into a field where we’re hanging our hat on someone else’s performance.

(Training broker)
Planning and developing a training program

One of the first tasks of the private consultant was to work with the training broker to help clarify and define the issues that had been identified at the first planning meeting of stakeholders. The private consultant reflected that the importance of this stage of the process cannot be overlooked:

Quite often people come to you and say this is what we want, but then we sit down and talk about it carefully [and] what they want might be slightly different to that or bigger or deeper...

As a result, the intended focus of the program was broadened, from sharefarming as a route to farm ownership, to include a range of other strategies for making progress and creating wealth. This would allow the program to reach a wider audience.

Regular meetings were then held between the broker and the private consultant, to develop program format and content. The process of ongoing communication between the broker and the private consultant while the program was being developed, ensured that training content and format would meet the requirements of stakeholders.

Like nearly all other programs brokered by the Dairy Branch, Making progress for young dairy farmers was not accredited. BD from the Dairy Branch believed that accreditation did not necessarily guarantee quality or client satisfaction.

The broker noted the role of other stakeholders such as the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) which had been involved in the earlier stages of the process in identifying the issues facing young dairy farmers. Their legitimisation or ‘signing off’ on program content once it was developed was an indication of broader industry support for the program. This meant that stakeholder groups were prepared to actively engage in promotion and awareness raising amongst their members.

Approximately 50% of the program was delivered by the private consultant, with guest speakers (farmers) providing illustrative examples of how they had dealt with challenges, and how they had progressed through the industry. Three Dairy Branch staff members were involved, primarily in hosting the event and in presenting some workshop sessions later in the day.

The broker and the private consultant emphasised that the strength of the program was its team approach to, and shared responsibility for, program planning, development and delivery.

Evaluation and further training

The Dairy Branch follows rigorous formal and informal processes of monitoring and evaluation of the training programs that it brokers. During delivery of Making progress for young dairy farmers, it was important to the process that the broker played an active role, even when not delivering.

If we’re not presenting we’re usually critiquing, keeping notes, trying to look at where we lose the audience or where they were really going good or where something didn’t make sense even though you thought it might.
Dairy Branch staff reported that feedback from participants indicated satisfaction with the outcome of the program, in that they gained a better understanding of the macro issues such as farm affordability and that the issues were not as difficult as they had thought. They also gained a greater insight into the link between farm success and their own skill.

Feedback also identified that further intensive support for younger farmers was needed. To address this need, a follow-up program is currently in the early stages of development by Dairy Branch staff, and is being planned to coincide with the next round of TOP funding. The planned follow-up program will provide one-to-one support to a group of 12 young farmers per year, to set and achieve their goals over a three-year period. It is likely the same private consultant will be involved in this second phase of the project because of his management and technical expertise.

In addition to developing their own follow-up programs, staff from the broker organisation are constantly on the lookout for other training opportunities for their clients. This involves alerting clients to training being offered by others, and where possible, organising funding for their clients to attend relevant sessions.

Profile of the broking process

- This broking model illustrates the overlap between training brokers who are also training providers.
- Industry-strategic planning exercise provided an opportunity for the industry to engage in training brokerage.
- Worked closely with clients to identify and define their needs and deliver on these, with the planning and development process driven by farmers.
- Involved all stakeholders early in the planning process, including the funding body and private consultant. This ensured broad stakeholder support and legitimisation.
- Broker organisation used own staff for the majority of developing and delivery of training, as required by institutional policy, buying in external expertise as necessary and dependent on funding availability. Sustainability is about accessing external expertise as needed.
- Built relationship with key training provider and had a thorough knowledge of his reputation and expertise. Relationship based on trust and mutual respect.
- Used range of strategies to ensure participation in the program, including targeting individuals.
- Broker and training provider worked as a team, sharing responsibility for program development, delivery and outcomes.
- Formal and informal monitoring and evaluation was a core part of training development and managing relationships with stakeholders.
- Built on previous program to develop the next one.
- Broker had thorough knowledge of its clients’ situations and contexts and referred them to other training as opportunities arose.
- Allocation of resources is integral to the broking process.
What makes this a successful broking model?

*Longstanding relationship with a credible and highly regarded training provider*

The private consultant who provides the bulk of the training is well known by the broker, having worked in the broker organisation at one stage. His expertise, reputation and credibility are highly regarded. The credibility of the training brokered by the Dairy Branch is dependent on the credibility of the private consultant who delivers the training.

*Brokerage is viewed as a team process*

Training brokerage is viewed by stakeholders as a team process. Each partner has an investment in and commitment to the process, and shares responsibility for successful outcomes.

*Carefully planned and managed process of training program development*

The development of the training is carefully planned and paced, involving key stakeholders such as the funding body early in the project, to secure support and legitimisation. Surveying farmers’ needs is an important early step in the process, as is early involvement of the private consultant who acts as an objective third party in helping to analyse and define needs, and to target program development accordingly. Regular meetings and ongoing communication occur between key stakeholders to negotiate and develop program content and format.

*Understanding learners’ needs*

The Dairy Branch uses a wide array of strategies to link clients to other training, including databases, newsletters, discussion groups and personal contact by extension officers. Because it has a good knowledge of its clients and of the industry, it also targets particular clients for relevant training courses within and external to the organisation.

*Extensive monitoring and evaluation*

The Dairy Branch ensures programs that it develops are monitored carefully and evaluated rigorously, from both a participant and deliverer perspective. Feedback is then used to improve subsequent courses, or subsequent offerings of the same course, and to determine how clients’ ongoing training needs can best be met.
Chapter 8: Solly Business Services

Case summary

- Small private consultant
- High level of trust in training broker and between training broker and stakeholders
- Timing of the process was important
- FarmBis was key source of funding

Background
Solly Business Services was established in November 2001 in Naracoorte in South Australia, by an agribusiness consultant and a training broker. The business employs two consultants and provides business consulting; coaching and mentoring; project management; education and training; and agritourism services. The clients include individual landowners, research and development corporations, and farmer associations.

The objective of the business is to support agribusiness development in South Australia. One of the functions undertaken to achieve this outcome is that of broking training activities to producers within the region. This is a commercially focussed activity, proactively identifying client needs and matching products and services; or developing relevant products and services to meet these needs. In undertaking this brokerage, the business takes the financial risk associated with offering training activities. As such, the business is very focussed on ensuring client needs are met, thus ensuring the business’ on-going sustainability.

Examples of this broking role are where the business:

- Provides strategic planning services to assist farmer organisations to identify their own training needs (e.g. the local farming systems group).
- Matches existing training courses to clients’ needs (e.g. through the coordination of Meat and Livestock Australia’s 32 EDGEnetwork training courses funded by producers and FarmBis).
- Facilitates producer learning through design and delivery of demonstration projects (e.g. Producer Initiated Research and Development projects (PIRDs) funded by participating producers and Meat and Livestock Australia).
- Develops and delivers new products and services to address the training needs of the business’ core client base (e.g. the one-day workshop Growing the farm business; mentoring of Nuffield scholar applicants; hosting of New Zealand study tours; and delivery of an annual agribusiness seminar).
In March 2004, the training broker initiated, developed and delivered a workshop *Growing the farm business* to four different groups of participants. This case study details the training broker role played in engaging a national expert deliverer and a local facilitator and consultant to deliver a one-day workshop covering:

1. Generating profit and wealth—the fundamentals behind growing a farm business.
2. Options for expansion—benefits and pitfalls of ownership, leasing, sharefarming, equity partnership, off-farm investment.
3. Case study approaches.
4. Major considerations in growing the business—business structures, taxation, machinery, people and succession planning, natural resource management.

**Identifying training needs**

The major source of information on producer training needs, is clients and associates of the training broker business. Individual client requests, discussions with key industry stakeholders, and outcomes of group strategic planning meetings are all used to inform the training broker of current client needs. Where the needs can be met by existing products and services, those products are offered. When the needs diverge from products available in the training broker business or other organisations, the business analyses the potential viability of designing, marketing and delivering such a product to its client base.

In the case of the *Growing the farm business* workshop, a number of clients had been approaching the business, and seeking ideas and feedback on their options for business expansion.

*I suppose it started about spring of 2003 (18 months prior to the workshop). The seasonal conditions were looking fine, commodity prices were good, and interest rates were attractive. All drivers were positive and you could see this was an opportunity from a farmer or client’s point of view to have the dollars to expand their business.* (Training broker)

With this in mind, the training broker sought feedback from associates and clients, and used industry information to determine how this interest could be met.

*I was doing a bit of verbal market research and some of the people you know they are wanting to expand their business, or at stage where they need to, might in passing say I’m looking at running a workshop on leasing and sharefarming, would you be interested in attending?*

By spring the following year, the training broker was confident there was sufficient interest in the topic for the firm to invest in developing and delivering a relevant workshop, and set about making it happen.

**Engaging people**

As indicated above, the process of obtaining feedback on the possibility of a workshop was a key method for engaging people in the course. This, combined with the business’ detailed and specific knowledge of its clients, allowed it to target the
people and existing networks which might be interested. One such approach was made to a regional farmer association, a farmer-driven group of the Southern Farming Systems program of the Grains Research and Development Program.

The coordinator of the regional farmer association, a local farmer, said that the training broker had approached the group, saying he would like to organise such a workshop, and asked if the regional farming association would like to have a workshop run specifically for its members.

At that stage one of the objectives of the group was to be involved in the farm management rather than just the production side of business and we thought it would be very worthwhile for the group. I think it is nice from a farmer point of view that you have someone there who is thinking of your needs out in front of you. (Local farmer)

In addition to working with the McKillop group, the training broker directly targeted its existing client base through personal invitation. The workshops were also promoted via the media and local networks. Feedback from participants indicated that the personal invitation from the training broker was the trigger for a decision to take part:

I’d heard about it on the radio, and seen it in the newspaper, but when I got the invitation from the training broker I registered my interest there and then. He knows my business and what I need, and he wouldn’t ask me to something that wasn’t worthwhile.

For the accountants and bankers, the opportunity to learn more about an important topic, and to network with existing and potential clients, also triggered them to register interest. Once the first two workshops had been completed, there was still interest in another, and the word of mouth within the community created demand for two more workshops to be run.

Planning and developing the training program

While the idea for the workshop had been in the mind of the training broker for some time, the publication of a recent research report on the proposed workshop topic written by a national expert, provided the content required for a successful training program. The training broker decided to invest in developing a new training product:

In the first instance I had to contact an RTO to auspice training or access FarmBis funding on our behalf, and also following their agreement to do that, I went into looking at designing the workshop content, and also contacting the report author to see if he would be the key deliverer, given that he is a nationally recognised authority in those areas.

The deliverer, who had been promoting the topic of leasing and sharefarming throughout Australia for at least 10 years, had met the training broker many years before, and ‘felt good about working with him’—particularly in terms of their combined ability to develop a workshop which met producers’ needs. With agreement from both the RTO and the deliverer, the training broker sub-contracted the consultant
and worked with him to develop the program content, while also seeking input and feedback from other key stakeholders.

The workshops were marketed early in 2004 and run in February and March of that year, when producers had the time and the financial confidence to take part.

_We ran the first workshop in February—producers had finished their harvest, their finances were complete—their income from harvests whilst they may not have received all the money it was in pools or forward sold, and they knew their financial position—whereas if we had run it 3 months earlier would have been a bit hesitant._ (Training broker)

**Evaluation and further training**
The workshops were adapted and developed from one to the next, based on the feedback and questions from participants. Changes were made to each successive workshop, addressing participant concerns and refining the workshop program. Strong demand for the first two workshops resulted in a further two being offered, with a total of 85 participants taking part over a four-week period.

While the training broker was aware of the opportunity for ‘licensing’ the workshop to other deliverers in other regions, at the time of interview this opportunity had not been exploited. As the core focus of the business was on delivering services within the Naracoorte farming region, this had been fulfilled by the workshops, and the process of extending them into other regions was not straightforward. No formal networks or relationships existed with other similar consultants in other regions, and the mechanism for expanding the delivery more broadly—and profitably—was unclear.

**Profile of the broking process**
- The key to the process is developing trusting relationships with stakeholders.
- Identify the training need and want (18 months prior).
- Scope the possibility of addressing the training need (on-going, leading up to the workshop).
- Assess the financial viability of addressing the training need.
- Identify how the training need could be most easily addressed (using an appropriate trainer and publication), and determine the best time to do so.
- Access funding from FarmBis by auspicing through a Registered Training Organisation.
- Develop the training product in collaboration with key stakeholders and the contracted trainer.
- Contact key networks (e.g. the regional farmer association) to assess interest in partnering in workshop delivery.
- Promote the training opportunity (direct mail, general media).
- Deliver the training, evaluate and modify in response to participant feedback.
- Re-run the workshop to meet demand.
- Awareness of opportunities for expansion of delivery more broadly, but mechanism for achieving this was unclear.
What makes this a successful broking model?

