

Parent, student and teacher perceptions and knowledge

Understanding parents, student and teacher perceptions of the red meat processing: Current state of knowledge

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Project Description

Primary and secondary school students are the next generation workforce, however for them to choose the red meat processing sector as an employer, they must have a positive perception of the sector, and knowledge of the diverse and attractive career opportunities available. This is vitally important to ensure AMPC's aspiration of the sector being seen as a diverse, safe and attractive industry of choice for employment by 2030 is achieved. Teachers are known key influencers of student career pathways and also determine the content/industries they include in teaching and learning programs to meet curriculum outcomes. If teachers do not have a positive perception, knowledge or awareness of what a job in the red meat processing sector entails, it is unlikely they will promote these pathways to their students. It is therefore important to engage with both teachers and students to address the sector's image and change current negative perceptions to attract a talented, diverse and dedicated workforce.

The objective of this project was to understand primary and secondary school teacher, student and parent perceptions, knowledge and awareness of the red meat processing sector and associated career pathways. This information will be used to develop an evidence-based program of activities to attract the next generation workforce who are talented, diverse, and dedicated to the red meat processing sector.

Project Content

Project activities targeted primary and secondary school parents, students and teachers and included:

- Focus groups with primary and secondary students and interviews with teachers and parents
- A teacher survey developed from findings of interviews and disseminated nationally
- Incursion and excursions with primary and secondary school classes

Project Outputs

- Development of a short hands-on proof of concept activity for primary and secondary student cohorts
- Report outlining current perceptions of the red meat processing and awareness of career opportunities in the sector informed by parent interviews, teacher surveys and interviews, and student focus groups.
- Future recommendations to develop an evidence-based national program to raise student and teacher awareness, knowledge, and perception of the red meat processing sector to attract a talented, diverse, and dedicated workforce

Project Outcomes

- An increased understanding of the knowledge and perception of primary and secondary school teachers and students about the red meat processing sector including career pathways.
- An evidence-base to develop a strategy to improve the perception, knowledge and awareness of the red meat processing sector to attract and retain a talented, diverse, and dedicated workforce.

Benefit for Industry

The presence of the red meat processing sector in local communities

A connection with either people working in the sector or the presence and involvement of an abattoir in their local community, increased knowledge and perception of the importance of the red meat processing sector. Teachers and parents who were familiar with the red meat processing sector thought of the presence of an abattoir in their local area, *“I automatically think of our big abattoir just outside [town],”* or cattle trucks, *“... so the kids would see cattle on trucks and be asking, where are they off to? And I say, well, actually, they're off to the meatworks”*. Additionally, some could identify the benefits to local communities who had an abattoir, *“I was just out in [town] recently, and, you know, something like a meatworks in a town like that is really essential.”* But it was important that students were made aware of these opportunities, *“And so if you know that there are opportunities, if there's like, the biggest employer in town is a local meatworks, which is often the case in these towns ... then it makes perfect sense to kind of create those pathways to bring those kids from that school environment, and give them a pathway through...”*



Teacher connection and perceptions to the red meat processing sector

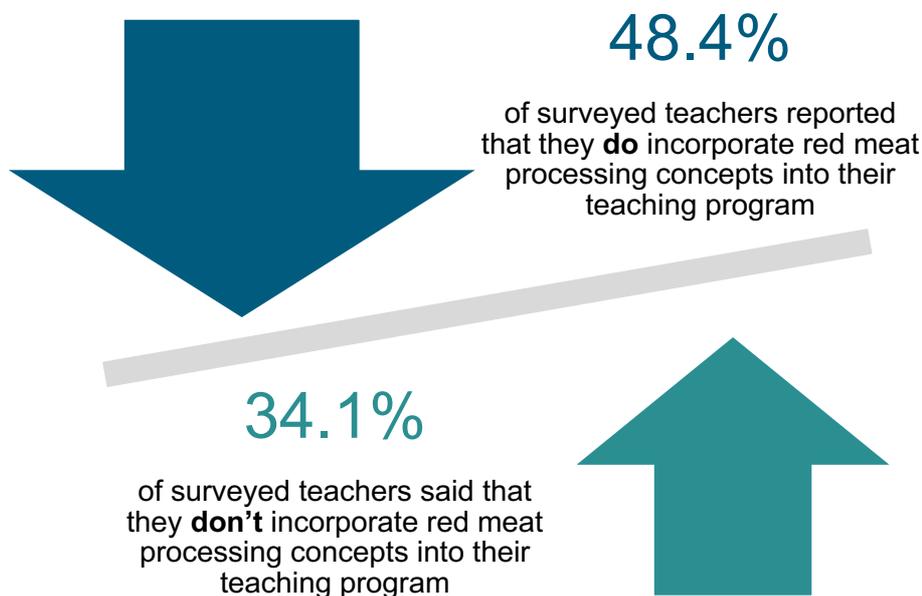
There was a significant relationship between teacher’s perceptions of the red meat processing sector and how they feel about careers in the red meat processing sector. Secondary teachers who possessed an agricultural qualification and taught agriculture or STEM subjects more broadly had more positive perceptions of the careers associated with the red meat processing sector. Having a friend or family member work in the industry or having visited an abattoir before also significantly improved perceptions compared to having no industry connection.

Red meat processing sector career conversations in the classroom

Teachers are known key influencers of student career pathways and are the main decision maker for the content/industries they include in teaching and learning programs to meet curriculum outcomes. The findings of this research confirmed this. How conversations about careers took place in the classroom varied between teachers, primary and secondary school, and whether they were teaching agriculture or not, highlighting different goals for integrating careers education into the classroom and that a generic approach to incorporating content about the red meat processing sector will not fit. There was a general lack of knowledge of careers in this sector, even by agriculture teachers. To ensure high uptake of future activities developed, and to increase the knowledge and perception of the red meat processing sector of teachers, students and parents, a multifaceted approach needs to be taken. The type of resources developed must also vary, with a focus on small modules, hands-on activities, behind the scenes insights (such as through videos), *“... something that showed like the whole process with videos just really detailed and really transparent ...”*, opportunities for field trips, *“I like the opportunity of also being able to take them into butcher shops, and abattoirs. I think, for me, if we're talking about processing, I like to be able to show them how carcasses are cut down, the kids love that.”* and careers guides.

“I think the most effective thing that's going to get kids into the industry is talking to people in the industry.”

Implementation of red meat processing sector concepts into the curriculum



Barriers to incorporating concepts about the red meat processing sector into teaching practice involved the topic not being clearly aligned with the curriculum in the subjects taught, irrelevance to the curriculum topic being taught, lack of time, perceived inappropriateness of the content, not having ever been required, and the sector not being among teaching and learning priorities. Additional concerns included a perceived lack of industry engagement, *“Our processing plant does not actively engage schools which I see as an issue for the industry. A more proactive role would be beneficial.”*

The future red meat processing sector workforce

For the red meat processing sector to attract the next generation talented, diverse, and dedicated workforce to this sector, the following needs to occur:

- Improve the knowledge, perceptions and awareness of teachers of the red meat processing sector and associated career pathways
- Raise student awareness and aspiration of career opportunities in the red meat processing sector through an evidence-based program of activities
- Increase the confidence of processors to work with teachers and students to showcase careers in the sector and strengthen partnerships to ensure long-term sustainability.