

General Purpose Standing Committee No 5

Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture

Ordered to be printed 21 October 2004 according to the
Resolution of the House

New South Wales Parliamentary Library cataloguing-in-publication data:

New South Wales. Parliament. Legislative Council. General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5

Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture : [report] / General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5. [Sydney, N.S.W.] : The Committee, 2004. – approx. 108 p. ; 30 cm. (Report ; no. 21, October 2004)

Chair: Ian Cohen.

Ordered to be printed 21 October 2004, according to the resolution of the House.

ISBN 0734764464

1. Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture.
2. Agricultural colleges--New South Wales—Murrumbidgee Region.
 - I. Title.
 - II. Cohen, Ian.
- III. Series: New South Wales. Parliament. Legislative Council. General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5. Report ; no. 21

DDC 630.711

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Terms of Reference

1. That General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 inquire into and report on the closure of residential training at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture and in particular:
 - (a) the process by which the decision was made to close the residential training,
 - (b) the community and industry consultation that preceded the announcement of the proposal,
 - (c) the impact on the Leeton and Yanco communities and district, and
 - (d) the reasons why Murrumbidgee and Tocal Colleges have not been transferred to the Department of Education and Training.
2. That the Committee report by Thursday 23 September 2004.¹

¹ NSW Legislative Council *Hansard* No 52, 5 May 2004, p677, subsequently resolved by the House that the reporting date for the inquiry be extended to Thursday 21 October 2004, NSW Legislative Council *Hansard* No 73, 23 September 2004, p11365.

Committee Membership

Mr Ian COHEN MLC	The Greens	<i>Chair</i>
The Hon Tony CATANZARITI MLC ²	Australian Labor Party	
The Hon Richard COLLESS MLC	The Nationals	<i>Deputy Chair</i>
The Hon Kayee GRIFFIN MLC	Australian Labor Party	
Ms Sylvia HALE MLC	The Greens	
The Hon Charlie LYNN MLC ³	Liberal Party	
The Hon Henry TSANG MLC	Australian Labor Party	

² Replaced Mr West, Legislative Council *Minutes of Meeting* No 64, Item 10, 29 June 2004

³ Replaced Mr Harwin, Legislative Council *Minutes of Meeting* No 64, Item 10, 29 June 2004

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Chair's Foreword

The decision to cease full-time residential courses at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture (MCA) was announced by the Minister for Primary Industries on 3 September 2003, and all residential facilities at the College were closed by the end of 2003. While some consultation was undertaken in formulating the original 2000 Report, the final decision was made without fully consulting teachers, students or the local community and has been the subject of considerable concern by the affected communities. The lack of consultation was a major factor in influencing the Legislative Council to refer the matter to General Purpose Standing Committee No 5 for inquiry and report.

In this report the Committee puts the view that consultation is an essential part of ensuring governments meet the needs of communities, particularly rural communities. Although a Rural Communities Impact Statement was prepared by the Department in relation to this decision, the Committee is concerned about the apparent lack of rigour in its preparation. To address this concern, the Committee recommends that all rural community impact statements be assessed by the Office of Rural Affairs before being included in any proposal going to Cabinet.

It has become clear to the Committee, through its public hearings and from the many submissions it received, that Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture is a unique institution that is meeting the needs of members of the Leeton and Yanco communities. The College makes a substantial contribution to the social capital of the community by catering for students disadvantaged by distance and the economic impacts of the ongoing drought in New South Wales. Prior to the decision the College also provided a venue for significant events that attracted many visitors to the region.

The Committee visited the College and was impressed by the size and scope of the College infrastructure and considers the facilities well worth maintaining for future projects. The site visit was valuable and provided the Committee with a worthwhile opportunity to meet both genuine advocates of the College and many country people directly affected by the decision.

This inquiry makes a number of important recommendations recognising the uniqueness of agricultural education in New South Wales. Education is vital to the sustainability of rural communities. With rapid changes in farming technology farmers need to continually upgrade their skills. Recognising that residential facilities are a necessity rather than a luxury for isolated students, indigenous students and farmers attending short courses at MCA the Committee recommends that the Department explore, in consultation with other agencies, innovative ways by which the residential facilities at MCA can be reopened. The Committee further recommends that the Department continue to seek improvement of courses offered and effectively market the courses, to ensure they remain centres of excellence in agricultural education.

Finally, I wish to thank my fellow Committee members for their constructive approach to this inquiry. I would also like to thank the members of the Committee secretariat for their support, particularly Ms Rachel Simpson, Principal Council Officer and Ms Annie Marshall, Council Officer, in drafting a balanced report and organising the Committee's site visit.



Mr Ian Cohen MLC
Committee Chair

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Page 23

That all rural communities impact statements be assessed by the Regional Communities Consultative Council before being included in any Cabinet proposal.

Recommendation 2

Page 34

That the Department explore with other agencies innovative ways by which the residential facilities at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture can be reopened, recognising that residential facilities are essential for isolated students, indigenous students and farmers who may attend short courses at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture.

Recommendation 3

Page 34

That the Departmental working party examining the future of the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture infrastructure develop a strategy for use of the residential facilities in consultation with the local community.

Recommendation 4

Page 35

That the residential facilities remain intact and functional until such time as the working party examining the future of the College has completed its deliberations and reported.

Recommendation 5

Page 47

That the Government recognise the uniqueness and importance of agricultural education in New South Wales and continue to provide adequate financial human and capital resources to Murrumbidgee College of Agricultural, Yanco and CB Alexander Agricultural College, Tocal.

Recommendation 6

Page 47

That the Minister, in conjunction with the advisory councils of the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture and Tocal colleges, continue to seek improvement of courses offered at the Colleges and effectively market these courses, to ensure both colleges remain centres of excellence in agricultural education.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Terms of Reference

1.1 On 5 May 2004 the Legislative Council resolved:

1. That General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 inquire into and report on the closure of residential training at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture and in particular:
 - (a) the process by which the decision was made to close the residential training,
 - (b) the community and industry consultation that preceded the announcement of the proposal,
 - (c) the impact on the Leeton and Yanco communities and district, and
 - (d) the reasons why Murrumbidgee and Tocal Colleges have not been transferred to the Department of Education and Training.
2. That the Committee report by Thursday 23 September 2004.⁴

1.2 These terms of reference were referred to the Committee by the House (the Hon Rick Colless MLC) on 5 May 2004. The Committee later resolved that the Chair seek leave of the House to extend the reporting date for the inquiry to Thursday 21 October 2004.⁵

1.3 Accordingly, a motion by the Hon Rick Colless, on behalf of Mr Ian Cohen was agreed to:

That the reporting date for the reference to General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 relating to the closure of residential training at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture be extended to Thursday 21 October 2004.⁶

Background to the inquiry

1.4 The Department of Primary Industries (the Department)⁷ maintains two agricultural colleges in New South Wales – the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture (MCA) at Yanco and the CB Alexander Agricultural College (Tocal) at Tocal.

1.5 On 3 September 2003 the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries announced the closure of full-time residential courses at MCA. The decision was based on the findings of a

⁴ Legislative Council, New South Wales, *Minutes of Proceedings No 52*, 1st session of the 53rd Parliament, 5 May 2004, p677

⁵ GPSCNo. 5 *Minutes of Meeting No 22*, Item 7, p3

⁶ NSW Legislative Council *Hansard No 73*, 23 September 2004, p11365

⁷ At the time of the events discussed in this report the Department was known as the Department of Agriculture. For the purposes of this report 'the Department' will be used to refer to both agencies.

Departmental review conducted in 2000, with the report entitled *Extending Education: Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture* published in March 2001.

- 1.6 Students who had intended to enrol in Certificate 3 and 4 courses in 2004 and those who were part way through their courses were unable to complete their education at MCA although arrangements were made for students who wished to transfer to Tocal. Only one student took up the Department's offer, transferring to Tocal in 2004 to complete their study.

Call for submissions

- 1.7 Advertisements seeking submissions were placed in the major metropolitan and regional press, including *The Land*, the *Mildura Sunraysia Daily*, the *Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser*, the *Griffith Area News*, the *Leeton Murrumbidgee Irrigator* and the *West Wyalong Advocate*.
- 1.8 The Committee also wrote to relevant individuals and organisations, including Mr Kevin Sheridan AO, former Director-General of NSW Agriculture, the relevant Ministers – the Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and the Hon Andrew Refshauge MP, Minister for Education and Training, and Mr Adrian Piccoli MP, Member for Murrumbidgee.
- 1.9 The Committee received a total of 39 submissions. A list of submissions is provided in Appendix 1.
- 1.10 The Committee also received 121 form letters from the “Friends of Tocal”, addressing item 1 (d) of the Terms of Reference specifically. A list of signatories is provided in Appendix 2.

Public Hearings and site visit

- 1.11 The Committee held two public hearings during this inquiry. A list of witnesses is provided in Appendix 3 and transcripts of the hearings can be found on the Committee's website at www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees. A number of documents were tabled during the hearings and are listed in Appendix 4.
- 1.12 On 21 June 2004 the Committee flew to Yanco to hold a hearing. The Committee heard evidence from MCA students, parents and other regional stakeholders. The second public hearing was held in Sydney at Parliament House on 5 July 2004 at which Departmental representatives and representatives from the agricultural industry gave evidence. During the first hearing on 21 June 2004 the Committee inspected the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture's extensive facilities and grounds at Yanco.