*First-hand knowledge of what training is needed, when, and in what form*

The long-term relationship between the training broker and the potential participants and key stakeholders in the training workshop ensured that the content, delivery, timing and relevance of the brokered activity was strongly aligned with participant needs. First-hand experience of producer issues, plus feedback from other key stakeholders, such as banks and accountants, provided an excellent mechanism for determining training needs and potential interest. When the training broker was asked to identify the key to being successful, he said ‘make sure there is a need’.

The ability to recognise when this need was ready to be acted on, was also critical. According to the trainer, the timing of the course was very good. This may have been because not only was there a ‘need’ for the training, but also a ‘want’ for the training.

> People were more positive about making changes. They were ready to do the things I wanted them to do in the 90s, but at the time people didn’t do these things because they didn’t have the funds and the positive attitude needed to make change.

*Employing the best trainers*

This training broker is effective because of his knowledge of who could best address the client needs, and how this person could be used to deliver an effective training opportunity to producers. As the broker said ‘try and find the best possible people to do it, don’t settle for who is up the road’.

Many participants commented on the benefits of having access to the leading expert on the topic in Australia, via the workshop.

> The trainer was fantastic—his background knowledge, his understanding of farming, plus the legals and the tax—if you have all of that you are pretty much there. (Participant accountant)

> To have a person of his calibre provide the information was very important. (Participant farmer)

*The financial imperative— obtaining a return on investment*

The training broker’s requirement for profit (and sustainability) helps to drive the brokerage process to ensure firstly, that the training addresses clients’ needs (so that they will participate), and secondly, that participants register (to provide a return on the investment of addressing the training need). For the *Growing the farm business* workshop, two workshops of 20 participants were required to break even. The ability to deliver more than two workshops moved the activity into profit.

The commercial imperative also requires that the participants gain a benefit from participation, which is greater than the cost of the workshop. If this is achieved, participants are more likely to continue to enrol in further activities offered by the training broker, providing business sustainability. This commercial process of investment, income generation, and provision of value can foster the creative and proactive development of training opportunities.
First-hand knowledge of who would benefit from the training
The broker’s knowledge of the specific clients (farmers, accountants and bankers) who would benefit from the training opportunity on offer resulted in a high proportion of registrations of potential participants. An analysis of participants showed that of the 85 attending, only eight were not previously known to the training broker. The training broker’s networks and recognised integrity within the rural community were a critical factor in ensuring participation.

Quality control of the training provision
Delivery of a quality training activity is critical for the success of that particular training activity, and for the broking of future activities. The flexibility to adapt the content and process to meet client needs was part of ensuring quality delivery.
Chapter 9: Fitzroy Basin Association

Case summary

- Natural resource management regional association with multiple stakeholders
- NRM outcomes enhanced because of organisational structure and resourcing that facilitates sub-broking at the local level
- High level of awareness of its role as a training broker
- Initial focus on FarmBis funding has given way to exploration of alternative funding sources for follow-up training.

Background

The Fitzroy Basin Association is a not-for-profit community organisation in Central Queensland with multiple government, private and community stakeholder groups. The area covered by the Association includes agricultural land (vegetables, fruit, grain, beef, cotton) and the Great Barrier Reef.

The Fitzroy Basin Association promotes sustainable development through Integrated Catchment Management processes, providing extension and advice to landholders and other stakeholders as required. It has played a major role in developing a blueprint for future sustainable development, in the form of the Central Queensland Strategy for Sustainability—2004 and beyond. The plan ensures rolling investment in natural resource management and reflects a commitment to ongoing education and training. Linked to this is a Priority Action Proposal that identifies the adoption of sustainable grazing systems on farms within target catchments, and the development of methods including training, to achieve this adoption.

Approximately 40 staff are employed by the Association, both directly and indirectly, through its sub-regional organisations. One of its key sub-regional organisations is the Central Highlands Regional Resource Use Planning Project (CHRRUPP) which is funded by the state and Australian governments through the Fitzroy Basin Association. It is active in identifying ongoing individual and community needs, and in providing support, as well as sourcing and developing training, to meet those needs.

Identifying training needs

The trigger for development of a specific program, Cattle and Catchments™, and for subsequent ongoing support and training provided by CHRRUPP, was an independent evaluation of a 2002 Fitzroy Basin Association project indicating the need for training that would integrate production and conservation objectives. Because there is a high proportion of graziers in the area, this group in particular was targeted for training.
Engaging people
Two specific catchment areas were targeted for the pilot *Cattle and Catchments™* programs: Comet (2003–04) and Lower Fitzroy (2004–05). These areas already had established catchment groups that could help to engage others, and had well-developed linkages to other groups and networks. Also, there were a number of landholders in the Comet catchment in particular, who were likely to be receptive to the proposed program, because of their age (30–40) and because they had already undertaken courses addressing similar concepts delivered by a regional private training provider.

Strategies to engage participants included direct call/mail to key graziers; using existing clients to approach neighbours; roadshows; and a free introductory field day on a local property that provided a ‘taster’ for the program. At the local level, the coordinator of the Comet catchment group used her networks to engage people. The training provider contracted to develop and deliver program materials also targeted some of his clients for participation.

The CHRRUPP project undertakes a very localised and targeted sub-broking role, engaging people in ongoing activities following completion of *Cattle and Catchments™*. The managing director of CHRRUPP, herself a local grazier and a member of the Comet Catchment group, which was active in helping to engage graziers in the *Cattle and Catchments™* program, reflects:

*We are very conscious of the level people are working at now because we’ve worked so closely with everyone here so we can almost anticipate the sorts of things that we need to provide for them to the next level ... We’re constantly reviewing and assessing the needs of our community.*

Identifying and negotiating appropriate training
The Fitzroy Basin Association and its sub-regional body CHRRUPP, have a clear understanding that their role is to match training needs to training and to do that, they do not have to be experts in all areas.

Planning and developing a training program
In developing the *Cattle and Catchments™* program the broker approached a private regional training provider who had delivered a number of courses to landholders in the two target catchment areas, and who had a good reputation locally for achieving results in terms of change management. The broker and training provider had an established relationship over a number of years.

The starting point for development of the program was the use of existing training provider material from a workshop on cattle production, as well as a module that the Fitzroy Basin Association had developed on catchment management.

The process was then one of regular round table team meetings, with two or three staff from both the training provider and training broker. Early meetings were about defining program objectives and finding common ground. Subsequent meetings were about negotiating content and format of the new program, to meet the objectives of the broker and the needs of graziers:
The whole deal was that the negotiation was easily understood by both parties ... We were on the same wavelength all the way ... what we did was keep supporting each other’s ideas’ (Training provider)

The training provider organised funding through FarmBis, and the program has since been trademarked by that provider. Although the two pilot Cattle and Catchments™ programs were not accredited, subsequent offerings will be accredited.

Cattle and Catchments™ comprises a free introductory field day on a local property; a two-day workshop focussing on topics such as catchment management, ecological services, grazing and nutritional management, and property development; a visit to each farm business; and a follow-up field day comprising a bus trip to a grazing property and a research station.

Following participant, broker and provider evaluation of the first workshop in the Comet catchment, staff from the training broker and training provider organisations had another round table meeting to discuss and agree on modifications for the second offering of the course. A number of changes were made to the program before it was piloted for a second time in the Lower Fitzroy catchment. Changes included the introduction of more material on catchment management, property planning and vegetation management; use of more localised examples and information, and better integration of the Cattle and Catchments™ material. Integration problems were also overcome by having the training provider delivering the whole second program.

In addition to Cattle and Catchments™, CHRRUPP has organised a number of other workshops for graziers in its region, sometimes facilitated by its own staff, and sometimes by external experts. The group’s extensive networks and positive relationships with a variety of government agencies and private consultants allow it to access external expertise, often at no cost other than reimbursement of expenses. This keeps the cost of training down.

Farmers interested in water quality monitoring on their properties are assisted by CHRRUPP to complete an appropriate module from Certificate III in Agriculture. The module was developed jointly by a nearby Registered Training Organisation, together with the Integrated Area Wide Management Group. CHRRUPP’s role is to engage enough participants for a course, and to organise a suitable date and time. It also assists participants with course costs. On completion, course participants receive a Certificate of Attainment.

Most workshops and training opportunities brokered by CHRRUPP are funded from within its budget and external sources such as FarmBis are not approached for funding. Because of this, cost is and will continue to be an important factor, with fee for service options being considered:

I anticipate that the kind of workshops we run down the track might involve a minimum cost to be met by some of our course participants ... given it’s something they want they are happy for us to coordinate it and pay a minimum cost. (Managing director, CHRRUPP)
Evaluation and further training

Nineteen farm businesses participated in the *Cattle and Catchments™* pilot program in the Comet catchment, and 11 in the Lower Fitzroy catchment. Team building and networking opportunities fostered by the course were particularly valued by participants. Both pilots, but particularly the one in the Lower Fitzroy, reported the adoption of new practices by graziers in terms of operational and management activities, and future planning. Overall, from the two courses there were 18 applications from farm businesses for incentive funding made available through the Fitzroy Basin Association Neighbourhood Catchments Incentive Scheme.

One of the most exciting developments that followed the *Cattle and Catchments™* pilot offered in the Comet catchment area, was an increase in the amount of localised support and training coordinated by CHRRUPP and described in the previous section. This was facilitated by the provision of funding for an additional full-time training and extension position.

Profile of the broking process

- Independent evaluation of an earlier Fitzroy Basin Association project indicated training need.
- Broker approached a highly regarded regional private training provider with extensive experience and a reputation for obtaining results.
- Broker had responsibility for engaging people using a range of strategies, including a free field day as a ‘taster’.
- FarmBis funding was organised and managed by the private training provider who had extensive experience in this area. For follow-up training, there is exploration of alternative funding sources, including fee for service.
- Training program was based on an existing and proven package developed and used by the provider, and a module developed by the broker.
- Formal process of negotiation of training content and format, comprising round table meetings between broker and training provider staff.
- Results of rigorous evaluation of the first pilot workshop by participants, broker and provider, revealed a number of changes were needed. This feedback initiated further meetings between broker and provider where extensive changes were made, before the workshop was piloted in a second location.
- The broker contracted a sub-regional body to provide intensive support and broker further training for graziers at the local level, and to ensure targets identified in the local Priority Action Proposal would be met. Staff from this body are locals, who are known and trusted by the community.

What makes this a successful broking model?

*Uses reputable training provider with track record of success in the area*

The private training provider selected to develop and deliver *Cattle and Catchments™* had an extensive knowledge of clients and their needs in the local area, and had extensive experience in training delivery. He came from an organisation with a widespread reputation for achieving outcomes in terms of change management.
Uses multiple training providers
The broker actively sought opportunities to work with both government and private sources, noting that ‘it’s challenging for us in this broker role to work with multiple service providers who are competing for often the same funding source’. It objectively reviewed and trialled different change management strategies and training products from a range of sources, to best meet the needs of landholders and other stakeholders.

Takes existing, successful program and modifies it to meet identified needs
The broker actively and consciously ‘takes the best from a lot of things and tries to mould them in a new direction’. It has ‘the ability to integrate and cherry pick some of the better opportunities that are there’.

Carefully planned and managed process of program development and evaluation
The broker followed a careful process of program development and evaluation, characterised by regular, formal round table meetings with the training provider, and a process of negotiation that was understood by each of the parties. Following program development and delivery, both the outcomes of the training and the broking process itself were evaluated. Again, a formal meeting was held, comprising two or three staff each from the training broker and training provider. Each group had prepared its own evaluation notes which were shared during the meeting. Evaluation of the broking process included a review of the flow of communication between stakeholders (where it worked well; where it was not so successful), and identification of the importance of clarifying the specific roles and responsibilities of each party. This information was included in a Final Report to the project funding body. Most importantly, the written documentation could be used by the broker and others in facilitating subsequent broking activity.

Undertakes rigorous evaluation and acts on it to make training more responsive
The broker acted on the evaluation of the first Cattle and Catchments™ pilot program, by making substantial changes as required. This willingness to admit when something has not worked as well as expected, and to change it to better meet the needs of clients, is a key characteristic of an effective training broker.

