



ACTION4YOUTH CASE-STUDY: WHAT DOES A CAREER IN WOOL HARVESTING LOOK LIKE?



Action4Youth's [Explore-Connect-Support](#) is a National Careers Institute (NCI) funded project that provides a three-step supported process to transition young people from all backgrounds and experiences into meaningful careers in agriculture.

The Explore-Connect-Support model takes students on the journey from awareness to employment through a structured pipeline that creates greater access to agriculture opportunities. A key component is our mentoring program that ensures students are genuinely supported to thrive in the workplace

The three career pathways of the program are dairy, wool and fishing industries.

So, what does a career in wool harvesting look like?

During 2021/2022 [Australian Wool Innovation](#) (AWI) piloted an awareness program to introduce NSW school students in Years 9 and 10 to wool harvesting. 35 one-day taster 'Welcome to Wool Harvesting' workshops ran in operating shearing sheds on working sheep properties, catering for over 400 students keen to know more about a career in wool.

AWI has identified the wool industry will require over **250** learner shearers per year to enter the industry to replace those who leave or retire. The industry also requires an additional **300-350** shed staff to do the wool handling and wool pressing duties. With an increase in sheep numbers and better seasonal conditions there is extra pressure, with **80** staff per million sheep required to handle the shearing.

Students attending the Welcome to Wool Harvesting workshops gained an insight into how they could be part of the workforce solution. With a professional shearer and wool-handler guiding them, they experienced how to throw a fleece, hold a handpiece, shear and crutch, and count sheep. They were shown the different types of wool including fleece, pieces, bellies and locks, and were introduced to the differences between superfine merino, fine merino, broad merino and crossbred fibre wool.

Harriet Ryan coordinates Welcome to Wool Harvesting. "We give the students the big picture view of the industry, starting with the grower through to where the fleece ends up, and the various career pathways available," she says. "At the end of the workshop we give them "next step" options such as 3-day wool-handling course."

Craig French is AWI's national manager of wool harvesting training and development and sees the 3-day course as an ideal platform to jump-start a career in wool:

"If they've got the work ethic and they've got the skills then there is employment for them. Everyone is chasing good workers. The three-day wool handling workshops can set them up for success. It means we can provide them with training and support so that when they go and work for a contractor they are not overwhelmed with their job responsibilities."

Craig, himself, has had a long, varied and successful career in wool. Read about his career journey [here](#).





WHAT DOES A CAREER IN WOOL HARVESTING LOOK LIKE?

Action4Youth will value-add to the awareness programs like Welcome to Wool Harvesting (which is rolling out nationally in the 2022/2023 year) of our partners by empowering young people to:

- Identify careers with purpose
- Take a deep dive into the wool industry
- Ascertain if the wool industry meets their aspirations
- Connect with young people already working in the industry like [Tom Squires](#)

All the while being supported by knowledgeable careers advisors and having access to real-world employers and work experience opportunities.

Through these impactful connections between employers and much needed potential employees, Action4Youth is part of the solution to supporting young people to enter a career in agriculture.

Meet 26-year-old [Young Farming Champion](#) and wool grower and shearer Tom Squires, from Tasmania

"There is nothing quite like being able to grow your own produce and then see what you have accomplished over a period of time. I'm a farmer growing young stock into big stock but I'm also a shearer and at the end of the day you can see immediate results when those sheep walk out the door. I find a career in the wool industry incredibly rewarding."

Learn more about Tom and his role in wool harvesting [here](#).