Procedural issues

- 1.13 Prior to the commencement of the inquiry the issues surrounding the decision were debated on many occasions in the House.⁸ On 16 October, the House agreed to a motion moved by

⁸ For example, NSW Legislative Council *Hansard*, 3 December 2003, pp5666 - 5674 (article 34); NSW Legislative Council *Hansard*, 2 December 2003, pp5515 - 5516 (article 22); NSW Legislative

the Hon Rick Colless MLC that under Standing Order 52 'all documents relating to the proposed closure of the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture' be laid on the table of the House by 11 November 2003. The call for papers was met by the Department and the material provided background information for this report.⁹

- 1.14** On 3 December 2003 the House agreed to another motion moved by the Hon Rick Colless MLC, that the House call on the Government to place a 12-month moratorium on the proposed cessation of all residential and full-time courses at MCA. Speaking to the motion the Minister informed the House that 'I wish to make it absolutely clear that the Government does not accept this motion and will proceed with its plans as stated.'¹⁰ The Minister continued that the

suggestion that this decision was made hastily is completely erroneous and utterly misleading ... The issue dates back to 2000, when a comprehensive study was conducted by NSW Agriculture to review the services and costs of agricultural colleges within NSW Agriculture. It was hardly done hastily.¹¹

- 1.15** Following the Committee's second public hearing the Chair wrote to the Hon Andrew Refshauge MP, Minister for Education and Training and the Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries requesting copies of correspondence between the Ministers regarding the withdrawal of Commonwealth Education and Training funds from NSW Agriculture. At the time of this report the Committee is continuing to pursue copies of the correspondence, following the Minister's initial refusal to provide the correspondence on the basis of legal advice.¹²

This report

- 1.16** The Committee adopted this report at a meeting on 18 October 2004. The minutes of this and other meetings held during the inquiry are presented in Appendix 5.

Structure of the report

- 1.17** This structure of this report reflects terms of reference 1(a) to 1(d) and contains four substantive chapters:

Council *Hansard*, 24 February 2004 Page 6385 (article 36); NSW Legislative Council *Hansard*, 16 October 2003, p3979 (article 2). The future of MCA was also debated in the Legislative Assembly.

⁹ Legislative Council, New South Wales, *Minutes of Proceedings, No 26*, 1st session of the 53rd Parliament, item 2 and *Minutes Of Proceedings No 30*, 1st session of the 53rd Parliament, item 14

¹⁰ Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, Legislative Council, New South Wales, *Hansard*, 3 December 2003, p5666

¹¹ Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, Legislative Council, New South Wales, *Hansard*, 3 December 2003, p5666

¹² Correspondence to the Minister for Primary Industries from the Chair, 12 July 2004; Correspondence from the Minister for Primary Industries to the Chair, 4 August 2004; Correspondence from the Chair to the Minister for Primary Industries, 7 August 2004

- Chapter 2 outlines the reasons for the decision to close the full-time residential facilities at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, Yanco (referred to throughout the report as ‘the decision’)
- Chapter 3 examines the impact of this decision on the south west region and in particular the Leeton and Yanco communities, the agricultural sector and students of MCA
- Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the consultation process that was undertaken by the then Department of Agriculture in relation to the decision
- Chapter 5 examines the appropriateness of transferring MCA and Tocal College to the Department of Education and Training.

Chapter 2 The decision to close residential facilities at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture

On 3 September 2003, the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries (now the Minister for Primary Industries), the Hon Ian Macdonald MLC (the Minister) announced that full-time residential courses offered at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture (MCA) would close at the end of 2003. This chapter addresses Term of reference 1(a) which required the Committee to inquire into and report on:

the process by which the decision was made to close the residential training

In addressing Term of reference 1(a) this Chapter looks at:

- What the decision encompassed
- The reasons for the decision
- The Rural Communities Impact Statement prepared as part of the decision-making process and
- The means by which the decision was communicated to MCA staff, students and parents.

What was included in the decision?

2.1 Throughout the inquiry there was some confusion as to the exact nature of the Minister's decision and what the decision included. The Minister's decision was announced in a media release on 3 September which said in part:

Full-time residential programs at the Yanco facility will end on December 13, and students can continue their agricultural studies at Tocal starting in 2004. Yanco's part-time programs will finish when the last of the trainees have completed their traineeships. Future traineeships will be fulfilled by CB Alexander in Tocal or TAFE NSW.¹³

2.2 The Committee notes that, although not spelled out in the Minister's press release, the cessation of full-time residential courses at MCA also meant that all residential facilities at MCA were closed at the end of 2003.

2.3 Dr Richard Sheldrake, Deputy Director-General Agriculture and Fisheries, Department of Primary Industries, reiterated the fact that the College had not been closed, as part of his evidence before the Committee on 5 July 2004:

... contrary to the misleading statements frequently appearing in the media, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture has not been closed but rather remains an important and growing centre for continuing education. More than a dozen new short courses and distance learning courses are being introduced to Murrumbidgee College

¹³ Hon I Macdonald MLC, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, 'Macdonald announces changes to NSW Agriculture's continuing education and corporate services units', *Media Release*, 3 September 2003

this year, and, as the Minister announced recently, a strong push is being made to expand it into irrigation training in co-operation with Charles Sturt University.¹⁴

- 2.4** Following the decision, from 2004 the MCA will concentrate on providing adult continuing education courses, short courses and distance learning. There are no residential facilities available for use by students of continuing education courses run at MCA. The impact of this decision will be examined in Chapter 3 of this report.

Reasons for the decision

- 2.5** The Minister's press release dated 3 September gave the following reason for the decision:

Full-time enrolments at MCA have dropped from 65 in 2000 to 39 this year.

As a result, the estimate net cost by Government to support each full-time student is \$24,800 – double what it was three years ago, and nearly three times the next cost per full-time student at the Tocal campus.¹⁵

- 2.6** Dr Sheldrake spoke of the reason for the decision during his evidence before the Committee:

Regardless of how it is measured, whether by enrolments or student contact hours, college records demonstrate unequivocally that for an equivalent investment of public resources, the Tocal college has regularly serviced up to three times as many students as the Murrumbidgee college. Thus, since 2000 full-time students at the Murrumbidgee college have cost at least twice as much per head as they cost at Tocal.

That difference was unsustainable and it would have been irresponsible of the department to not take action on what was clearly an inefficient use of public resources.¹⁶

- 2.7** Dr Sheldrake continued that

The decision to cease residential courses at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture [MCA] at Yanco was a properly constituted and carefully considered process.¹⁷

- 2.8** The decision followed two significant government reviews. The first was undertaken by the Department in 2000 to review the services and costs of agricultural colleges within the Department. The second was a review of vocational education and training in agriculture commissioned by Cabinet and undertaken in 2003. NSW Agriculture, TAFE NSW, the Cabinet Office and NSW Treasury were represented on the Cabinet review. The following sections look at these reviews. The Committee examines the consultation that was undertaken as part of those reviews in closer detail in Chapter 4 of this report.

¹⁴ Dr Richard Sheldrake, Deputy Director-General of Agriculture and Fisheries, Department of Primary Industries, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p3

¹⁵ Hon I Macdonald MLC, *Media Release*, 3 September 2003

¹⁶ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p3

¹⁷ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p3

Extending Education review

2.9 The report from the 2000 review titled *Extending Education: review of the Agricultural colleges within NSW Agriculture (Extending Education report)* was published in March 2001. The purpose of the review was to address the decline in full-time residential students at both Yanco and Tocal colleges and the need to resource the Colleges appropriately.¹⁸ The terms of reference for that review were to:

1. Identify the opportunities and the means by which NSW Agriculture's agricultural colleges can strengthen the delivery of flexible, relevant and innovative training and educational activities to clients.
2. Review the potential of the physical, human and technological resources required to meet these opportunities.
3. Evaluate opportunities to further enhance the links between the Colleges, Departmental Programs, Centres of Excellence and external bodies.¹⁹

2.10 The review made 19 recommendations. These are reproduced as Appendix 5. Most relevant to the MCA and this inquiry was recommendation H which states:

That consideration be given to consolidating full-time residential activity to one College site by 2004 if the decline in full-time student numbers continues into 2003.²⁰

Student numbers

2.11 The 2000 review identified student enrolment at Yanco and Tocal for the years 1997 to 2001. The Committee has also obtained data on enrolments during 2002 and 2003, and data on student hours for the years 2000 to 2002.²¹ These have been compiled in tables 2.1 and 2.2 below.²² Note that the figures are intended to be illustrative of a trend in student enrolments only. There are inconsistencies in the way these figures are reported each year and also inconsistencies in the way the information is presented by each college. Consequently there may be some slight discrepancies in the tables below.