Structure of the organisation facilitates sub-broking
The broader broking role of the Fitzroy Basin Association is complemented by the localised sub-broking role of CHRRUPP, which provides a critical link between graziers and the Association. CHRRUPP is responsible for on-ground implementation of the Priority Action Proposal in the Central Highlands region of the Fitzroy Basin. This includes providing support and coordinating ongoing training that is specific to the needs of its graziers. The group’s activities are funded by the state and Australian governments, under a sub-contractual arrangement with the Fitzroy Basin Association, and it reports directly to the Association Board. At the same time, it has considerable autonomy in determining how its funds should be utilised to best support landholders to meet target outcomes. The effectiveness of CHRRUPP is enhanced by its locally based staff with extensive networks within and outside the community.
Awareness of their roles as training brokers
The Fitzroy Basin Association in general, and CHRRUPP in particular, are very conscious of their roles as training brokers, and are proactive in identifying training needs and matching them to appropriate training.

They also have a clear understanding that they do not have to be experts in all areas, but that they need to be able to engage expertise as required. They value and respect the expertise of others.
Chapter 10: Victorian Grains Industry Training Network

**Case summary**

- Grains industry training group with membership of farmers, providers and other stakeholders
- Has a paid coordinator to broker training
- Deliberately acts as a training broker
- Has access to a variety of funding sources

**Background**

The Victorian Grains Industry Training Network (VGITN) was established in the mid-1990s as the result of an assessment of skill needs in the grains industry. VGITN’s purpose is to bring providers and farmers together so they can exchange information about training needs and match training to needs; it very deliberately acts as a training broker. Committee membership is around 20, with a management committee of nine farmers and training providers, along with stakeholder members from the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF), the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), Rural Finance, and Partners in Grain, an industry body.

VFF funds VGITN, and DPI provides in kind support. They source project funding as appropriate opportunities arise. Membership is generally open to anyone who is interested. Once people join, they tend to maintain an active commitment. The chairperson, always a farmer to avoid conflict of interest, rotates each two years.

A paid coordinator (0.6 full-time equivalent) is shared with Partners in Grain (0.3 full-time equivalent). VGITN’s target audience is grain farming enterprises in Victoria. There are approximately 150 enterprises on its database, although all are welcome at activities it brokers. It should be noted that these enterprises also have further networks for sharing of information and participants are encouraged to let their neighbours know.

VGITN brokers 10–20 courses per year, involving up to 400 participants. The value of the training brokered varies according to the type of program delivered, from high-cost programs such as the one on gene technology in Canberra for which the cost was $750 per participant, to information workshops such as the one on stubble management where the cost was only the time of the presenter, which was donated. The value of training brokered by VGITN is estimated to be $200 000 per year.

In 2003 VGITN commissioned a report on the types of people required for employment on Victorian farms. Groups of farmers throughout the state were asked whether they had a need for new employees; how long those employees would be required; the tasks to be done; and whether employees should be skilled or unskilled. This was followed by a conference on training needs. VGITN responded with a major
Identifying training needs

One of the training initiatives that can be traced back to the 2003 report and which followed the conference, was the course in Header Operations. There was a general recognition amongst farmers that there were not enough skilled people to operate headers at harvest time. The largest header contractor in the district approached VGITN, recognising that he was having trouble finding people to employ, and was constantly training people who would leave at the end of one season. VGITN had identified that ‘farmers were getting older, leaving the industry, and we needed young, capable people,’ and the need to increase skills in machinery use. It decided to broker a practical, hands-on course in driving and operating big machines, because VGITN members thought such a course would appeal to local young people and meet the identified skills gap in the industry.

VGITN acts to identify needs in informal ways as well. The coordinator and the members of VGITN are active in multiple networks in the Victorian grains industry and in their local communities. They listen as people talk, and seem to be constantly alert for opportunities to advise people about learning and training, formally or informally. A provider member of VGITN, for example, often puts people in contact with the right kind of training through her informal networks at the football or at functions at the school her children attend. The training she recommends is not restricted to that run by her institution.

The VGITN coordinator has developed an excellent understanding of the 150 or so grain farming families in Victoria that she serves through many years of work in training in the industry. She is aware of their experiences as learners, and sees each individual as being on a learning journey. She knows who is ready to do a company directors’ course and who should do a TAFE course if they are joining a board. She makes assessments of those who are not yet ready to cope with that level of formal training. She pushes people on to a new learning challenge when she thinks they are ready, often emailing, faxing or phoning when an opportunity comes along that she feels is right for that person.

Engaging people

Building relationships is the key to VGITN’s success at engaging people in training, as is a track record of facilitating training that is relevant and accessible. VGITN has a high degree of credibility amongst farmers in the grains industry, earned through careful matching of people to courses, and a flexible approach that includes negotiation, so that training meets the needs of participants.

The coordinator’s personalised service extends to her methods of communication. She knows who is comfortable with email and who needs words of encouragement on the phone to prompt them to attend a course. She has different email and fax lists for people at different stages on their learning journeys, grouping those with like ‘next step’ profiles. Other members of VGITN are also constantly on the lookout for people to engage in learning. One member noted that many people are prepared to travel outside their area to attend a course, but do not like to go unless they know somebody else who is attending. She described ringing somebody and saying, ‘Look, I know
there’s somebody in another town who wants to go to that course you want to go to, why don’t you go and have coffee together and then see if you both want to go to the course together?’. And that is exactly what happened.

The initial offering of the course in Header Operations was a pilot with only eight places. There were 30 written applications from young people, who found out about the course by word of mouth. There were also phone calls from interstate and from RTOs wanting to put their students through the course.

**Identifying and negotiating appropriate training**
VGITN’s first strategy for meeting identified training needs, is to ‘signpost people into things, we don’t provide what is already there’ (coordinator). If a suitable program is available, but not in the right place, or at the right time, the coordinator negotiates with the provider to make it accessible to VGITN’s grain farming target group. In one example, a TAFE college was persuaded to run a company directors’ course for women on boards one day per week, off campus, in a suitable location for the women.

**Planning and developing a training program**
VGITN has no trouble attracting providers, farmers, or other members, and encouraging them to attend the four or five meetings held each year. This mix of people on VGITN is important in developing a wide network of information about needs, potential providers and trainers; their quality, capabilities, and funding sources. VGITN has brokered a number of innovative courses on diverse topics, from succession planning to technical skills.

The course in Header Operations brokered by VGITN illustrates how wide networks, and a focus on needs rather than existing courses, can produce excellent outcomes for trainees, the industry and other stakeholders; in this case, the header contractor and several providers.

Once VGITN had decided to broker a course in header operations, it asked the coordinator to source funding to employ someone to prepare materials. The VGITN committee suggested that the coordinator should talk with the harvesting contractors’ association to ensure that the course met industry needs. The association was initially suspicious that a licensing system could be imposed on it, but came to realise the benefit of developing a skilled pool of operators. An outcome of the coordinator’s discussion was to obtain funding from a machinery supplier to prepare a manual. Another was that the course incorporated a driver’s licence for driving the large machines on public roads.

A group of farmers, header contractors and three RTOs met to decide on the skills that were necessary for the new entrant group targeted. The coordinator linked the identified skills to competencies. There were six competencies from levels two and three of the Agriculture and Horticulture Training Package that covered the skills. As well as technical aspects of using machinery, and crop harvesting, they included occupational health and safety, ‘because that’s absolutely fundamental given the machinery for header operations’, and workplace communication, ‘because of the talk back communication whether you’re buying parts or dealing with the farmer whose place you’re cropping’.
VGITN recognised that the deliverers of the training had to be credible, and set about organising those best equipped to deliver the training outcomes they expected. The contractor who had initially approached VGITN was identified as the most expert and credible potential trainer, but he had no experience in this area. At first VGITN was quite keen just to provide the course, and was not interested in delivering accredited training. However, it found that it was much easier to obtain funding if the course was accredited, because standard VET system funding could be obtained. VGITN sought expressions of interest from RTOs in delivering various components of the course. Special pilot funding had to be negotiated with the Victorian state training authority because occupational health and safety issues meant that the break even class size of 15 was not possible. Small additional amounts of funding came from industry groups including Partners in Grain.

Two of the universities that are members of VGITN expressed an interest in hosting the course as the RTO, and the VGITN committee selected one of these. A trainer from the university delivered the theoretical and occupational health and safety components. The contractor provided the practical component of the training in his shed, using his own equipment. The contractor, a little reluctantly, obtained a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessing so he could do this. The RTO trainer mentored the contractor during the header course. The RTO trainer learnt technical details from the contractor, ‘the importance of where you set the comb and why the comb varies for different crops’. The contractor learnt practical training strategies, ‘phrasing the questions… pair them, two off to go and check the wheel bearings together, rather than have the eight stand around’.

The course was conducted three times under two different formats. The first was for people from the local area who were not involved in any other training, and ran for a week. The second two were slightly shorter courses for people who were already enrolled in various certificates with TAFE colleges and other RTOs in Victoria. These were shorter because the participants had already completed their occupational health and safety training. The accredited providers, either the university or representatives of the RTOs whose students attended the last two offerings, mentored the header contractor who was delivering training. Those RTOs also decided it was preferable to outsource this training rather than attempt to provide it themselves.

The course was conducted during winter when people were not needed for work on farms, and the machinery was available for training. The workplace aspects of the course were assessed the following harvest season.

VGITN is very accomplished at promoting ownership of training amongst providers, participants and the industry. For example, at the end of the first header course they held a barbecue. All the trainees and their parents attended, together with the trainers and the VGITN committee, with the intention of giving everybody ownership of the course.

**Evaluation and further training**

From all reports the course in Header Operations was highly successful. The trainee interviewed found it was what he expected: interesting and highly useful. Like the other seven students in the pilot course, he was subsequently offered employment.
with the contractor. The fact that the course was relevant, with an appropriate amount of hands-on activity and linked to real jobs, made it ‘a real winner’. VGITN owns the course material and its intention is to sell it to other providers for use in different locations, as well as running more courses locally.

VGITN is using the header course as a model to develop a course on advanced boom spraying. This will not be an accredited course as the market is different. It is targeted at farmers who already have some expertise in boom spraying, and will be combined with an opportunity to update chemical certification for those who are willing to remain for some additional hours beyond the boom spraying component.

**Profile of the broking process**
- Wide representation on the VGITN Committee from farmers, providers and stakeholders.
- Active committee with members who also see themselves as training brokers.
- Formal identification of industry training needs.
- Building of trusting relationships as the key to engaging people.
- Awareness of available training and capabilities of providers.
- Systematic involvement of stakeholders in designing courses to meet identified gaps.
- Facilitation of collaboration amongst providers and with other groups such as the harvesters’ association, to acquire the best possible training experience.
- Preparedness to look outside the square, for example, for funds, trainers and venues.
- Brokerage funded through industry (VFF).
- Knowledge of where potential learners were on their individual learning paths, provision of individualised guidance and the building of learners’ confidence to progress on their journey.
- Recognition of the need for a mechanism for expansion, in terms of selling the course to other providers.

**What makes this a successful broking model?**
VGITN is identifying and filling gaps. It is looking to see what is available. It is aware of skill needs, and by whom those skills are needed, and it matches the gaps with provision. One measure of the success of VGITN is the fact that everybody continues to be enthusiastic about attending meetings. There are providers who are motivated, and previous chairs who are still very active members. This enthusiasm is because VGITN is highly relevant to its members, be they farmers who require access to quality training for the industry; providers who must have a finger on the pulse of industry needs; or other stakeholders such as DPI. Members know they are part of a very successful organisation. VGITN is also prepared to reflect, and change what it is doing. The features of this successful model are:

*Having a paid coordinator*

The course in Header Operations would not have been possible without having the resources of a paid coordinator to help source the funding to produce materials and select the highly effective combination of trainers. The coordinator maintains a database of potential participants and their needs.
Networks and continuity
The benefits of continuity of the organisation and the person employed as coordinator are evident. The networks of the coordinator and the VGITN members were important in negotiating the delivery side of courses, including the succession planning and header courses. It has providers who are very enthusiastic members of the network. The relationships that the coordinator and members have established over time in the industry and the community, attest to VGITN’s credibility with learners.

Proactive planning and negotiating
The way VGITN decided to broker the course in Header Operations—very systemically and strategically—was a key factor in the success of the course. VGITN had identified a general skill gap in operating machinery, the need for courses for young people, and a specific recruitment and retention issue regarding header operators. Consultation with header companies, the careful, informed selection of multiple trainers, and negotiation of content, is further evidence of strategic planning. VGITN is seen as credible by the providers and is skilled at ensuring that providers collaborate.

Understanding learners’ needs
The coordinator is proactive in dropping personally selected and targeted ‘tit bits’ of information about training activities to people as emails, phone calls or faxes. She not only knows the needs of potential participants, but also builds their confidence as learners. There are many examples of subtle ways in which all members of VGITN ‘sell’ the idea of training. The breadth of committee membership ensures that VGITN understands emerging industry needs, often before potential learners, and so training is pre-identified.