¹⁸ NSW Agriculture, *Extending Education: Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture*, March 2001 (*Extending Education report*), p8

¹⁹ *Extending Education*, p2

²⁰ *Extending Education*, p6

²¹ **Source:** *2001 & 2002 delivery statistics*, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture and CB Alexander Agricultural College Tocal, tabled in the House 11 November 2003 pursuant to an order for papers 16 November 2003: Legislative Council New South Wales, *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 30, 1st session of the 53rd Parliament, item 14

²² **Source:** *Extending Education: Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture*, March 2001; *2001 & 2002 delivery statistics*, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture and CB Alexander Agricultural College Tocal, Draft Ministerial Briefing note, *Increased organisational efficiencies, education function*, 2 July 2003, tabled in the House 11 November 2003 pursuant to an order for papers 16 November 2003: Legislative Council New South Wales, *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 30, 1st session of the 53rd Parliament, item 14

Table 2.1 Student enrolments, Yanco and Tocal, 1997 to 2003

	Yanco				Tocal			
	<i>Full-time</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Short course</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Full-time</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Short course</i>	<i>Total</i>
1997	60	95	189	344	94	52	-	146
1998	44	59	689	792	66	69	427	562
1999	59	88	4929	5076	102	54	496	652
2000	49	85	4003	4137	112	49	435	596
2001	32	152	3303	3487	75	24	1303	1402
2002	28	127	2345	2500	98	46	1725	1868
2003	39	80	-	*	108	35	-	*

Note: Figures for short course enrolment were not available for 2003, so it is not possible to calculate total enrolments at either college for that year.

Table 2.2 Student enrolments, course hours, Yanco and Tocal, 2000 to 2002

	Yanco				Tocal			
	<i>Full-time</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Short course</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Full-time</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Short course</i>	<i>Total</i>
2000	69,430	33,310	84,913	187,653	154,200	15,875	14,410	184,485
2001	41,920	32,787	90,832	165,539	108,650	6,784	25,980	141,414
2002	37,112	50,333	83,688	171,133	110,520	11,280	17,250	139,050

Note: The Committee was unable to obtain information on course hours for the years prior to 2000 or for 2003

2.12 As can be seen from Table 2.1 above, MCA experienced a 35 per cent decrease in full-time student enrolments from 1997 to 2002. Over the same period, Tocal experienced an increase of fifteen per cent, although the full-time enrolments in 2003 at Tocal were down by four per cent from a peak of 112 students in 2000.

2.13 The Chairman of the MCA Advisory Council, Mr Jim Geltch, suggested during his evidence on 21 June that a focus on student numbers was inconsistent with normal practice amongst

the education community and that student contact hours would be a better measure of activity. He continued:

In the year 2000 there were 179,035 student contact hours and in 2002, 135,379. They are audited student contact hours. That includes all students, whether they are from traineeships, residential courses, Aboriginal rural training, or whatever it might be.²³

2.14 Dr Sheldrake's response to this assertion was that there was a definite decline, 'however it is measured' (see para 2.7 above).²⁴

2.15 Table 2.1 also illustrates a significant increase in full-time MCA enrolments in 2003 from the low in 2002, an increase of 40 per cent. Mr Daniel Slennett, an ex-student of MCA, informed the Committee that during 2003 students thought enrolments would continue to grow in the future:

After we heard the College was shutting down we thought—our year was probably the biggest year in the past 10 years or something and the next year—this year, if the College was open this year—it probably would have doubled pretty much what our year was last year. We were going to get more.²⁵

2.16 Mr Geltch also questioned the basis upon which the assertions regarding declining student numbers were made. During his evidence on 21 June Mr Geltch suggested that:

When you say "dramatically decreased", again I reiterate that you are looking at full-time residential courses, which is not what we should be looking at. We should be looking at this institution as an educational institution for young people. How that is delivered I think is the real moot point and it is delivered in a number of different ways. If you look at the totality of the number of different ways that that is delivered, there has not been a dramatic decline in numbers.²⁶

2.17 The Committee heard many reasons for the decline in enrolments. Principal among the reasons suggested for the decline was the drought. Mr Gordon Dunlop, NSW State President of the Isolated Children and Parents' Association, discussed the flow-on effects of the drought on enrolments at MCA during his evidence on 21 June 2004:

The impact of the drought has certainly had some impact on MCA. It is not the overall impact. There has been an overall decline in the rural population. ... It certainly has had an effect on the enrolment at MCA. ... The reason for the decline is that families cannot afford to educate their children. When they get to years 11 and 12 and they cannot cope with face-to-face teaching they come to agricultural colleges. They also feel obliged to stay at home and help their families. It is a big expense to board and the drought has had some impact. I am sure that if everything was fine and there had never been a drought there would not be a decline in the numbers.²⁷

²³ Mr Jim Geltch, President, MCA Advisory Council, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p28

²⁴ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p2

²⁵ Mr Daniel Slennett, ex-student, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p2

²⁶ Mr Jim Geltch, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p 30

²⁷ Mr Gordon Dunlop, NSW State President, Isolated Children and Parents' Association, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p53

2.18 Ms Diana Gibbs, Chair of the Regional Communities Consultative Council, also cited the impact of the drought as a reason for declining enrolments at MCA:

we have been going through the worst drought in history, as I am sure you are aware, ... So, there has not been much spare cash to do any courses. I would expect a downturn in any activity because of the drought.²⁸

2.19 Mr Richard Chaffey, a farmer who is also a member of the Tocal Advisory Council, told the Committee that the drought would have a big impact on people's ability to send their children to MCA to undertake full-time courses:

I am concerned about the socioeconomic effect of the drought, particularly at Murrumbidgee. That has had a real impact on the ability of people to pay for their sons and daughters to do the course. That probably has not been highlighted much today. People cannot afford to send their kids away from the farms in the west.²⁹

2.20 The Committee acknowledges that full-time enrolments at both MCA and Tocal have declined over recent years. The reasons for that decline are varied but many can be attributed to the effect of the drought on the Murrumbidgee district and agriculture generally. To address this decline in numbers, the Committee heard that following the review, the Department increased MCA's consolidated revenue budget by 20 per cent and embarked upon a number of strategies such as an intensive advertising campaign.³⁰

2.21 The Committee notes that, in response to a question on notice, the Department provided the Committee with details of funding to MCA for the years 1999 to 2003. These figures are provided in table 2.3 below:

Table 2.3 Murrumbidgee College ConFund Expenditure Financial years ending 1999 to 2003

Year	ConFund Expenditure
1999	\$2,016,905
2000	\$1,792,132
2001	\$1,757,304
2002	\$1,910,546
2003	\$2,020,272

Source: Correspondence from the Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, Minister for Primary Industries and Natural Resources, 4 August 2004, providing answers to questions taken on notice 5 July 2004, answer to question no. 5.

2.22 The Committee notes that despite claims of an increase in funding to MCA, in 2003 funding was still only at 1999 levels.

²⁸ Ms Diana Gibbs, Chair, Regional Communities Consultative Council, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p18

²⁹ Mr Richard Chaffey, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p42

³⁰ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p2

2.23 With respect to advertising the College, Dr Sheldrake told the Committee that:

The College council tried, in conjunction with the department, to look at ways of increasing the number of students at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture. Ms Howard might give you the details, but we put in place a fairly significant advertising program on television. If you lived in the central west and watched the cricket over the summer and the Olympics there was a pretty strong and solid advertising campaign promoting Murrumbidgee college during the summer period.³¹

2.24 The Committee accepts that the Department, the College and the Advisory Council did take steps to redress the decline in student numbers. However, these steps clearly did not prove effective.

2.25 On notice, the Committee asked the Department whether the review identified the number of students required to make the full-time residential courses at MCA economically viable. In response, the Department indicated that it did not. The Committee notes the increase in student numbers in 2003 and considers that insufficient time was allowed for enrolments, which increased in 2003 by forty per cent, to increase to a level that would make the College sustainable.

Cost per student

2.26 The *Extending Education* Report found that both MCA and Tocal were heavily subsidised at a cost of approximately \$9,000 per student at Tocal and \$15,000 per student at MCA.³² The average cost per student for the calendar year 2000 is represented in the table below:

Table 2.4 Average cost per student, MCA and Tocal colleges, 2000

	Full-time	Part time	External*	Short Course
MCA	\$14,785.29	\$4,212.26	\$597.93	\$159.29
Tocal	\$9,197.25	\$3,232.31	\$733.11	\$552.69

* 'External' at MCA means fully funded students; at Tocal it means home study students

Source: Extending Education, Appendix 3, p36.

2.27 The Committee heard substantial evidence regarding the method for calculating the cost per student, with some witnesses asserting that different methodologies were used for calculating the cost at Tocal and MCA. Mr Geltsch questioned the numbers during his evidence on 21 June:

I ask on what basis you have used those numbers? I think that is important because, again, I think it comes back to a question of whether you are just dividing the number of residential students by the recurrent funding or consolidated revenue number. I think that is far too simplistic. I think that what you need to do is look at the student contact hours in totality, look at the cost of supplying those student contact hours and

³¹ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p10

³² *Extending Education* p12

come up with a number there. I think that is what you need to do to compare apples with apples.³³

2.28 Likewise, Mr Dunlop questioned the basis for the Department's costing:

The \$24,500 was a costing for only 39 full-time students. They did not take into account the 2,400 part-time hours that should have been added to the costing of the 39 full-time students. Tocal's costings included both full-time and part-time students. When you put the two figures for MCA together with Tocal's figures you come up with a costing of about \$12,000, which is well under the TAFE recommendation. It works out at about \$19.80 and \$12.80 an hour and TAFE ranges from \$12 to \$18 an hour face-to-face.³⁴

2.29 Mr Geltch tabled documents during his evidence contradicting the methodology applied by the Department when calculating the costs associated with MCA and Tocal. The document stated:

It is not appropriate to include home study courses or sales of home study materials in the calculation of AHC (Annual Hours Curriculum) ... Tocal's delivery statistics include sales of home study books and home study courses of 492,430 hours in 2001 and 411,420 hours in 2002. These hours are not recognised as Annual Hours Curriculum (AHC) by any educational authority.³⁵

2.30 In response to these assertions, the Committee asked Dr Sheldrake to clarify the methodology used by the Department for calculating cost per student at MCA and Tocal. In response to this question, which was taken on notice by Dr Sheldrake, the Committee was provided with the following methodology:

**METHODOLOGY USED TO CALCULATE COST PER STUDENT AT
Tocal AGRICULTURAL CENTRE & MURRUMBIDGEE COLLEGE OF
AGRICULTURE**

The average student costs at each college for the years 2000 to 2003 inclusive were prepared using the methodology developed and applied for the Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture published March 2001.

The College review methodology was developed by the Registrars of both colleges in consultation with staff of the Management Accounting Unit (MAU) of the Finance & Administration Program to ensure a consistent and appropriate treatment of expenses.

The steps involved in the preparation of the costings include:

- All salaries expenditure and associated salary on costs were gathered (this included Consolidated Fund Salaries and Industry/Other funds). The staff included was as per the list in Appendix 5 of the "Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture".

³³ Mr Geltch, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p28

³⁴ Mr Dunlop, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p52

³⁵ Tabled Document No 1C, Mr J Geltch, *Costings*

- All staff were listed on a spreadsheet. The time each spent on various functions was allocated in hours per week. Categories included Administration, Domestic, Education comprising (Full-time, Part-time, Short Course, External), Farm, Other. The hours each officer spent on various functions was (*sic*) arrived at by consultation with Section Leaders who in turn discussed the times with their staff to arrive at a fair figure. When totalled the hours for each category was (*sic*) converted to a percentage of the total hours. This percentage was used to arrive at the salary cast (*sic*) by function.
- All operating costs were added together and any expenditure that was not considered part of the education or college operation was removed. At Tocal, we removed such things as Tocal Homestead Maintenance expenditure, payments to the CB Alexander Foundation and Advisory Office expenses. Since Consolidated and Industry fund expenditure is largely split by section or Function anyway these figures were reasonable (*sic*) easy to gather ie Award Courses, Administration, Continuing Education etc). Section managers were asked to nominate the % of expenditure spent on each function. Where there were some mixed functions such as Farm and Assets expenditure (*sic*) was split in much the same way. From the information I have the costs included expenditure against Assets Cost Centres 1527, 1528, and 919 in order to ensure all expenditure was included.
- An allocation of \$100,000 Growth Fund Capital Equipment was treated as Full-time student expenditure.
- Income was gathered and split in much the same fashion as the last two points above. Income from Short Courses, Commonwealth Growth funds, By-Product Income Account, Student Fees and other external projects was split according to Full-time, Part-time etc.
- Management Accounting provided the depreciation figure, which together with the above process produced the figures contained in the “Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture”.
- MAU also reviewed these figures to ensure that a similar process was followed.

NB: The net cost referenced in Appendix 3 of the College Review for Tocal and Yanco (ie. \$1,085,276 and \$961,044 (for Tocal & Yanco, respectively) was used to calculate the cost per student at both colleges over the years 2001 – 2003, inclusive, viz. the net cost for 2000 was divided by the number of students each year to arrive at the cost per student.³⁶

Other financial indicators

2.31 Other key business and financial performance indicators identified in the Report include:

- External funding – MCA was very successful at obtaining external funds – \$4.3million over three years 1997 to 2000, compared to \$0.3million over the same period at Tocal

³⁶ Department of Primary Industries, Responses to Questions on Notice, Attachment 1, 279-03, pp1-2

- Publication sales – MCA achieved sales of \$9,000 over period 1997 to 2000; Total \$488,000 over the same period
- Courses offered – MCA offered 118 accredited courses over the period 1998 to 2000. Total offered 28 over the same period
- Occupancy rates – 50 per cent for student accommodation, averaged over three years (1998 to 2000), based on a 365-day year for both colleges. MCA short course occupancy rate was 12 per cent and Total's was 28 per cent
- Asset value 2000 – MCA \$22,564,681; Total \$16,162,983
- Overall net cost of the Colleges for 2000 was \$3,042,198 at MCA and \$2,585,168 at Total, calculated by adding expenses and depreciation and subtracting revenue.

Report conclusion

- 2.32** The Report concluded that the review 'has provided the framework to grow NSW Agriculture VET services'. The report continued that:

This framework needs to be supported by consolidating full-time residential activity and properly resourcing our capability to meet the growing demand for continuing education.³⁷

- 2.33** Dr Sheldrake reiterated the report's conclusions during his evidence:

The report recommended that consideration be given to the consolidation of services if full-time student numbers continued to decline. Unfortunately, they did. Efforts to reverse that trend, including intensive promotion campaigns and statewide school visits, were to no avail. Despite that, four additional full-time staff were appointed to the College and teaching vacancies were kept filled with competent staff, even when student numbers were very low.³⁸

2003 review

- 2.34** A further, smaller scale review was conducted in 2003. This review, which was commissioned by Cabinet, considered the activity and roles of the providers with particular focus on areas of inefficiency or duplication. Dr Sheldrake told the Committee that NSW Agriculture, TAFE NSW, the Cabinet Office and NSW Treasury were represented on the review, and that it added further justification for the closure of residential facilities:

The review canvassed the option of transferring NSW Agriculture's vocational education training activities to the Department of Education and Training, TAFE. It was noted that there was duplication between the traineeships offered by the Murrumbidgee college and the Riverina Institute of TAFE, and it was decided that the College should withdraw from that activity. TAFE delivery is non-residential and the

³⁷ *Extending Education*, p30

³⁸ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p2

Department of Education and Training did not want to acquire NSW Agriculture's physical facilities at MCA.³⁹

Conclusion

- 2.35** The Committee acknowledges that there has been a decline in full-time enrolments at MCA and Tocal, much of which can be explained by the long lasting drought that New South Wales is experiencing. The Committee does note, however, that in 2003 there was a 40 per cent increase in full-time enrolments at MCA from 2002, as a consequence of a community awareness campaign.
- 2.36** The 2001 *Extending Education* report allowed only two years for MCA to increase enrolments. Two years is not long enough to assess whether a trend has been reversed. The Committee considers it regrettable that MCA was not allowed sufficient time to consolidate the increase in student numbers enjoyed by the College in 2003. Had the MCA been allowed more time it is possible that the numbers would have continued to increase to a level that would make the full-time residential courses at the College financially viable.

How was the decision communicated?

- 2.37** On 3 September 2003 the Minister released two press releases announcing changes to the Department's provision of agricultural education in NSW.⁴⁰
- 2.38** There was some inconsistency in the evidence presented to the Committee about how information about the decision was disseminated. Mr Slennett told the Committee about how he heard of the decision:

I was out at Darlington Point at Cooper Station doing work experience at the time with a co-student, Bradley Arnold. I was working out there, we were talking and we just decided to call the college to see what was happening down here. We got the news saying that the college was shutting down and it was probably an hour something later from Darlington Point.⁴¹

- 2.39** Mrs Rodham, the mother of an ex-student at MCA told the Committee she heard about the decision 'through the media'.⁴² Mrs Rodham continued that her son was on work experience at the time the decision was announced and that he was informed about the decision in the following way:

My son was on the work experience at the time at the Trangie research centre. There were three of them up there at the time and they had gone up with one of the office staff. I think she had taken them up and her husband worked here. That is the only

³⁹ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p2

⁴⁰ Hon I Macdonald MLC, *Media Release*, 3 September 2003

⁴¹ Mr Slennett, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p4.

⁴² Mrs Jeanette Rodham, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p17

way the children found out. Her husband rang her and told her, and the kids got told that we have to go back. There has been nothing whatsoever.⁴³

2.40 This contradicts evidence later received by the Committee from Dr Sheldrake and representatives of the Department. On 5 July 2004 Dr Sheldrake informed the Committee that:

The students were advised and the parents were also advised in a letter from me. Ms Howard visited the College and met with the students and spoke to them.⁴⁴

2.41 Ms Howard, Program Manager, Education and Training, Department of Primary Industries, continued:

That was 3 September at about 1.30 in the afternoon. It was the same day as the announcement. I was advised on the day that all students were at the meeting when I spoke to them but I understand since then that two or three students were at Trangie doing prac work.⁴⁵

2.42 Ms Scott-Orr, Executive Director Research and Advisory, Department of Primary Industries, told the Committee that she told Mr Geltch the same morning that the Minister announced the decision and that the staff and students were being advised, and that the Department's intention in Ms Howard going to the College, was to 'advise everybody simultaneously'. Dr Sheldrake admitted that 'it is unfortunate that, as it turned out, a small number of students were not at the College' and thus heard about the decision on the radio.⁴⁶

Conclusion

2.43 It is regrettable that all students, staff and parents of MCA did not learn of the decision first-hand. Witnesses who participated in the Committee's inquiry expressed shock at hearing about the decision. The Committee considers that close and ongoing consultation with and involvement of students, staff and parents prior to the closure announcement would have been a more appropriate Departmental decision-making process. This consultation process is discussed in the next chapter.