Understanding the process of broking
VGITN members realise that they are brokers and deliberately act to achieve good training outcomes for people in the grains industry. They have a good mix of formal and informal networks, and there is evidence not only of VGITN itself and the coordinator acting as brokers, but also of other VGITN members acting as brokers in their own right. VGITN is a one-stop shop. Not only can VGITN assist in finding the most suitable training, but it will also help with grant applications if there is a need for funding, for example, through FarmBis. VGITN will assist institutions in locating people to conduct courses, or redesign courses to suit the needs of the grains industry. It will also assist in organising viable class sizes, as the result of networks with organisations like Partners in Grain, VFF and even Neighbourhood Houses.
Chapter 11: Discussion of results

Introduction
This chapter is presented in four sections, relating to the first four objectives for this research, which are to:

- Map existing training/learning brokerage arrangements in Australian primary industry.
- Investigate the outcomes for primary producers of these training/learning brokerage arrangements.
- Identify features of effective brokerage arrangements and inhibitors to effective broking from the Australian primary industry experience and from arrangements in other industries and overseas.
- Derive a series of models of effective brokerage arrangements that apply to learning activities for various sectors, groups and issues in primary industry (e.g. commodities such as grains, producers from non-English speaking backgrounds, natural resource management).

The chapter will consider findings from the telephone survey and case studies, and will link these to the literature. For the purposes of this discussion, the six case studies will be abbreviated as follows: Biodynamic Agriculture Australia (BAA), Department of Primary Industry Water and Environment (DPIWE), Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA), Solly Business Services (Solly), Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd (RST), and Victorian Grains Industry Training Network (VGITN).

What existing broking arrangements are there in Australian primary industry?
This section considers findings from the telephone survey, in terms of the three broad types of organisations involved in brokerage. It discusses how organisations can be further classified according to the clustering of broking activity, and considers the results of the mapping exercise that analysed broking activity by industry and scope (geographical location). The section finishes with a discussion of the role of training providers as brokers, and the effect of different funding sources on broking arrangements.

Three types of organisation
Chapter 3 (Methodology) reported how the organisations surveyed could be classified as three types—not-for-profit (NFP), commercial, and government agencies—and that approximately half the sample were NFP organisations. The findings indicate that the nature of their broking practices is linked closely to the context in which the organisations operate. Specifically, the key differences between these organisations in terms of their broking arrangements were related to how they informed their clients of training; client characteristics; the number of clients serviced annually; the size of the organization; and the focus of the training.

Although each of the three organisation types identified primary producers as their key client group, there were differences in other target client groups. For example, commercial organisations identified agribusiness as their second major client group,
which is not surprising, given the strong focus of commercial organisations on facilitating education and training to increase farm business profitability through improved business management practices. For the other two organisation types—NFP and government—which are more likely to facilitate training in primary production, there is no one identifiable second major client base, but rather a range of groups. Farmers groups/organisations are a target client group of government organisations, and NRM organisations a target client group of NFP organisations. Again, these target client groups are to be expected, given the traditional and long-standing linkages between government agencies and farmer organisations, and the growth of not-for-profit regional organisations with responsibility for developing and implementing regional NRM strategies.

In terms of how clients are informed of training opportunities, both government and NFP organisations use flyers and newsletters as key tools, while commercial organisations use one-to-one contact as their method of contact. This may reflect the focus of commercial organisations on securing return on investment and on maintaining market share, by ensuring that marketing of programs is targeted very specifically to likely participants, and is similar to findings reported by Kilpatrick and Bound (2001) re market-focussed brokers. Additionally, because government organisations are typically the largest of the three types of organisation (in terms of employees, number of clients serviced and number of training events organised), strategies such as flyers and newsletters allow for a greater coverage of the potential participant base; greater economies of scale; and help to ensure all clients are fully informed with regard to available training opportunities. This is in keeping with the broader public service role of government agencies.

Survey findings showed that the various organisation types were all represented amongst the most active brokers, although there were fewer commercial enterprises. This may be due to the fact that commercial organisations operate in competitive environments that inhibit the sort of collaboration required of active brokers. The fact that the most active training brokers fall largely within the categories of government or NFP organisations (mainly industry bodies), is consistent with Kilpatrick and Bound (2001), who identified these two groups as having the characteristics required of effective brokers in rural industry, including broad networks and the ability to facilitate access to resources.

Four types of broker-related activity
Chapter 4 (Results) reports the three major clusters of broking activity that emerged from the analysis: client; provider; and other stakeholder (networking) activities. These are useful tools for analysing different patterns of broking activity according to the emphasis placed by organisations on relationships with key stakeholder groups.

Organisations that are the most active in terms of client interaction are all primary industry focussed (as opposed to natural resource management focussed) and likely to have larger numbers of employees. Their key activities are likely to include training and extension. Given this focus, it is not surprising they undertake comprehensive and targeted needs analysis and use a wide range of methods to inform and advise their clients of training opportunities. Government organisations are more likely than commercial or NFP organisations to be client active, and it is suggested that this is partly due to the fact that a number have been broking for many years, have
established strong and trusting relationships with their client base, and are likely to have some stability and continuity in terms of staffing and resources.

Organisations that are the most active in terms of interaction with training providers are likely to be orientated towards primary industry training (as opposed to natural resource management or general topics). Most commercial organisations are included in provider-active clusters, which is not surprising, given the need to position themselves at the cutting edge of education and training. In order to maintain market share, they have developed wide training provider networks. Interestingly, the findings suggested that provider-active organisations are more likely to broker unaccredited training, although it is unclear why this might be the case, given that training subsidies appear to be more readily available for accredited training.

The findings indicate that effective brokerage relies on developing and obtaining access to a wide range of networks, beyond training providers and clients. Specifically, there are two sub-groups of stakeholder activity: network contact activity and networking behaviour. Organisations with the widest range of contacts were government agencies in particular, and larger organisations in general. This fits well with findings from Kilpatrick and Bound (2001), who identified the ability of government agencies to build the conditions that allow groups and organisations to collaborate. In addition, it is suggested that larger organisations have the resources (human, financial, time) to develop and maintain linkages with a wide range of stakeholders.

In terms of networking behaviour (the extent to which brokers used their networks), the most active organisations networked on all aspects of training development and provision, had formal input into training generally through membership of committees dealing with training issues, and had contact with providers/brokers. Most of these were government or commercial organisations, with either a primary production or business training focus. Again, this is not surprising, given the characteristics of government agencies described in the previous paragraph, and the imperative of commercial organisations to keep abreast of, and shape training policy and direction.

**Mapping of broking activity across industries and geographical locations**

Mapping of broking activity by industry sector revealed fewer differences than expected. As noted earlier, the only significant finding from this activity was that organisations that operate in the ‘not primary industry’ sector (mainly NRM organisations) are less likely to be active in broking roles, than those involved in primary industry production. In the main, organisations in this sector are not-for-profit. Given that the key focus of the NRM sector is on preparation of NRM regional plans and implementation of strategies, rather than on education and training, this finding is not unexpected. The fact that such organisations are less likely to undertake activities such as analysing client needs therefore comes as no surprise.

Interestingly, the four organisations that were classified as the least active training brokers were all not-for-profit organisations, and two were engaged in NRM activities. It may be that lack of continuity of resources in terms of core funding, may be partly responsible for reduced broking activity amongst these organisations.
The FBA case study is an exception to the finding that ‘not primary industry organisations’ are less active brokers. The broking role of the FBA is increasing, and there is evidence that its lower levels of involvement in training to date are both an advantage and disadvantage. It is an advantage because the Association is not locked into historical training delivery arrangements with a small group of providers, but has the freedom to use different providers for different purposes, and to mix and match providers to find the best fit between needs and training. It is a disadvantage because the organisation lacks detailed knowledge about specific training policies, structures and supports, such as the National Training Framework and about the administrative requirements of subsidised training (e.g. FarmBis). This has resulted in a need to expand its networks to include those who are able to provide this information. This approach is supported by Aslin et al. (2002) who identified a key skill in capacity building in the NRM sector, as the ability to know where and who to go to for relevant information.

The finding that organisations in the ‘not primary industry’ sector are more likely to be isolated from their clients and to have more limited networks, is interesting, given that much NRM work is community-focussed activity. One explanation might be that the NRM organisations themselves often cover large geographical areas and have responsibility for a range of activities, including advocacy and policy recommendations. This focus on the ‘big picture’ may translate into some separation from the client base. There are ways to address this however, as the FBA case study illustrates, by forming sub-groups in local areas, with local coordinators dedicated to identifying and meeting training needs. These coordinators are critical in linking the resources and expertise of the larger organisation to identified training needs within local communities. Overall, as the FBA case illustrates, such organisations may need to work closely with training providers and others with experience in needs analysis, and to use the networks of these people to assist in engaging clients in training.

The only significant differences in levels of broking activity according to geographic location was that active brokers are either single-state focussed or operate in more than one state and/or territory, but not in all states and territories. This suggests that brokers may need sufficient resources, economies of scale and networks of influence to broker effectively, but that where networks are either too small (part of state) or too large (nationwide), brokers are not able to respond appropriately to their clients’ needs. This suggestion is supported by Miller (2001), who found state industry bodies to be a critical link between local and national broking initiatives.

The finding that Tasmania has three of the seven active brokers identified in the study suggests that size and a clearly defined target audience and provider group, may assist in effective broking. Such conditions are likely to support a framework for the development and sustainability of stakeholder networks, and for maintaining active contact with clients.

**Training providers and other brokers**

Table 7 in Chapter 4 broadly categorised training brokers within rural industry in Australia into three groups, according to whether or not they were involved in training provision. These groups were: training provider using broking principles in their practice; training provider as broker; and other broker. The case studies provided examples of each of these three types of broking activity. A summary of the
characteristics of each case study, including the type of broking activity, is provided in Table 8. This table builds on case study characteristics presented in Table 2 (Chapter 3).

Table 8. Expanded characteristics of six case study sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of case</th>
<th>Broking a core activity</th>
<th>Main sphere of broker activity</th>
<th>Type of organisation</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Scope of activity</th>
<th>Type of broking activity*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biodynamic Agriculture Australia</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Client active</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Training provider using brokerage principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd</td>
<td>No (brokers its own programs)</td>
<td>Stakeholder active</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Grain, sheep, beef, other livestock, equine</td>
<td>Regional/multi State</td>
<td>Training provider using brokerage principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPIWE Dairy Branch</td>
<td>One of a number of activities</td>
<td>Stakeholder active</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>Regional/single State</td>
<td>Training provider acting as a broker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solly Business Services</td>
<td>One of a number of activities</td>
<td>Broker &amp; provider active</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Grain, sheep, beef, other livestock</td>
<td>Regional/single State</td>
<td>Training provider acting as a broker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy Basin Association</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Client active</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>NRM</td>
<td>Regional/single State</td>
<td>Other broker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Grains Industry Training Network</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Client &amp; stakeholder active</td>
<td>Not-for-profit</td>
<td>Grain</td>
<td>Regional/single State</td>
<td>Other broker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*See Chapter 4 for discussion of three broad classifications of brokerage activity, depending on whether the broker is a training provider or other.

Note: For the purposes of this study, training provider is defined broadly to include all organisations that identify the provision of education and training to clients/members as one of their key activities. It does not refer exclusively to Registered Training Organisations.

All three types of broking display a strong client focus. Although the differences are not significant, there are indications that training providers focus more on the value of training to clients and on attracting repeat business and referrals from satisfied clients, while other brokers may have a broader focus on developing an industry or a community, rather than on return business. This suggests that for training providers, interaction with clients may be more closely targeted, although the example of the targeted and personalised approach of the broker in the VGITN case (other broker) suggests this may depend more on the individual approach of the broker, rather than the type of broker.

There are some differences between training providers and other brokers in terms of provider interaction. The findings suggest that training providers involved in brokerage are likely to use a smaller number of other providers than those classified as other brokers, which is not surprising, given their own expertise in training. For training providers, there is also some suggestion that activity in the provider domain is
more likely to be restricted specifically to those who can provide pathways for the provider-broker’s clients. Again, this is not surprising, given the focus of training providers. At the same time, there are examples in the case studies of a desire by training providers to collaborate with other providers for the benefit of clients, and to create a range of opportunities for such collaboration. The description of the development of the *Growing the farm business* workshop in the Solly case study is a good example of this. This suggests that concerns identified by Kilpatrick and Bound (2001) regarding the negative impact of competition policy in Australian training provision are being addressed.