⁴³ Mrs Rodham, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p22

⁴⁴ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p8

⁴⁵ Ms Ellen Howard, Program Manager, Education and Training, Department of Primary Industries, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p8

⁴⁶ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p9

Chapter 3 Consultation

This chapter addresses Term of reference 1(b) for this inquiry which required the Committee to inquire into and report on:

the community and industry consultation that preceded the announcement of the proposal

This chapter identifies the consultation undertaken by the then Department of Agriculture (the Department) with the following groups or individuals:

- Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture (MCA) Advisory Council (the Advisory Council)
- Students and parents of students and staff of the MCA
- Members of the Leeton and Yanco local communities
- State Government advisory bodies and other industry groups

The Department's view

3.1 Dr Richard Sheldrake, Deputy Director-General Agriculture and Fisheries, Department of Primary Industries, informed the Committee that the decision to close full-time residential courses at MCA was 'a properly constituted and carefully considered process.'⁴⁷ Dr Sheldrake outlined the consultation that was undertaken as part of the decision-making process during his evidence on 5 July 2004:

Consultation was undertaken in 2000 with college management, staff, full-time residential students, departmental managers, college advisory councils and TAFE NSW. The review conducted staff meetings and interviews, structured group meetings and received written submissions. The final report was written in 2000 and given to staff.⁴⁸

3.2 The Committee questioned Dr Sheldrake and other Departmental witnesses further about their consultation with students prior to the decision being announced, in response to which the Department indicated that there had been no further consultation after the 2000 report was released.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Dr Richard Sheldrake, Deputy Director-General Agriculture and Fisheries, Department of Primary Industries, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p2

⁴⁸ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p2

⁴⁹ Ms Ellen Howard, Program Manager, Education and Training, Department of Primary Industries, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p9

Consultation with students, parents and staff of the MCA

3.3 When asked whether students had been consulted prior to the decision to close full-time residential courses at MCA, Ms Butler, who was a first year student in 2003 answered ‘there was just nothing’ and ‘it was a big shock’.⁵⁰ Mr Slennett, who also attended the College in 2003 reiterated that the decision ‘just came out of the blue’.⁵¹

3.4 Ms Butler’s mother discussed the lack of consultation in her submission to the inquiry:

I do not believe the Government completely thought this decision through and weighed up the impact the closure would have on the surrounding communities. What I would like to know [is] how the Government can make a major decision, to cease full-time residential courses, in a matter of hours. All without discussing with the people who would be mostly impacted by their decision.⁵²

3.5 Another mother of an ex-student at MCA, Mrs Jeanette Rodham also lamented the lack of consultation with parents prior to the decision:

The only way we were informed otherwise was when we wrote letters of complaint, I suppose it was, to the Government. We got letters back to say that it had been closed, and that was it. Other than that there had been no contact with any of the parents whatsoever. We had no idea what was going on at all.⁵³

The MCA Advisory Council

3.6 The extent to which the Advisory Council was consulted was the subject of some debate during the Inquiry’s public hearings. Advisory Council minutes indicate that the *Extending Education* report was discussed at several meetings, and Mr Geltch, Chairman of the Advisory Council, told the Committee that he had spoken to Ms Helen Scott-Orr from the Department on a number of occasions. Referring to these, Mr Geltch told the Committee that ‘the Minister could state that we were involved in the consultation process and that would be a fair comment. However, it was a devious way to achieve that outcome.’⁵⁴

3.7 Mr Geltch further contended that the Advisory Council was not provided with a full copy of the 2001 *Extending Education* report and was not made aware of the recommendation that consideration be given to consolidating full-time courses into one institution (Recommendation H), that Ms Howard from the Department ‘did not present us with the report at the meeting in June’ and in fact ‘cherry-picked some of the recommendations from the report.’⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Ms Claire Butler, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p5

⁵¹ Mr Daniel Slennet, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p5

⁵² Submission No 9, Mrs Louise Butler, p2

⁵³ Mrs Jeanette Rodham, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p18

⁵⁴ Mr Jim Geltch, Chairman, MCA Advisory Council, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p25

⁵⁵ Mr Geltch, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p25

- 3.8** In response to these contentions, Dr Sheldrake outlined the meetings at which the review and its report were discussed with the Advisory Council. He told the Committee:

It was certainly discussed at the December meeting of the advisory council in 2000 and then again at the June and December meetings of 2001. The minutes of the Wednesday 13 June 2001 meeting of the advisory council, which was held at 9.30 a.m. at the Amaroo conference centre, say, "The council was very concerned about the summary of recommendations point re full-time students to be at one facility". That refers to recommendation H in the review.⁵⁶

- 3.9** In response to the specific suggestion that the Advisory Council did not receive a copy of the 2001 *Extending Education* Report, Dr Sheldrake told the Committee that he 'cannot say whether they received a copy of the report' but that 'the principal of the College, who was a member of the advisory council, received a copy of the report' and that 'the minutes certainly indicate that they discussed that issue.'⁵⁷
- 3.10** On the basis of the evidence it has heard, the Committee does not believe the Department consulted fully with the Advisory Council, students or parents. Some attempts at consultation were made but with inadequate provision of information in relation to the Advisory Council.
- 3.11** Government members of the Committee believe that there is conflicting evidence as to the nature or level of consultation that occurred between the Department and the Advisory Council.

Consultation with members of the Leeton and Yanco local communities

- 3.12** In reply to questions from the Committee the representatives of Leeton Shire Council and Griffith City Council informed the Committee that neither had been consulted prior to the decision being made.⁵⁸ Mr Andrew Crakanthorp, Assistant General Manager of Griffith City Council, informed the Committee that:

... the Griffith City Council is not aware of any consultation, as you alluded to earlier, that occurred prior to the announcement regarding this facility and certainly in regard to socioeconomic impact studies. Unfortunately, as one who has lived in the western Riverina region for some time now, it would appear that, across the State, there has been little regard paid by the State Government to these proposals for consultation and socioeconomic impact studies. All too often we see that the decisions are made and previous commitments to such processes are simply overlooked, and it is very disappointing.⁵⁹

- 3.13** In its submission to the inquiry, Leeton Shire Council also notes the lack of consultation:

Simply put, there was no community or industry consultation. The first that the Mayor and General Manager of Leeton Shire Council knew of the matter was when we were

⁵⁶ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, pp7-8

⁵⁷ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, pp7-8

⁵⁸ Mr Dino Zappacosta, Acting Mayor, Griffith City Council, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p12

⁵⁹ Mr Andrew Crakanthorp, General Manager, Griffith City Council, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p13

contacted early on 3 September 2003, and asked to attend a meeting at MCA where the announcement was made later that day.⁶⁰

- 3.14** The Member for Murrumbidgee, Mr Adrian Piccoli MP, also told the Committee he was unaware of any consultation with the local community prior to the decision to close residential facilities at MCA:

The second point is that there was no real consultation prior to this decision being made. Even when I was told I refused to believe it and said I did not think any government would close a college. I was wrong.⁶¹

Consultation with State Government advisory bodies and other industry organisations

Riverina Regional Development Board

- 3.15** The Committee asked representatives of two key state government advisory bodies who appeared before it whether they had been consulted prior to the decision's being announced in September 2003. In response, the Chairs of the Riverina Regional Development Board and the Regional Communities Consultative Council informed the Committee that they had not been consulted at any stage prior to the decision being made or announced.
- 3.16** Mr Pat Brassil, Deputy Chair of the Riverina Regional Development Board, told the Committee that, had he been consulted, he would have given the Government the following advice:

On present knowledge I would have advised that the College be not closed to residential courses and be left open only for long courses. I would have expected to be consulted because I believe the State Government has brought us into existence as a regional development board for particular things to do with the economic development of the region. I believe no department, or no Minister for that matter, should interfere with the employment of people in the region without first consulting us and other interested people in the region. The fact that we were not consulted has left the decision makers in this matter lacking a point of view that we could have put forward.⁶²

Rural Communities Consultative Council

- 3.17** Ms Diana Gibbs, Chair of the Regional Communities Consultative Council, established by the Premier to report to him and the Minister for Rural Affairs with advice on the impact of policy and programs on regional New South Wales also remarked on the lack of effective consultation with her organisation. Ms Gibbs told the committee:

⁶⁰ Submission No 8, Leeton Shire Council, p8

⁶¹ Mr Adrian Piccoli MP, Member for Murrumbidgee, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p46

⁶² Mr Pat Brassil AM, Deputy Chair, Riverina Regional Development Board, Evidence, 21 June 2004, pp40-41

From my own personal perspective, and all I can speak of from firsthand knowledge was that the Regional Communities Consultative Council was not involved at all. We were never asked for any view during the review process or afterwards.

[W]e were very concerned about the apparent lack of any effective consultation. I use the word "effective" because quite often people say, "We did consult," but effective consultation means a true dialogue of taking on board the opinions of local people who might have a different perspective and those who do not live in the region.⁶³

- 3.18** From the evidence received by the Committee it is clear that the Department undertook no consultation following the *Extending Education* Report in 2001. Other organisations that noted the lack of consultation by the Government include the NSW Farmers Association,⁶⁴ Bland Shire Council,⁶⁵ Condobolin Progress Association⁶⁶ and the CB Alexander Agricultural College Advisory Council⁶⁷.

Rural Communities Impact Statement

- 3.19** The Premier's Ministerial Memorandum No 96-17 instructs that 'any major changes proposed by government agencies in rural New South Wales will, in future, be subject to a Rural Communities Impact Statement.'⁶⁸
- 3.20** The purpose of such a statement is 'to ensure that the potential economic and social impact of any changes are considered, so that the Government is aware of the full extent of the impact on services, staff numbers or facilities in regional areas.' The Memorandum stressed that 'Ministers must ensure that the economic and social effects of particular proposals are considered in their development and not in the final stage. It will also be important to consider the implications of a proposal in the context of other Government decisions or developments affecting a particular region.'⁶⁹ Guidelines for preparing rural communities impact statements were subsequently released by the Office for Rural Communities within NSW Agriculture in March 1997.⁷⁰
- 3.21** Dr Sheldrake informed the Committee that a rural communities impact statement was completed 'prior to the Government finalising its position'. Dr Sheldrake continued:

The assessment found that the overall income and employment effects on rural New South Wales were likely to be neutral. It is pertinent to note that while the NSW Department of Primary Industries currently has two agricultural colleges, at one stage

⁶³ Ms Diana Gibbs, Chair, Regional Communities Consultative Council, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p17

⁶⁴ Submission No 24

⁶⁵ Submission No 38

⁶⁶ Submission No 37

⁶⁷ Submission No 22

⁶⁸ Premier's Memorandum No 96-17, *Rural Communities Impact Statements*, October 1996.

⁶⁹ Premier's Memorandum No 96-17, *Rural Communities Impact Statements*, October 1996.

⁷⁰ The Office of Rural Communities is now the Office of Rural Affairs, located within the Department of Lands.

there were five in New South Wales; with other colleges being at Orange, Hawkesbury and Wagga Wagga. They were all managed by the department at that time. The focus of agricultural training has shifted over time, consistent with international trends. Where the main demand used to be for traditional full-time courses, it has now largely shifted to either professional university training or more vocationally oriented short courses that provide practical forms of continuing education.⁷¹

3.22 There is no evidence that the Department undertook meaningful consultation as part of its assessment of the impact of the decision when preparing the Rural Communities Impact Statement. This is despite the *Guidelines for Preparation of Rural Communities Impact Statements* endorsed by the Premier in Memorandum 97-5 in March 1997.

3.23 The *Guidelines for Preparation of Rural Communities Impact Statements* state in section 2 under the heading ‘consultation’ that:

consultation is an integral part of the rural community impact assessment process and in ensuring effective implementation of change.⁷²

3.24 The Guidelines continue:

Depending on the nature of the proposal being assessed, this might include consultation with industry, community groups, local government, other NSW government agencies, and Commonwealth or interstate agencies.

Consultation allows the affected community to contribute to the identification and quantification of impacts. It also allows the community to comment on agency estimations and to contribute from an early stage in the implementation process.⁷³

3.25 The Committee heard evidence from Ms Diana Gibbs, Chair of the Regional Communities Consultative Council (RCCC), that the RCCC has the task of assessing rural communities impact statements. Ms Gibbs expressed concern about the role of rural communities impact statements in government decision-making:

We are concerned that if rural impact statements are not used effectively in Government decision making then why should we bother to do all this if the results are ignored? Our staff put a lot of time into making very careful assessments, and we are concerned that they are not taken on board. At best rural impact statements could be considered a rubber stamp.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p2. The impact of the decision on the local communities and rural New South Wales more generally are examined in Chapter 3 of the Committee’s report.

⁷² Office of Rural Communities, NSW Agriculture, *Guidelines for Preparation of Rural Communities Impact Statements*, March 1997, http://www.premiers.nsw.gov.au/our_library/rural/rural%20comm%20impact%20stat.htm, p11 of 18, downloaded 2 September 2004

⁷³ NSW Agriculture Office of Rural Communities, *Guidelines for the Preparation of Rural Communities Impact Statements*, March 1997, p11

⁷⁴ Ms Diana Gibbs, Chair, Regional Communities Consultative Committee, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p16.

3.26 Referring to the role of the RCCC, Ms Gibbs informed the Committee that the RCCC was not involved in the preparation or assessment of the regional communities impact statement ‘at all’:

I never saw one, as chair of the council. Our secretariat never mentioned that one had come in front of it. So, I cannot really comment on exactly what happened other than to say I was never aware of one being prepared.⁷⁵

3.27 The Committee is very concerned about the apparent lack of rigour in the preparation of the rural communities impact statement. It is unclear whether the Office of Rural Affairs has a formal role in assessing rural communities impact statements prior to their inclusion in a Cabinet proposal. The Committee is of the view that the decision-making process would benefit if this assessment was formalised and recommends that the Government require all rural communities impact statements be assessed by the Office of Rural Affairs before being included in a Cabinet proposal.

Recommendation 1

That all rural communities impact statements be assessed by the Regional Communities Consultative Council before being included in any Cabinet proposal.

Conclusion

3.28 The Committee is extremely concerned that a decision of this magnitude was made by the Department without adequate consultation with those directly and indirectly affected. The decision appears to have been made with very little and, in some cases, no consultation with parents, students and staff, minimal involvement of the Advisory Council and in direct contravention of Government guidelines regarding the preparation of Rural Communities Impact Statements.

⁷⁵ Ms Gibbs, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p17.

Chapter 4 Impact of the decision

This chapter addresses Term of reference 1(c) for this inquiry, which required the Committee to inquire into and report on:

the impact on the Leeton and Yanco communities and district

This chapter also examines the impact of the decision to close residential training facilities at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture (MCA) on students who were enrolled at the College in 2003 and the wider impact of the decision on agricultural education generally.

Impact on Leeton and Yanco communities

4.1 The Department's consultation was discussed in Chapter 3 of this report, including the lack of involvement of the Regional Communities Consultative Council in the rural impact statement. The impact on the Leeton community was assessed in the Rural Communities Impact Statement prepared by the Department as part of the decision-making process. The overall findings of that assessment make a sharp contrast to the evidence received from members of the local community and others during the Committee's public consultation. This assessment appears to have been made without consulting the people on whom the impact would fall.

Rural Communities Impact Statement

4.2 The Committee received a copy of the Rural Communities Impact Statement (RCIS) in response to a question taken on notice by the Department. In evidence, Dr Richard Sheldrake, Deputy Director-General of Agriculture and Fisheries, Department of Primary Industries stated that RCIS prepared by the Department as part of the decision-making process concluded that 'the overall income and employment effects on rural New South Wales were likely to be neutral.'⁷⁶

4.3 The assessment focussed on two areas – service delivery in education and income and flow on effects. In relation to educational service delivery the review found that:

Enrolments at Yanco are small and declining in number and services will continue to be provided from Tocal. Regional disadvantage is therefore minimal with the potential for widespread gains from any future improvements in education program/services delivered from Tocal.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Dr Richard Sheldrake, Deputy Director-General of Agriculture and Fisheries, Department of Primary Industries, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p2

⁷⁷ NSW Agriculture, *Proposed consolidation of corporate services and education functions by NSW Agriculture: rural communities impact statement*, p3

4.4 The RCIS found that 44 salaries would be lost from MCA. Of these, it was estimated that 50 per cent would accept a voluntary redundancy, resulting in ‘around 22 people’ leaving the Yanco/Leeton area.⁷⁸ In relation to income and employment, the assessment concluded that:

Because of the smaller community size, the impact of lost regional salaries will be greatest in the Leeton area. This will however be limited/offset by:

- The small number of jobs in comparison to the total numbers employed in Leeton and the expanding Leeton/Griffith economy
- Positive income effects associated with VR [voluntary redundancy] payments
- Favourable prospects for regional employment growth and re-employment
- Positive employment effects in ... Total.⁷⁹

4.5 There was some concern about the timing of the Department’s RCIS. Mr Ray Pluis, Mayor of Leeton Shire Council, told the Committee that in fact the assessment ‘was not carried out beforehand, but was completed a couple of weeks after the announcement.’⁸⁰ Mr Pluis also questioned the methodology of the assessment. He told the Committee:

At best it was a very superficial investigation of the impact of the closure on Yanco and Leeton communities and included figures regarding population and economy of cities including Griffith. Griffith is located approximately 60 kilometres from Yanco and while that area would be impacted on, as would any other extended regional area by the closure of the full -time and part-time courses, we were really looking for the impact on Yanco and Leeton, which was not addressed in any substantial way by the study.