In terms of provider networks, it may also be that organisations like the VGITN, whose specific focus is brokerage, are in a position to create a broader range of targeted training opportunities for their clients and to draw on a wide selection of providers as they do so. For those organisations that are also responsible for the provision of some education and training, such as DPIWE, there may be fewer resources (time, personnel, funds) for brokerage, hence a need to focus more on specific aspects of brokerage (e.g. client interaction).

**Brokerage funding sources**

It was clear from the study that funding for brokerage came from a variety of sources, and that a number of people are not being funded separately for their activities, but are broking training as part of their broader role of providing advice and extension services, or are doing it ‘off the side of their desk’. Examples include extension officers in state/territory Departments of Primary Industry, and employees of some breeder/grower associations.

The literature and a search of the Internet show there are two major funding arrangements for brokerage: provider-funded (commission paid by provider or profit sharing between provider and broker) and client-funded (clients can be individuals or organisations such as industry associations or government agencies, and funding can be in the form of a commission or salary). The current study found less evidence of commission-based, provider-funded brokerage. Most case studies featured a range of client-funded training brokerage activities (e.g., Solly, which is partly funded by Meat and Livestock Australia, VGITN which is funded by an industry and a farmer organisation, and FBA, whose brokerage is partly covered by government funding through the NAP). Because the purpose of the study was not to compare and contrast different funding models, it is not possible to identify the positive and negative features of each arrangement. However, the case studies provided evidence of the effectiveness of client-funded models in terms of matching needs to training for Australian rural industry.
What are the outcomes of broking arrangements for primary producers and others?
This section discusses findings from the telephone survey and from the case studies (Chapters 5 to 10). The findings indicate that broking yields a range of economic and social benefits for individual participants, broking organisations, specific industries and the broader rural industry and NRM sectors, and rural communities as a whole. The purpose of this project was to document, rather than measure, these benefits, illustrating them with specific examples from the case studies where possible.

For participants
For participants and potential participants, the following benefits were identified:

- Accessibility and affordability of training.
- Training targeted to local needs and conditions, linked to specific outcomes (e.g. employment, adoption of better NRM practices), and in some cases, nationally accredited.
- Access to the best possible training delivered by experts.
- Empowering individuals to play an active role in their learning/training pathway, including development of learning support networks.
- Awareness of the value of training.

These findings align closely with Kilpatrick and Bound (2001) regarding the immediate benefits of brokered training, and with Kilpatrick et al. (2001) and Miller (2001) regarding the long-term benefits, with regard to learner empowerment and the development of learning networks.

In case vignette 1 (Chapter 4), participants in a capacity building course for rural women indicated that they would not have been able to attend if the broking process had not kept costs down and assured delivery in their local community. In the FBA case study, broking of a course linking cattle production and NRM techniques in a specific region, meant that participants were ideally placed to go on and obtain incentive funding to implement practices on their properties. For participants in a header operations course brokered by VGITN, a sense of ownership of the course was an important factor in developing positive attitudes towards training. Because the course was targeted to a specific area of local industry need, participants subsequently gained employment in the field, again reinforcing the value of training.

In each of these examples, the role of a third party (broker) in ensuring a good match between needs and training, was critical. In particular, the benefits of brokered training extend well beyond the planning and delivery of the course, to include pre- and post-delivery contact, support and encouragement, as well as client advocacy. These key functions of brokers as agents of change are also identified in the literature (Miller 2001; Canadian Health Services Research Foundation 2003).
For broking organisations

For broking organisations, the benefits of brokerage included a range of resource-related issues, as well as capacity building within, and external to the broking organisation. The following specific benefits were identified from the data:

- Pooling of (often scarce) financial resources.
- Ensuring the cost effectiveness of training investment through broking, in order to create the maximum amount of leverage
- Widespread support for, and promotion of, training amongst stakeholders.
- Growth potential for broking businesses.
- Development of quality-assured course materials in an identified area of need is an investment, in that materials can be sold to other providers for delivery elsewhere. Funds raised can be used to broker further training for clients.
- Opportunities for collaboration and learning, involving a wide range of individuals and groups within and external to the community

These findings are supported by those of Kilpatrick and Bound (2001) and Gientzotis Consulting (2003) in terms of financial advantage for broking organisations, and of Gientzotis Consulting (2003) in terms of improvements in quality delivery and the development of a service culture.

For commercial organisations, in particular, issues of obtaining a return on investment in training were critical. The RST case study describes how a relatively small and new commercial venture has used broking principles to grow its training business, to the extent that it now services 250 clients annually (accredited training) and 3000 clients annually (non-accredited training). One of its strategies was to employ trusted and credible regional coordinators to act as brokers at the local level. Their role is to identify training needs and opportunities, and to target and engage course participants. In the Solly case study, ensuring participants gain a benefit from participation which is greater than the cost of the workshop, ensures continued participation in subsequent training.

Return on investment is also important to not-for-profit organisations, such as VGITN, in terms of the quality and quantity of training leveraged for members/clients. The VGITN case study highlights the cost effectiveness of broking for that organisation. For the cost of a three-day per week salary for the coordinator, the group is able to broker between 10–20 training courses per year for its clients, at an estimated annual value of $200 000.

In terms of capacity building within the broking organisation, the DPIWE and FBA case studies describe a symbiotic relationship between broker and provider, which enhances the capacity of both organisations, by building on each other’s strengths and recognising and supporting each other’s areas of weakness. In the FBA case study, this meant increased knowledge of the broker about training subsidies, integration of course materials, and course delivery methods.
For rural industries and the NRM sector

For rural industries and the NRM sector, there are a number of benefits of brokerage, related to a better equipped rural workforce. These include:

- Training reaches a wider audience
  - Better informed growers because of access to a wider variety of training than might otherwise have been available.
- Targeting relevant training to specific individuals/groups.
- Good participation rates in training because it is arranged by credible, local brokers.
- Continuity of service provided by a broker who develops learning pathways for individuals/groups, rather than ad hoc training courses.
- Good adoption rate of new practices.
- Industry/community ownership of training, and nurturing a training culture.

These identified benefits support findings from Kilpatrick et al. (2001) regarding the industry benefits of joint approaches to learning.

Outcomes of the Cattle and Catchments™ program (FBA case study) included the adoption of new practices by graziers in terms of operational management activities and future planning. In addition, there is a willingness by graziers to participate in subsequent training opportunities, brokered largely at the local level by staff employed by CHRRUPP.

The DPIWE case study outlines clear benefits for the dairy industry in Tasmania, of the brokered training for young dairy farmers. By working closely with key industry stakeholders to identify needs, a program was developed in conjunction with the training provider, to address the issue of the lack of young people achieving in the industry. Evaluation of the program indicated the need for further intensive support for younger farmers, giving rise to the development of a follow-up program. In another example, the VGITN case study describes the industry-wide benefits to be gained from the broking of a course in header operations, in terms of working with stakeholders to address a skill shortage that had the potential to impact on industry productivity and competitiveness.

Each of the above case studies illustrates the way in which brokered training can lead to a more innovative and competitive rural sector, with industry either acting as brokers itself, or as a stakeholders in the broking process.

For rural communities

Many of the benefits to industry extend to rural communities in general, in terms of better linking of training and employment opportunities, valuing of education and training, and increased community capacity. In short, findings from this study align with those of Gientzotis Consulting (2003) and Kilpatrick et al. (2001), regarding the benefits of brokerage in terms of increased social and economic community wellbeing through opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.

There are a number of instances within the case studies that indicate how social capital is built as (often diverse) individuals and groups within and outside the community collaborate to identify and deliver training solutions. For example, the RST case study describes how the development of training courses involves
community members providing facilities and/or equipment, to keep the costs of training down and to ensure relevance of training to local conditions. In another example, the VGITN case study describes a broking process that includes a diverse range of community, farmer, agribusiness, education and training, and industry groups in the identification, development and delivery of training for clients. In this case, the broker has a strategic plan that demonstrates a clear understanding of its role, and of its responsibilities to individuals, the grains industry, and the broader community.

What are the features of and inhibitors to effective brokerage?

This section considers findings from the telephone survey and the case studies. Where relevant, these are supplemented with findings from the literature, regarding brokerage in Australian primary industry, other industries, and overseas. Enhancers of effective brokerage are considered first, then a range of inhibitors is examined. The section concludes with a set of generic brokering principles derived from the telephone survey and case study data.

Enhancers of effective brokerage

An understanding of the training broker’s role

In Chapter 1 we provided a definition of a training broker:

A training broker plays an active and purposeful role in identifying training needs. A training broker considers the whole suite of present and potential training opportunities and actively matches needs to training, acting in the best interests of the client.

This definition clearly distinguishes between training brokers, and others involved in education and training. Findings from the study suggest that the more effective the broker, the stronger their sense of purpose, the greater their understanding of their role, and the greater their understanding of how the broking partnership works. This finding is supported by Johns (2004) who identified consolidation of partnership identity and heightened awareness of the impact of the partnership as central to developing and sustaining effective partnerships.

From the data, six discrete roles were identified in matching needs to training; however, not all could be considered broking roles:

1. **Information** sharing about training products and clients’ needs
2. **Referring**/recommending to existing programs
3. **Negotiating** access to/participation in existing programs
4. **Modifying** existing programs through negotiation
5. **Developing** programs in response to an identified unmet need
6. **Investing** in brokerage (financial/human resources)

Because the focus of brokerage is on **actively** matching needs to training, we argue that the first two (informing, referring) are not broking roles. The roles that clearly constitute brokerage are shaded in grey in Table 9. The table also links stakeholder groups to broking roles. Effective brokers are likely to undertake all of the roles identified for their particular stakeholder group. As well as having/acquiring relevant knowledge, skills and networks in place to support them in these roles, effective
brokers ensure they are acting professionally and ethically in accordance with appropriate ethical, privacy and confidentiality, and professional indemnity requirements.

Table 9. Stakeholders and broking roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Refer</th>
<th>Negotiate</th>
<th>Modify</th>
<th>Develop</th>
<th>Invest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agribusiness</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catchment authorities/region development groups</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension officers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FarmBis</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer associations</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming systems groups</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private consultants</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research &amp; development orgs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/Territory DPIs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training providers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings indicate that, as well as having a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of brokerage, effective partnerships are enhanced by a range of factors that can be grouped into three broad areas: environment, resources, and processes.

Environment
The broking environment relates to the internal and external (policy) domains. Brokerage is most successful in a collaborative and trusting climate, where stakeholders have a commitment to a shared vision and some measure of shared values. This holds true for training brokerage within Australian rural industries (Kilpatrick & Bound 2001; Greer & Scudds 2004), as well as brokerage in other industries (see Pettersen 2005 re insurance brokerage), and in overseas contexts (see Canadian Health Services Research Foundation 2004). The case studies clearly illustrate that effective brokerage is underpinned by relationships, between and among broker and clients, broker and providers, and broker and other stakeholders. All brokers in the case studies have direct links to the local community, and are well known and trusted by clients/potential clients, as well as training providers and other stakeholders. In the BAA and RST cases, some of these links are mediated by local brokers (the voluntary farmer broker in BAA, and paid local coordinators employed by RST and FBA).

Effective brokers describe how the building of relationships and the development of trust and credibility amongst clients, providers and other stakeholders, is an ongoing priority, and are realistic about the time and resources required to develop relationships. This is reflected in the RST and FBA case studies, where both broking organisations decided to employ local coordinators/brokers to focus on developing...
relationships at the local level. It is reflected in the actions of the broker in the VGITN case study, who provides a personalised service to the 150 grain farming families that she serves. Realistic expectations are identified in the literature as integral to effective broking (Greer & Scudds 2004).

There is evidence in the case studies that brokerage is viewed by stakeholders as a team process in which partners share responsibility and rewards. Most describe how a close relationship with industry is a key element of a climate conducive to brokerage (e.g. VGITN and the grains industry; DPIWE and the dairy industry; Solly and the meat and livestock industry). The VGITN case describes in detail how multiple stakeholders from different contexts and backgrounds (farmers, providers, farmer organisations, government) work closely together, and how the broker uses a range of strategies to ensure community input. This aligns with Australian (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b; Mitchell 2004) and overseas (Shortell et al. 2002) partnership experiences. The VGITN group is enthusiastic and works actively and tirelessly to broker training for the grains industry. Members see themselves as part of a very successful organisation and regularly celebrate successes, for instance with the barbecue held on completion of the first header operations course. Recognition of partnership identity and celebration of success are characteristics of effective partnerships and have been found to contribute to their sustainability (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b; Johns 2004).