The study itself was carried out without any public consultation. I believe it was just a desk-top exercise to comply with the requirements of the Premier's directions. I understand further that the guidelines for the issue of the regional communities impact statements were developed by the Department of Agriculture, so it is hard to see how it overlooked the need to carry out one. Ongoing discussions took place with various Ministers and the directors-general of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Education and Training. From that we got to the stage where we accepted that the full-time and part-time courses had been discontinued and we were looking to see where we could go from there.⁸¹

4.6 In response to these allegations, Dr Sheldrake advised the Committee that in fact there were two RCISs prepared by the Department – one that went to Cabinet and another, more detailed one, that was made publicly available:

Every decision that goes to Cabinet requires a community impact statement, so that was part of the committee Cabinet submission. Because of the likely impact of this we undertook to do a more detailed community impact statement for the clients, or the

⁷⁸ *Proposed consolidation of corporate services and education functions by NSW Agriculture*, p2

⁷⁹ *Proposed consolidation of corporate services and education functions by NSW Agriculture*, p3

⁸⁰ Mr Raymond Pluis, Mayor, Leeton Shire Council, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p23

⁸¹ Mr Pluis, Evidence, 5 July 2004, pp23-24

people affected, and that was distributed about a week or so after that. That was in preparation, but it was not concluded before that.⁸²

Evidence received from the local community

4.7 The evidence received from members of the local community did not agree with the Department's conclusion that the effects on Leeton/Yanco would be 'neutral'. Mr Plus informed the Committee that, two months prior to the decision being announced, Greens General foods closed down their cereal operations in Leeton, 'and lost 40 or 50 jobs'. That closure, combined with the impact of the decision to close residential facilities at MCA, 'would see us [Leeton] losing about 80 jobs over a two or three month period.'⁸³

4.8 Mr Plus provided the Committee with a detailed analysis of the financial impact of the decision on the Leeton community, estimating the overall impact of the decision to be nearing \$7.5 million:

... whenever we work with the Department of Regional Development to bring in some more jobs into the area they always talk about a multiplier impact of 3, 3.5 or somewhere of that nature as generating additional jobs every time you bring a new job in. So if you look at the 40-odd jobs, you are talking about in the vicinity of \$2 million in direct wages out of the area; you could be looking at another, without exaggerating, probably couple of hundred thousand dollars worth of materials purchased in the region because they did not necessarily directly purchase their supplies or equipment in the region, but there would be at least a few hundred thousand dollars there. So you might be getting up around \$2.5 million in wages and materials, multiply that by three and you are up around \$7.5 million out of our local economy, out of a population of 12,000 people.

4.9 In addition to the direct financial impact on the community, Mr Plus pointed to the social impact of the decision when ex-employees of MCA leave the community:

The people who were employed at the College were across a broad range, from caterers and cleaners up to much more highly paid positions. A lot of those people were engaged outside of work hours in things like the scouting movement, pony club, sporting coaches and trainers and so on. So you lose those people, you also lose a lot of those other voluntary-type works that those people put into their community.⁸⁴

Conclusion

4.10 The *Guidelines for the Preparation of Rural Communities Impact Statements*, released by the Office of Rural Communities, NSW Agriculture, in March 1997, provides detailed guidelines for the characteristics of the RCIS. Economic characteristics, social characteristics, environmental,

⁸² Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p12

⁸³ Mr Plus, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p26

⁸⁴ Mr Plus, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p27

regulatory and economic impacts are identified as being relevant to Government decision-making.⁸⁵

- 4.11** The overall conclusion of the RCIS prepared by the Department, that the effect of the decision would be 'neutral' is clearly contradicted by evidence received from members of the local community. The Committee's view is that the Department did not prepare a sufficiently thorough RCIS upon which to base its conclusion. For example, the closure of the Greens General Food operations two months prior to the decision was not taken into consideration by the Department in its RCIS.

Impact on rural communities generally

- 4.12** In her submission, Miss Diana Gibbs, Chair of the Regional Communities Consultative Council, wrote:

Education is vital to sustainability of rural life and rural youth deserve a variety of regionally specific education options.⁸⁶

- 4.13** Ms Gibbs gave evidence the Committee about a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' and 'planning for decline' in rural communities:

It is not just agriculture, it is rural communities generally. We are very concerned about that cumulative effect. It comes back to this planning for decline. If the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, in its wisdom, decides that population is going to drop then it starts planning for fewer teachers, take away some policemen, not provide resources for a medical centre and all sorts of little things. It is the death of 1,000 cuts. Rural communities need, and I believe have a right, to access an equivalent level of service to anybody else in the State. Rural communities should not be considered to be second-class citizens. Yes, it is difficult. Yes, we do live a long way out. Yes, we are scattered. But I cannot believe that in the twenty-first century we cannot find a better way to deliver services. It is not good enough to simply take them away and say "Rural communities are in decline, so we will not plan to provide services to them." We are 20 per cent of the population of the State, that is, one in five people live in regional communities. We have a right to expect the same sort of future and the same ability to determine our own futures as anybody else.⁸⁷

- 4.14** Ms Gibbs stressed the importance of viable rural communities to 'look after our land and water', and suggests that regional communities are not provided with the means to grow and adapt to change:

[T]he council sees the current events with the Murrumbidgee college as just another impediment placed upon regional communities to develop their own ability to grapple with change, their ability to attain economic viability and wellbeing, using their own resources and with local ownership. The only successful development is development

⁸⁵ NSW Agriculture Office of Rural Communities, *Guidelines for the Preparation of Rural Communities Impact Statements*, March 1997

⁸⁶ Submission 26, Ms Gibbs, pp2-3

⁸⁷ Ms Gibbs, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p20

that comes from within. It cannot be imposed from outside. It has to grow, and the Murrumbidgee college was part of the tools to nurture that ability to grow from within. We are very concerned that this is another aspect of the plan for decline philosophy. Statements have been made from a number of agencies that they should plan for decline in regional communities. We would most strongly oppose any such philosophy. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you plan for decline and take services away, of course there will be decline. Do not turn around and say we told you so. Planning for decline is something the RCCC will be speaking on, in a very negative way, at great length in the months to come.⁸⁸

- 4.15** The Member for Murrumbidgee, Mr Adrian Piccoli MP also discussed the impact on rural communities generally of the loss of an educational facility such as the MCA:

The buoyancy of country communities can be based on something as simple as an inch of rain. The closure of an educational facility on top of the drought and on top of everything else was a real blow to the psyche of the community, not just in the electorate of Murrumbidgee but right across western New South Wales. At a time when we are on building prisons and closing colleges, I can only see it as a very backward step. I attended the graduation ceremony here at the College a couple of months ago. While I congratulate the students, it was a fairly sombre experience held in a relatively small hall, whereas in previous years it has been held in the forecourt under a big marquee with several hundred people and the Minister for Agriculture or the director-general being the official guest. This year's graduation ceremony was an unfortunate sign of the times.⁸⁹

Impact on isolated students

- 4.16** A range of evidence was received both in submissions and hearings that isolated rural students are hugely disadvantaged by the closure of residential facilities. Most are too young to hold a licence; those who do may be unable to afford a car; moreover it is dangerous to drive the long distances to commute to TAFE. Parents, many of whom are working farmers, cannot afford the time and expense to drive their children to TAFE courses.⁹⁰ TAFE courses in regional centres lack residential accommodation, requiring young students to find accommodation and their food off-campus, an added expense and a source of worry to parents.

- 4.17** Residential accommodation was considered essential for isolated students, both young students and farmers, wishing to attend short courses. The NSW Farmers' Association submission stated that providing residential facilities 'is an important tenet of providing education to students living on the land in isolated parts of the state.'⁹¹ This was echoed by Mr Piccoli during his evidence before the Committee:

... the most important thing I think about the Murrumbidgee college is the residential side of things. That is very important to western New South Wales because of the distances and access. If you had even the Murrumbidgee college here fully fledged

⁸⁸ Ms Gibbs, Evidence, 5 July 2004, pp16-17

⁸⁹ Mr Piccoli, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p46

⁹⁰ Mr Slennett and Ms Butler, Evidence, 21 June 2004, pp2-10

⁹¹ Submission 24, Ms McCredie, p7

without a residential component, it would still be pretty difficult to access it if you are from Balranald, Brewarrina or Nymagee or anywhere else. The reason why it has raised such passionate concerns here is because of the residential side of things. Young students could come here, do their agricultural courses and actually stay here because of the boarding facility.⁹²

- 4.18** Ms Gibbs also told the Committee that residential facilities are essential even for short courses to be viable for farmers who require constant upgrading of their skills:

While, yes, short courses are still to be offered at Murrumbidgee a farmer cannot, realistically, drive 200 kilometres for a three-hour course and then go home again. The residential ability was a very important part of that. The future of agriculture is very different to what it was in the past. The new systems of agriculture that I mentioned are going to be absolutely essential. How do we upgrade the skills of our farmers? I guess my husband is, perhaps, typical of the average farmer. He is 57 years old. Yes, he has a degree. But he is still upgrading his skills all the time. Yes, we can access the Internet, but to physically go and exchange opinion with your peer group as well as hear from lecturers and other experts is an essential part of farm management these days. Day trips are just not going to meet that need.

The whole question of the next generation, what about the next generation of farmers? How do we make sure that they are supplied with the skills they need? Residential facilities really are required to access even the shortest of courses. Just to have an overnight stay would make it far more accessible to farmers.⁹³

Indigenous students

- 4.19** An important part of the program offered at MCA is the Aboriginal Rural Training Program, for which the College received the National Indigenous Trainer of the Year award in 1997. Dr Sheldrake informed the Committee that this program was not under threat, and would in fact be expanded:

In addition, the successful indigenous rural training program at the College is continuing to expand with course programs for areas like Warren, Narrandera, Monnus Correctional Centre, Shepherds Park and the Yorta Yorta group. The College is joined in a memorandum of understanding with Charles Sturt University to look into collaborative development of educational activities.⁹⁴

- 4.20** Ms Gibbs also spoke to the Committee about the particular impact the decision to close residential facilities would have on the local indigenous community and their access to education:

... a number of the individuals within the Indigenous communities who are trying to get businesses up and running like the grape growing at Murran Bridge, for example, do not have ready access to transport. They cannot just jump in their four-wheel drive and go somewhere. They just do not operate that way. To move great distances is not always culturally easy for them. They have a great attachment to their land.