In terms of the external (policy) environment, the case studies illustrate the role of policy in helping to support conditions conducive to brokerage. For example, in the FBA case study, availability of NRM funding through the NAP and NHT programs facilitated local initiatives, including the employment of local brokers (CHRRUPP). It would seem that further opportunities for NRM groups to enhance their broking capacity will be created through the National Knowledge Broking for Regional NRM initiative. In terms of industry, the Victorian Farmers Federation contributes funding towards the employment of the paid coordinator in the VGITN case, while the DPIWE case study illustrates how broking of training is supported by the dairy industry through the Targeting our Profitability program.

While policy does not always directly fund brokerage, the case studies suggest that a supportive government and industry environment gives brokers confidence in developing new programs. Examples are the FarmBis subsidies to participants in approved training. There is evidence that the availability of FarmBis subsidies for participants gave brokers confidence to develop new courses in the RST, Solly and FBA case studies. However, most cases also indicate that more needed to be done to identify and exploit other sources of funding and support, to allow broking activities to be expanded. Some brokers, such as VGITN, are already well down this path.

**Resources**

Resources fall in two main areas: human (people and their skills and knowledge), and financial. Lack of time was also an issue for many.

The case studies indicate that effective brokers had generic skills in facilitation, communication, mediation, and leadership, as well as detailed knowledge of available training and the capabilities of providers. These are the same sorts of skills required of others in coordinating roles, and are identified as attributes of coordinators/brokers in the Australian (e.g., Mitchell 2004) and overseas broking literature (e.g. Canadian
Health Services Foundation 2003). In addition, brokers had skills and experience in working across different sectors (e.g. producer, education, industry). The brokers in the VGITN and Solly case studies are good examples of this, while the FBA case illustrated how the broker linked with a training provider who could help negotiate the rural training sector (FarmBis) with which the broker had had little experience. The ability to work across contexts is identified elsewhere as a characteristic of effective brokers (Kilpatrick & Bound 2001; Kilpatrick et al. 2002a).

Equally as important as the above skills, was the skill of knowing where to find relevant information. The local coordinator in the FBA case study is quite clear that brokers do not have to be experts in everything, but they do need to know where to go to obtain information. Most cases described the importance of knowing which provider/s to approach to develop specific courses, and where to go to obtain funding. Timing was also important, with the DPIWE case illustrating that sustainability is about using local knowledge whenever possible, but knowing when to bring in external expertise.

In terms of financial resources, the case studies illustrate various funding arrangements for brokerage, ranging from funded brokers (the broker in the VGITN, the local coordinators in the FBA case), to those for whom brokerage forms part of a much broader role (DPIWE case study), to those who must generate their own income to continue broking (Solly and RST cases), to those who work in a voluntary capacity (the farmer broker in the BAA case study). In terms of commercial broking organisations, the Solly case study illustrates how the need to obtain return on investment was a driver for high quality, responsive training. As the broker noted: ‘This commercial process of investment, income generation, and provision of value can foster the creative and proactive development of training opportunities’. Some brokers also had in place a mechanism for expansion (see VGITN case, where the broker prepared to expand the course in header operations and sell to other providers). Others, such as Solly, were aware of opportunities for expansion, but at the time of writing the case study, had not developed a mechanism for achieving this.

Overall, there was evidence from the case studies that allocation of adequate resources (time, staff, financial) was integral to an effective broking process, and this was clearly illustrated in the DPIWE case study. Data from the telephone survey also recommended that brokers organise the backing of relevant government agencies and others at the start of the project, so that resources (e.g. facilities, staff, reputations) are not compromised. The issue of appropriate resourcing for partnerships, including interactional infrastructure, is well documented in both the Australian (e.g. Kilpatrick & Bound 2001; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b; Greer & Scudds 2004), and overseas literature (e.g., Canadian Health Services Research Foundation 2003), and supports findings from the current study.

There is also evidence within the cases that resource continuity facilitates more effective brokerage. This is clearly illustrated in the VGITN case study, where the broker had sufficient resources to access funding to produce training material and to put together a highly effective combination of trainers. Continuity of resourcing also meant continued employment for the broker, who had built up an extensive network across the grains industry and beyond. The issue of continuity (or lack of continuity)
of resourcing, features in other research into the development and sustainability of effective partnerships (e.g. Kilpatrick et al. 2002b).

**Processes**
The case studies highlighted the importance of having processes in place to facilitate communication and information sharing in general, as well as processes for involving relevant stakeholders in course planning and development, and processes for evaluating brokerage. These processes, sometimes referred to in the literature as interactional infrastructure (e.g. Canadian Health Services Research Foundation 2003), have been found to underpin other effective training brokerage partnerships (Kilpatrick & Bound 2001; Greer & Scudds 2004).

General communication and information sharing processes were identified by Mitchell (2004) as one of four enablers of effective networks. In terms of the current study, effective brokers also put in place such processes, which were facilitated by developing a broad stakeholder base. A good illustration is the committee featured in the VGITN case, comprising farmers, providers and a range of other stakeholders. Key advantages of ensuring processes are in place to facilitate regular and ongoing communication and information sharing were identified as:

- carefully planned and paced process of information gathering, as opposed to ad hoc information gathering, before planning began (see DPIWE case)
- formal identification of industry training needs (see VGITN and DPIWE cases)
- increased capacity to identify and understand emerging industry needs, often before learners (see VGITN case)
- long-term relationship between broker and potential participants and key stakeholders ensures relevance of content, delivery, timing (see Solly case).

Course planning and development processes usually comprised a series of relatively formal meetings between broker, provider and other relevant stakeholders. The VGITN case is a good example of a process of proactive planning and negotiating with regard to proposed courses, and includes reference to various stakeholders such as consultations with header companies, and careful selection of trainers. The formal processes of negotiating planning and development of the training are illustrated in some detail in the DPIWE and FBA case studies. Systematic involvement of stakeholders in designing courses to meet identified gaps, as well as ensuring all relevant stakeholders are involved early in the planning process, ensures training is targeted and relevant. Both the VGITN and DPIWE cases illustrate the importance of getting this process right.

Mitchell (2004) identified evaluation of partnership outcomes as another of the four enablers of effective networks, although evaluation is not always identified as a separate process in the literature on effective partnerships. The case studies quite clearly view evaluation as a key component of brokerage, and most describe how evaluation is undertaken systematically, both during and on completion of the training. A good illustration of this is the FBA case study, which described a formal meeting between representatives from the broker and provider organisations. The parties not only discussed training program evaluation, but also focussed on evaluation of the broking process, from both the broker and provider perspectives.
Cases such as FBA and Solly illustrate the close link between evaluation and quality assurance processes, and highlight their importance in ensuring broking of future activities. These brokers not only evaluate the broking process, but act on evaluation results. For example, in the FBA case, as a result of evaluation, the broker modified the content of the *Cattle and Catchments™* course, the way it was delivered, and reviewed its own participation in course delivery.

The issue of processes for developing and sustaining partnerships is critical to effective brokerage, and will be revisited in the later section on ‘Models of effective broking arrangements’.

**Inhibitors to effective brokerage**

The case studies did not provide a large amount of detail on inhibitors of effective brokerage, as their purpose was to highlight processes for developing and sustaining effective brokerage. However, some general comments were provided by case study interviewees and telephone survey participants, regarding inhibitors to brokerage. These issues can be considered in the light of the three broad categories of enhancers: environment, resources, and processes.

In terms of processes, some brokers described a breakdown in communication processes at a critical stage of development, meaning that the quality of the training delivered was negatively affected. In one example, this happened at a very late stage of course development, even though the earlier stages had been characterised by a free and open exchange of ideas, and a formal process for sharing ideas. This is different from the issue of insufficient mechanisms for managing member input identified in the literature (see Shortell et al. 2002), and suggests that brokers should not become complacent when collaborative processes are working effectively, because this could well be the stage when problems arise.

Not surprisingly, the issue of insufficient resources (financial, human, time) was identified a number of times as an inhibitor to brokerage, particularly in terms of the effects on continuity of staffing and programs. This supports similar findings from both the Australian (Kilpatrick et al. 2001; Greer & Scudds 2004) and overseas literature (Shortell et al. 2002).

In terms of policy, there was little specific reference to its inhibiting effect on brokerage, but again this is not surprising, given that the focus of the study was on effective brokerage. One broker commented that reliance on subsidised training for the rural sector (e.g. FarmBis) has made it difficult to coordinate training that is not subsidised, for fear of not being able to attract sufficient participants to cover costs and/or make a profit. This brings into focus the need to consider sustainability issues post-FarmBis, and suggests a major change is needed in attitudes towards non-subsidised training within the rural sector.
**Principles of effective brokerage**

Chapter 4 contained a list of attributes of effective training brokerage process, summarised under the headings: project development; project management; managing stakeholders; clients; assessment of needs; delivery; and evaluation. These points were highlighted in the survey interview process and subsequently confirmed in the case studies. From these attributes, a set of principles for effective broking has been developed. These principles appear to underpin effective brokerage, regardless of organisation type, industry sector or location, and are based on relationships of trust and the use of extensive networks. The principles are derived from the research data and from the synthesis of the Australian and overseas partnership and broking literature. They are presented in three groups, according to target audience: training providers using broking principles (Table 10); all brokers (Table 11); and funding bodies/industry associations (Table 12).

**Table 10. Broking principles that training providers should adopt**

- Be learner-centred
  - Active in identifying client needs (relationships)
    - From informal networks
    - Through formal processes
  - Active in ensuring clients’ needs are met, e.g. matching programs or adapting programs and/or developing new programs
- Be flexible and responsive to client needs regarding content and delivery
- Develop and maintain a wide network of stakeholders to identify emerging needs and awareness of other training opportunities
  - Include brokers in the network
- Apply the principle of reciprocity by taking a long-term view, and seeing yourself as part of a community of training providers
  - Recognise the value of brokerage
- Be willing to collaborate with other providers

**Table 11. Good practice broking principles**

- Be learner-centred
  - Active in identifying client needs (relationships)
    - From informal networks
    - Through formal processes
  - Active in working with providers to ensure clients’ needs are met, e.g adapting programs or developing new programs
- Have links to local networks; clients have a relationship of trust with the broker
- Encourage a learning culture (nurturing)
- Have links to training providers; cultivate a relationship of trust with trainers
- Maintain a continual awareness of training opportunities and gaps
  - From informal networks
  - Through formal processes
- Develop and maintain a wide network of stakeholders to identify emerging needs and awareness of other training opportunities
  - From informal networks
  - Through formal processes
- Actively match needs to training
- Assure the quality of the training provided as a result of brokerage
  - Select credible training providers for referral or delivery
  - Evaluate the training provided as a result of brokerage
- Have appropriate professional standards in place and comply with relevant legislation
- Evaluate the brokerage process for credibility and quality assurance
Table 12. Principles for policymakers and industry bodies: fostering brokerage

- Provide incentives for brokers, trainers and participants, e.g. financial
  - Need rewards for broker, not just trainers and participants
- Recognise brokerage as a key part of getting an effective return on investment in training
  - Recognise brokerage as a key part of being effective as an industry or regional body
  - Demonstrate the value of brokerage (e.g. cost:benefit analysis)
  - Ensure training product developers link to relevant, quality brokers
  - Promote the development of broking skills
- Recognise that training providers need resources to actively identify client needs in order to maximise return on investment in training

Models of effective broking arrangements that apply to learning activities for various sectors, groups and issues in primary industry

The results indicate clearly that there are no significant differences in broking arrangements for different organisations, although strategies for client interaction and client base differ slightly between government, commercial and not-for-profit organisations. There was also no significant difference between industry sectors or location, apart from the observation that ‘not primary industry’ organisations were less likely to be active brokers.

The telephone survey and case studies yielded insufficient information to determine whether particular groups (e.g. indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse) required a different broking model, although research by Greer and Scudds (2004) indicated that the same basic principles also apply to brokerage in indigenous communities. These include development of and commitment to a shared vision; trusting relationships and social support in the learning process; skills in working together and with others; and appropriate interactional infrastructure. They noted that what differs is the amount of time and wider range of engagement and support strategies needed at various stages of the broking process, rather than the principles themselves.

Findings by Kilpatrick and Bound (2001) regarding the difference between market-focused and client-focused brokers were not strongly supported in the current study. Although there were differences in the way commercial organisations operated, these differences were mainly in relation to type of client, method of client contact, and focus of training. There was nothing in the RST and Solly case studies to suggest that relationships with clients were hierarchical, or that their focus on financial return was at the expense of clients.

There are no clearly identifiable models of training brokerage for different contexts. Instead, the case studies indicated that effective brokers operate from the same set of basic principles and processes, but are flexible in applying them within their own context. There is also evidence within the case studies that the same organisation may use different strategies and a different mix of stakeholders, depending on the nature of the training being brokered. For example, training in broader issues of management and succession planning may require a broking process that involves a wide range of possible stakeholders to ensure multiple perspectives are covered, whereas more technical courses (e.g. header operations) with a specific body of knowledge, may require input from a different range of stakeholders.
In another example, depending on the type of training being brokered, processes for engaging participants may differ. For example, in the DPIWE case, a wide range of strategies was used to engage as many of the target population as possible in the *Making progress for young dairy farmers* course. This is in contrast to a much narrower range of engagement strategies for an earlier benchmarking program, which was targeted specifically at those who had experienced difficulties in understanding and interpreting benchmarking outputs.

The following section discusses the generic broking process evident within all case studies, and links these to the generic broking principles identified earlier in Table 11. Specific examples are provided, where relevant, of how different brokers have adapted strategies to suit their particular context.

**The broking process**

In accordance with the literature on partnership development, the data indicate that brokerage is a process or lifecycle moving from a looser, informal structure in the earlier stages to a more formalised structure later (Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997; Lane & Dorfman 1997; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b; Falk & Smith 2003). There are also indications in the case studies that effective brokers have a good understanding of the process and of where they fit within it, which Shortell et al. (2002) identified as a key attribute of effective partnerships.

The process can be synthesised into three broad stages:

- getting started
- matching needs and opportunities
- evaluating the broking process.

Each of these stages includes one or more of the principles for effective brokerage outlined earlier in this chapter. Table 13 provides a matrix of broking stages and principles.

**Table 13. The broking process: stages and principles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broking stages</th>
<th>Broking principles</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting started</td>
<td>• Be learner-centred</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have links to local networks; clients have a relationship of trust with the broker</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage a learning culture (nurturing)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Develop and maintain a wide network of stakeholders to identify emerging needs and awareness of other training opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have links to training providers; cultivate a relationship of trust with trainers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintain a continual awareness of training opportunities and gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching needs and opportunities</td>
<td>• Actively match needs to training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assure the quality of the training provided as a result of brokerage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating the broking process</td>
<td>• Evaluate the broking process for credibility and quality assurance</td>
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</table>
Getting started

This stage is where information is gathered from a variety of sources, about client needs and available training opportunities, and involves the widest possible range of stakeholders. The case studies identify a wide range of informal and formal processes for identifying training needs. Formal processes include regional/NRM/industry strategic planning meetings and conferences; recommendations arising from evaluations of previous projects; and formal surveys of industry association members, agribusiness clients etc. Informal processes include regular and ongoing feedback from clients and other stakeholders, and the use of broker networks to seek specific input from/share information with associates, key industry and government stakeholders.

The sort of information to be collected includes: existing skill levels of the client group (both generic skills, and technical or content skills); preferred learning styles of participants; current and emerging opportunities or threats to the industry/organisation, and skills required to meet these current and emerging needs. Any assessment of training needs should include recognition of current competence, to ensure clients are matched to training that is appropriate to their needs. Where the broker is not a training provider, having access to training providers qualified to assess current competence is important.

During this stage, local networks are gradually developed and expanded. This is essential for building trust between broker and client. The case studies indicate that trust plays a key role in determining program participation rates, both initially and in terms of repeat business. It is built as brokers gain a reputation for coordinating high quality, relevant, timely, accessible and affordable training. In line with findings from Kilpatrick and Bound (2001), the case studies show how relationships of trust are facilitated when brokers have a detailed knowledge of their client base and its changing needs. There is also evidence to suggest that sub-broking at the local level can help to build and/or strengthen a relationship of trust between a larger broker organisation and its clients. Examples include the local coordinators in the RST and FBA case studies.

The building of trust between broker and provider also begins at this stage, as well as the development of broker-provider networks. The case studies highlight a number of factors that help to build trust:

- choosing the best possible provider/s for the job
- the credibility and reputation of both the broker and provider (reputable brokers attract reputable providers and vice versa)
- the extent to which each party has similar or shared values, particularly in relation to working collaboratively to best meet the needs of learners
- a clearly identified process for consultation, negotiation and program development, with the roles and responsibilities of each party clearly identified and understood.

It is important that the broker has knowledge of, and linkages with a range of credible local and external training providers able to deliver programs relevant to target client group needs. For all brokers, including training providers acting as brokers, good practice is about working collaboratively as part of a community of training providers,
in the best interests of learners. This approach supports research from the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (2004) that found ‘broking will only really be able to function … if there is a true network of brokers reaching out, sharing information, and offering tips on best practices’ (pp. 2–3).

Supporting findings from Kilpatrick et al. (2001), the current study found that brokers play an important role in fostering a learning culture, not only amongst their client base, but also amongst their broader stakeholder group. Strategies to foster a learning culture begin during the start-up phase and extend throughout the life of the brokerage partnership. They include the provision of support and follow-up to clients before and after training, working with clients and other stakeholders to develop learning pathways relevant to learners’ needs, and facilitating and encouraging dialogue between clients and providers. A good example is the approach of the VGITN coordinator, who has a number of strategies for encouraging a learning culture amongst her clients, including different email and fax lists for people at different stages of their learning journeys, recognising and valuing the skills and knowledge of clients, and promoting the value of training within the broader stakeholder group. These strategies empower clients as active partners in the learning process.

As well as developing linkages with providers, the start-up phase is also characterised by the development of networks and strategies to allow the broker to maintain a continual awareness of training opportunities and gaps. Networks for identifying training opportunities can be both formal and informal. Formal linkages include participation in regular regional forums, industry association planning meetings, and similar stakeholder planning/meeting forums. Informal linkages include ongoing contact with representatives from stakeholder groups, and regular scans of stakeholder, industry and government websites. This is where good Internet research skills are useful. Evaluations of completed training programs also provide information, while some brokers commission their own reports into training requirements and gaps.

The case studies show that effective brokers use a range of strategies to scan for opportunities and gaps as illustrated in the VGITN case study. The broker used multiple sources (2003 report, conference of stakeholders, contact from a leading header operator) to identify a gap in training for header operators. In another example, the broker in the Solly case used his extensive networks amongst associates, clients and industry associations to identify a gap in the training market in relation to farm business expansion, and to gauge interest in participating. The broker, a commercial operator, subsequently invested in developing and delivering a relevant workshop.

Matching needs and opportunities
The start-up stage—where relationships are being established, networks are being developed, and issues relating to training needs and opportunities are being explored—is followed by the more formal stage of linking identified needs to appropriate training. At this stage, it has become clear which stakeholders should be involved in the process, so brokers develop methods to facilitate consultation and negotiation between the relevant partners. These usually involve some formal meetings, and may include informal processes as well. Having an understanding of the culture of other partners in the network (e.g. training institution culture, industry
association culture) is important at this stage, as are the negotiation and leadership skills of the broker.

Actively matching needs to training is likely to involve most or all of the following six phases of activity, depending on whether an existing program is selected, or whether a program is to be modified or a new one developed. Although these phases are presented as linear, in reality some will be undertaken concurrently.

- **Clarify/define needs and target audience, and set learning objectives**
  This phase is likely to form part of an early planning meeting of stakeholders, and should involve the broker, provider/s, and representatives from the client target group at a minimum. Other stakeholders such as industry organisations and/or relevant government agencies should also be included as appropriate. The DPIWE case study illustrates the importance of this phase: to clarify, refine and articulate the general needs expressed earlier in the process; to specify the target client group (e.g. young dairy farmers) and to devise learning objectives that meet the requirements of all stakeholders.

- **Determine what type of program will best meet identified needs**
  The case studies describe how input from stakeholders (particularly from training providers and industry associations) is sought, to determine whether to offer an existing program, to adapt an existing one, or develop a new one, and whether or not the program should be accredited. This phase is characterised by stakeholder input on a range of issues, including: comparison of learning objectives (see paragraph above) to the objectives of existing programs; the need to meet industry and legislative requirements; availability of appropriate expertise to develop and deliver the program; and the availability of funding (in general, funding is more readily available for accredited programs).

- **Determine funding source and make application to the funding body as appropriate**
  Most brokers in the case studies have a wide knowledge of available funding sources, and use their networks to keep abreast of new and potential sources. Stakeholders are likely to be involved in determining whether funding should be sought from external sources (e.g. FarmBis, User Choice, NAP funding), and the extent to which clients might be expected to contribute to the cost of their own training. Effective brokers tend to use a range of different funding sources, depending on the training required, as illustrated in the VGITN case study.

- **Select a credible and appropriately qualified provider**
  Selection of a provider/s can be done in a variety of ways, including calling for expressions of interest, using the stakeholder group to identify relevant expert/s, and using the broker’s own knowledge of and relationships with credible providers. There are a number of examples in the case studies about selection of providers. For example, DPIWE used a training provider with whom they had a long-standing and trusting relationship, noting how the credibility of provider and broker were closely linked. On the other hand,
Solly selected a leading expert in the field to deliver the training program it brokered. The broker and stakeholder group need to be satisfied that the selected trainer is the best possible person for the job, and that they are prepared to work collaboratively to develop and/or deliver a program that will best meet the needs of the client target group.

- Work with stakeholders to determine and develop program content
  Where the decision has been made to modify an existing program or develop a new one, the phase should involve broker and provider/s, with input from the client target group. Input should also be sought from industry associations and government agencies as appropriate, the FarmBis coordinator (if relevant), and other experts as required. The case studies (see in particular, FBA and DPIWE) illustrate how the process is one of negotiation over a period of time, as program content is gradually compiled, then refined to ensure it addresses the learning objectives. Critical to the process is the free flow of communication and open and trusting relationships between the stakeholders. Effective brokers work with stakeholders to develop clearly understood and agreed processes of negotiation (well illustrated in the FBA case study).

- Ensure the program is trialled with sample of target audience before offering
  In keeping with the learner-centred focus, and as part of quality assurance, programs should be trialled with a sample of the target group, or with others having similar characteristics to the target group. At the very least, this phase should include informal feedback from some potential clients, regarding program content and format. Some members of the stakeholder group could also be used.

Effective brokers are aware that quality assurance underpins the process of successfully matching needs to training. Program evaluations should be developed in consultation with the training provider/s as the program is being developed, to ensure the focus is on measuring the extent to which the learning objectives have been met. Part of the quality assurance process is selecting credible training providers (discussed earlier). Another key part of the process is evaluation of training outcomes. This helps brokers and other stakeholders to measure the extent to which needs and training have been successfully matched.

The case studies indicate that brokers and other stakeholders involved in developing the program use evaluation to identify further training needs, and to facilitate pathways to further learning activities for clients. This includes providing information on other available courses or contact details for other providers, as well as broking further training. The results of evaluations are also used to benefit subsequent program participants. For example, information can be used to revise existing programs before offering them to a new client group (see FBA), and to guide the development and delivery of subsequent training programs (see DPIWE). Effective brokers ensure that processes are in place to evaluate both during the program (regular monitoring), as well as at its conclusion, and use a combination of formal (written participant surveys) and informal participant feedback.
Evaluating the broking process

The third stage in the broking process is that of evaluating the process itself. The purpose of this stage is to assess whether the process has been in the best interests of the client. The literature suggests that this stage is less well recognised or understood (e.g. Canadian Health Services Research Foundation 2003), and there are indications from the telephone survey that a number of brokers were referring to evaluation of the training (content, delivery, presenters) rather than evaluation of the broking process itself.

Effective brokers understand the difference between the two, and place importance on a formal evaluation process following delivery of the brokered training. In the FBA case study, evaluations of the training itself, and the broking process, were conducted during the same stakeholder meeting. The meeting determined that overall the broking process was successful in meeting its objectives, and identified areas for improvement (e.g. better communication between broker and provider needed at the final stages of program development).

Evaluation of the broking process should include a stakeholder review of the ten good practice broking principles listed earlier in this chapter (Table 11), as well as a review of process issues. Specifically, it needs to capture the level of value adding (i.e. where the dollar value has been made and how participants have benefited along the way). The Solly case illustrates this point well. Good evaluation is also dependent on a clear articulation of the purpose of the brokerage (i.e. to maximise impacts or own profits, or somewhere in between).

Summary

Much appears to be happening in rural industry in terms of training brokerage. Not all of the activity could be described as brokerage in terms of the definition provided in Chapter 1, but the good practice examples of training providers using broking principles in their work are also important in creating a more responsive rural training market. Although there are no failsafe models of training brokerage, it is clear that the activity is underpinned by a set of generic principles and processes that appear to be common to all effective brokers, even though different broking contexts may call for flexibility in implementing the principles, and may determine how much time is spent at each of the three broad stages of the broking process.
Chapter 12: Implications and recommendations from this research

Introduction
The study has explored a number of broking arrangements within rural industry and has concluded that effective broking comprises a three-stage process, underpinned by a set of generic principles. These findings have been developed into a user-friendly manual, *Matching training needs and opportunities: A guidebook*. This guidebook, and the set of related case studies (Chapters 5 to 10 in this report), address the fifth project objective: to prepare case studies and a user-friendly manual that can potentially promote effective broking arrangements. The guidebook was developed by the researchers with stakeholder input, and is available electronically from the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building website: [http://www.rirdc.gov.au/capacitybuilding/index.html](http://www.rirdc.gov.au/capacitybuilding/index.html).

Implications of this research
This research on the process and benefits of brokerage has the potential to bring about a number of significant changes in the rural training market. Its applied nature means that new knowledge has been created with a specific application in view—the identification of new ways to match needs to training for rural industry. At the same time, it also provides input into three other areas of research: experimental development (knowledge gained from the research is used to create new materials and processes); demonstration and extension (broad communication of new knowledge in a way that allows clear assessment of its technical and economic viability), and training and development (human resource development for RIRDC’s rural industries).

All Australian primary industries are potential beneficiaries of this research. Earlier investigation by Kilpatrick (1996) has shown a positive link between participation in learning activities in general, and farm profitability. Research has shown that primary producers who are involved in appropriate participatory learning activities are more likely to adopt sustainable agricultural practices (see Synapse Research and Consulting and CapitalAg Consulting 2001 for a summary of relevant research prepared on behalf of Land & Water Australia). While this research was restricted to brokers operating in regional Australia, there is no reason to suggest that brokers with a client focus and a learning orientation would not also benefit clients in metropolitan Australia.

Benefits will flow from the research because it will facilitate:

- client-focussed development of training that implies improved awareness by education and training providers, of opportunities for developing relevant, innovative learning programs and better mechanisms for producers to nominate needs, and
- better matching of learning needs with provision of learning activities.
Adoption of the recommendations from this project, and implementation of the manual, *Matching training needs and opportunities: A guidebook*, will lead to increased participation by producers in superior learning activities. It will mean that producers and their industry organisations will have information to direct scarce funds in the most effective way when matching learning needs with provision of activities. In addition, training providers will be able to direct their resources toward the areas of demand.

Government is examining options for supporting primary producer and land manager training activities following the end of the current FarmBis program in 2008, and for developing human capacity in natural resource management. This research provides an evidence base for input into those policy decisions, and policy development on learning activities for natural resource management.

The findings presented here support earlier research into training brokerage (Kilpatrick & Bound 2001) that called for public support of training to extend beyond mere delivery, to developing providers to be flexible, adaptable and understanding of client needs, and developing clients as informed, discerning and empowered consumers of quality vocational education and training. The case for public support is partly based on grounds of equity and inclusion; however, this study suggests that there are also economic efficiency arguments for improving the match between training need and provision.

Australia is currently making a huge investment in research, development and extension (RD & E), and NRM delivery. The broking model has significant implications for improving communication, reducing duplication, enhancing coordination, and fostering collaboration across regions, industries and issues.

Specific implications of the broking model for different sectors are noted below.

**For primary producers**
A simple pathway for identifying the training that is available to best meet their needs (compared to the necessity of having to do all the investigation themselves).

**For training brokers**
- Tools for matching training provision to client needs.
- Models for funding of the role of training brokerage.

**For training providers**
- A simple pathway for making their training accessible to a greater number of primary producers (compared to having to find the clients most in need of training provision).
- Opportunities to partner clients in adapting training provision to meet client needs.

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1 Training brokers include the following: farmer/industry organisations, NRM regional organisations, R&D corporations, FarmBis, state agencies, NHT and DAFF.
• Better knowledge about the competition in the training market, what type of training is needed, and who needs it (reducing duplication and enhancing the benefits of competition).

For institutional investors in training\(^2\)

• A mechanism by which to reduce duplication of effort in the assessment of training needs, the development of training services, and the delivery of training services.

• An opportunity to better coordinate training provision within and between industries, and within and between regions.

• An opportunity to leverage investment in training by focussing on brokerage, rather than training delivery.

• An opportunity to adapt the training brokerage model to the brokerage of all RD&E services (R&D, extension, training and funding).

The benefits outlined above could be accrued to the greatest extent, and at the greatest rate, if a national approach to training brokerage was adopted. This could facilitate a sharing of knowledge about training needs and training services which is across industries and across regions. This sharing of information could be extremely powerful in creating a responsive and more active training market.

The evidence gathered from this research suggests that a coordinated national approach to implementing training brokerage across Australia could result in significant improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of training delivery. The benefits of these improvements would be many times greater than the costs. Indeed, for a very small outlay, the effectiveness of the current investment in supporting sustainable agriculture could be massively improved.

**Recommendations**

Overall, the study highlights that training brokerage needs to be recognised as a discrete and vital role in developing a responsive training market, and that the roles of training providers as brokers, as well as third party brokers, need to be better understood and more widely supported. It also indicates that for training brokerage to grow, innovative ways of supporting and encouraging its development are needed. The possibilities of generating funding for brokerage from a wide range of other sources have not been fully explored, nor have mechanisms for commercial and other organisations to expand on training they have brokered by marketing it elsewhere.

Specific recommendations to foster the development, expansion and sustainability of good broking practices are provided in the following sections. These recommendations also identify which key stakeholder group/s (brokers, training providers, policymakers and industry bodies, and others) each recommendation is directed towards.

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\(^2\) As for training brokers, institutional investors include the following: farmer/industry organisations, NRM regional organisations, R&D corporations, FarmBis, state agencies, NHT and DAFF.
Provide brokers with necessary skills and support

There is a clear need for brokers to be skilled communicators and facilitators, and to have a clear understanding of the broking process. As well as ensuring brokers have generic skills in key areas such as communication, negotiation and leadership, a range of specific skill development and support strategies is recommended, as follows.

**R1: Disseminate training brokers guidebook as widely as possible**

The step by step guidebook was developed as part of the current project, and has been informed by and trialled with broking practitioners and other key stakeholders. The guidebook should be disseminated by the CVCB via its website and through the networks of CVCB partners. There should also be a link to the RIRDC website. The guidebook would ideally be made widely available through the websites of a range of other organisations, including FarmBis, state and territory departments of primary industry, the Australasia Pacific Extension network (APEN), and Registered Training Organisations nationally.

**R2: Provide workshops that will showcase models of good practice, equip stakeholders with skills in effective brokerage of learning activities for primary producers, and promote good practice in broking**

The guidebook has been designed for individual use, and is also a tool to be utilised in workshop situations. It provides case studies to illustrate good practice in brokerage. Using this guidebook, training brokers’ workshops need to be organised and promoted within each Australian state/territory, and should be conducted by skilled facilitators. Recommended forums include FarmBis state/territory and national workshops, and APEN state/territory forums and national conferences.

**R3: Develop communities of practice to provide opportunities for support and shared learning about brokerage and its potential for rural industry**

While the guidebook is a useful starting point, much brokerage is learnt on-the-job, as the result of issues that require the development of a response relevant to the broking context. It is recommended that practitioners need a support framework, comprising others involved in brokerage, to enhance their learning. Brokers should be encouraged to form communities of practice. APEN is in a key position to support such communities of practice through the chat group facilities already available on their website. Other groups, such as the Australian Facilitators Network, could also support such activities. The existence of communities of practice should be publicised by these groups, and also by CVCB, RIRDC, FarmBis, and state and territory departments of primary industry.

**R4: Add training brokerage to the curriculum of extension courses**

Brokerage is still a relatively new concept in Australian rural training and NRM sectors. In addition to facilitating brokerage through targeted workshops and the use of the guidebook prepared for the current project, it is strongly recommended that a broking component needs to be included in all extension courses, and in courses that prepare people to work in extension, such as Agricultural Science degrees.

**Promote awareness and encourage implementation of good practice broking principles**

While many individuals and groups are undertaking some form of brokerage, there is confusion about what brokers actually do, and whether broking is a discrete activity or something that is done ‘off the side of the desk’. The current study clearly defines the
broking role, and contrasts it with other roles such as that of training provider. By identifying a set of good practice broking principles, brokers now have a framework for developing and evaluating their practice. These principles need to be widely disseminated, and brokers must be encouraged to implement them. Recommendations for achieving this are listed below.

**R5: Each CVCB investor explores the results of this research specifically for their organisation, and develops implementation strategies for adopting the model of training brokerage into their standard business practices**

CVCB investors have a responsibility to promote training brokerage as a key strategy in ensuring a responsive training market. Specifically, they are in a position to provide strong leadership through example, by adopting and modelling good practice training brokerage in their day-to-day operations.

**R6: Refer to good practice principles and incorporate them into everyday practice**

The good practice broking principles identified in the guidebook underpin effective brokerage. Training providers should be encouraged to incorporate good practice principles in their training, while they and others involved in brokerage must ensure their activity is grounded in good practice broking principles. It is recommended that those organisations identified in Recommendation 1 (CVCB, RIRDC, RTOs, FarmBis, state and territory departments of primary industry) should have broad responsibility for promoting awareness of the principles and encouraging their implementation.

**R7: Actively seek out brokers and develop networks with them**

If we are to increase the responsiveness of the rural training market, it is imperative that all players actively seek opportunities for information sharing and collaboration, in order to better identify needs and meet them. Primary producers should be encouraged by farmer organisations and industry bodies to use brokers, so as to better match their needs to relevant training. In addition, training providers have a responsibility to actively seek out training brokers and to create opportunities for networking, in order to enhance their own practice and better meet the needs of their clients.

**R8: FarmBis should encourage broking along with good practice**

The FarmBis program does much to create conditions that support broking, such as providing incentives to develop programs and encouraging the development of clients and an understanding of needs. Because of their knowledge and networks, FarmBis networkers are in a prime position to raise awareness and encourage implementation of good practice broking principles, as part of their broader role of fostering good practice in the development of training for the rural sector. They should use their position to further encourage and facilitate partnership approaches to the identification of training needs and development of training solutions.

**R9: Conduct more research into the role of private consultants and public/private training providers as brokers**

The current research has identified a set of good practice broking principles, and a three-stage broking process, that need to be disseminated as widely as possible amongst practitioners. However, there is also a need for further knowledge about the principles, process and benefits of brokerage, and for this information to be readily available to practitioners, as well as policymakers and industry bodies. In particular,
there is evidence that consultants and training providers play a key broking role in Australian rural industry, although in some cases these roles are not adequately recognised and supported by policymakers. It is recommended that further research be undertaken into the role of agribusiness in general, and consultants and training providers in particular, in broking training within Australian rural industry. This research should be commissioned by RIRDC and the CVCB, as well as by industry-based research and development organisations.

**Resourcing the implementation of good practice brokerage**

Findings from the study indicate that we must invest in brokerage. Investment includes, but is not limited to, financial resources. Investment is about valuing brokerage and recognising it as a key part of being effective as an industry or regional body.

*R10: Policymakers and industry bodies to act upon the principles for fostering brokerage identified in this report*

The three broad principles for fostering brokerage relate to the provision of incentives, supports and resources for brokers. In short, there is a clear need for investment in brokerage. It is recommended that this report be disseminated to policymakers and industry bodies, and that the principles fostering brokerage be highlighted for their attention. Policymakers and industry bodies should be aware of the principles, and should actively respond to them as they engage in policy development and review.

*R11: Those who fund training need to make adequate provision for implementation of good practice principles*

Dissemination of good practice broking principles to practitioners and other stakeholders will not facilitate effective brokerage, if there is inadequate provision of resources to support their implementation. Funding bodies must be made aware that their support for good practice brokerage needs to be underpinned by the provision and continuity of adequate and realistic resourcing. Effective brokerage will increase the value of investment in training.

*R12: Initiate, trial and implement broking models to create sustainable systems for facilitating training post-FarmBis*

There is an urgent need to initiate, trial and implement broking models within the rural industry and NRM sectors, in order to ensure sustainability in terms of training facilitation. Given that the current round of FarmBis funding is due to cease in 2008, policymakers and industry bodies should give this issue high priority, to ensure continued responsiveness of the training market post-FarmBis.

*R13: Develop mechanisms for fostering communication and coordination amongst training brokers*

(a) *Institutional investors to support and facilitate coordination amongst training brokers via a website, forums to promote information exchange, and networking meetings*

There is a clear need for a national approach to coordinating training brokerage across industries, sectors and regions, and the responsibility for this lies with institutional investors.
(b) **APEN to form a broking subcommittee**

It is recommended that APEN forms a broking subcommittee, responsible for providing advice to policymakers and industry bodies regarding the development of strategies to better integrate funding, research and development, and the training response. The subcommittee would also have overarching responsibility for developing broking skills and providing support for brokers, and for promoting awareness and encouraging implementation of good practice broking principles amongst its membership.
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