⁹² Mr Piccoli, Evidence, 21 June 2004, pp49-50

⁹³ Ms Gibbs, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p15

⁹⁴ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p3

Murrumbidgee college was somewhere they were familiar with. The staff there had gone to great lengths to go out to the communities and talk to them. They understood what was happening at Murrumbidgee college. I would be concerned that if they were suddenly told that, yes, they could access the same courses but they would have to go somewhere completely different, might just get too hard.⁹⁵

- 4.21** The Committee recognizes the difficulties involved for students and farmers to attend short courses at MCA without residential services at the College. If the Department is serious about the provision of short courses at MCA the issue of student accommodation must be addressed.

Impact on agricultural education in New South Wales

- 4.22** The Committee heard a lot of evidence about the changing nature of agricultural education, and a shift away from full-time study to more vocational short courses and continuing education. Dr Sheldrake told the Committee that this was consistent with international trends:

Where the main demand used to be for traditional full-time courses, it has now largely shifted to either professional university training or more vocationally oriented short courses that provide practical forms of continuing education.⁹⁶

- 4.23** There was general agreement that this shift had occurred; however many witnesses told the Committee that this was not beneficial for agricultural education. In particular, the move towards university education was seen by some to be a negative development. Mr Gelch, Chairman of the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture Advisory Council, spoke passionately to this issue.

There has been an academic creep [which] is why it is so important that we have skills-based training. Hawkesbury, Wagga Wagga, and Orange all had agricultural colleges and they were absorbed into the university system. ... There was certainly some skills-based training at those colleges. When they were absorbed into the university systems, we lost that skills-based training. I have seen some graduates of those colleges and I am very much aware of that. It makes it all the more important to maintain skills-based colleges. The old Wagga, Hawkesbury and Orange agricultural colleges. ... skills-based training right through to management-based education. We fight very hard to ensure we do not have that academic creep.⁹⁷

- 4.24** The Committee was provided with a very real example by Mrs Rodham whose son Tristan completed his first year at MCA in 2003:

There is no such thing just now of coming home to the family farm. So much is involved in farming that you must have all these certificates and qualifications to get a lot of things. My husband came home to the family farm. He has no qualifications. His son is more qualified than he is. He has to go back now and do chemical courses and all that sort of thing just to be able to buy the pesticides and herbicides for the local farm. Tristan has all that because he got all that here. That was one of the

⁹⁵ Ms Gibbs, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p19

⁹⁶ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, pp2-3

⁹⁷ Mr Gelch, Evidence, 21 June 2004 p 32

reasons he got the job, because he originally started off burr spraying, and because he had the ChemSmart chemical course he got the job and is now turned into a full-time station hand's job. You have to have so much more qualification now because they are making it harder and harder. On the family farm there is no way you could walk out of school in year 10 and come home to the family farm. You have to have more qualifications. So, the idea of sending him down here was to get those qualifications.⁹⁸

- 4.25** The impact on agricultural education extends to secondary education. Leeton High School and MCA enjoyed a very close relationship, with the facilities and programs at MCA being utilised extensively by the school. The Principal of Leeton High School, Mr Peter Edwards, told the Committee about the impact of the decision on the High School:

... we often need to call on other agencies or institutions to assist with educational programs, either by providing extension programs, enrichment programs or remediation programs. In the context of my school, Murrumbidgee College assists us with all these functions, and more. It has facilities and resources that we can tap into that are the envy of many schools. ...

In my experience as Principal of Leeton High School for the past five years, I can identify many cases where the opportunities and encouragement provided by the teachers and other staff at Murrumbidgee College have kept students at risk at school and in formal education. The indigenous education programs offered by the College have had a similar beneficial impact on indigenous students from this school and other schools.⁹⁹

- 4.26** Mr Edwards concluded his submission by stating that:

Quality educational facilities are not widely available here in rural and remote NSW and closing an institution with such a fine reputation for providing quality educational opportunities for southern NSW and northern Victoria seems to me, as someone in the business of education, to be a significantly retrograde step.¹⁰⁰

Impact on students of MCA

- 4.27** The Committee heard that, of the 39 students enrolled in full-time courses at MCA in 2003, one student has continued his studies at Dalby agricultural college in Queensland, one student has transferred to Tocal, and a few have transferred to TAFE. It was estimated that approximately 10 of the 39 students have continued their studies, with the rest of the ex-students now working.
- 4.28** Two ex-students gave evidence before the Committee. Mr Daniel Slennett is now studying at Dalby in Queensland. Mr Slennett told the Committee that the only way he could pursue a career in agriculture and run his family's farm was by completing a course at an agricultural college.¹⁰¹ He told the Committee about the impact on him and his family of the decision to close full-time residential courses at MCA:

⁹⁸ Mrs Rodham, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p18

⁹⁹ Submission 13, Leeton High School, p1

¹⁰⁰ Submission 13, Leeton High School, p2

¹⁰¹ Mr Slennett, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p4

I was directly affected by the closure of Murrumbidgee Agricultural College as I was a full-time student doing certificate 3 and 4. I left my boarding school in year 10 in Sydney only to do two years at Murrumbidgee. It had the course that suited me for the position I was in as it was close to home and it had the course outlines I was interested in. Having checked out other places, it was the only one that suited me. I came here expecting to do two years but unfortunately it was cut short. The closure of Murrumbidgee Agricultural College has caused me be trouble as I had to find another place to go, another college, and it affects my family as well. I found another college up in Queensland which is 10½ hours a way from home. It costs quite a bit to get up there whether I go by bus or travel up personally, with the accommodation.¹⁰²

- 4.29** The cost of travelling to and from Dalby has also had an impact on Mr Slennett and his family:

I am 10½ hours away from home. I can only get home on the holidays and it puts quite a few miles on the car and it does get quite expensive to travel up there, taking into account the fuel costs and public transport and accommodation if I am driving up.¹⁰³

- 4.30** Ms Claire Butler was also a first year student at MCA in 2003 who aspires to be an agronomist. Ms Butler informed the Committee that prior to the closure she intended to finish her 2 year course at MCA then go to Charles Sturt University at Wagga. However, the decision regarding MCA coupled with a decision to cut agriculture as an HSC subject at TAFE has meant that she is now studying business administration at TAFE with a view to securing a traineeship at Elders because, as she told the Committee, ‘there was sort of nothing else really to do’.¹⁰⁴ In her submission, Ms Butler continues that ‘my future has been jeopardised by Mr Ian Macdonald’s decision.’¹⁰⁵

- 4.31** In her submission, Ms Butler also wrote about the way the decision made students:

One morning tea break we were told there were discussions about the College’s future and by lunchtime our fears were confirmed, full-time residential courses would cease! That really made us feel of little worth to the government, that they couldn’t even keep it open for one more year so the first-year students could finish what they had started. We knew then that we had to start re-thinking our futures.¹⁰⁶

- 4.32** Another ex-student invited by the Committee to give evidence was unable to attend due to his work commitments. His mother appeared and discussed the impact of the decision on her son and the future of their family farm. She told the Committee:

Our son was the youngest student down here. He was only 15. We sent him here because we were only 1½, two hours from here, so therefore we were close to home. The reason he was sent here was he finished in year 10 at the local high school in

¹⁰² Mr Slennett, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p2

¹⁰³ Mr Slennett, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p6

¹⁰⁴ Ms Butler, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p5

¹⁰⁵ Submission No 11, Ms Claire Butler, p1

¹⁰⁶ Submission No 11, Ms Claire Butler, p1

Wagga Wagga and the TAFE college does not cover full-time Broadacre farming as a full-time course. It is only as a traineeship.

The day of the announcement absolutely devastated our house. What were we going to do with our son? He was too young to bring home to run the family farm. We then looked into Dalby. Again, he is a 16-year-old. How can you send him 16 hours from home? It was not a question of yes, you will be going. He stayed at home. He has been one of the fortunate ones and has got employment since.

I still cannot get over it. He was to be down here for two years and then hopefully get a job and come home and run the family farm. It is just that a lot of the same parents are in the same position. ... We did not know where we were going to go with our young son. His education in this area has now finished completely because unless Murrumbidgee college reopens, he would come back then but other than that there is no way he will go anywhere to further his education.¹⁰⁷

Future use of MCA infrastructure

- 4.33** The Committee heard that the Department is examining options for additional short courses at MCA and also the future use of the residential facilities at the College. Although Dr Sheldrake was neither able to tell the Committee of the function of those buildings which would be utilised nor when they would be functioning in their new role, he did say that:

meetings have been held with the then Mayor and staff of Leeton Shire Council to examine the future options for the residential buildings and kitchens at the College. A meeting with the Department of Education and Training [DET] involving both TAFE and schools education has also examined future options for the use of redundant kitchens and assets on-site. An independent hospitality and catering consultant has now been commissioned to assess the future use of these facilities, and a report is pending.¹⁰⁸

- 4.34** The Committee undertook a site visit at MCA and was impressed by the buildings, facilities and equipment there. These buildings are now not being used and are not expected to be in use in the foreseeable future. The Committee considers the MCA to be a valuable resource for the Department and every effort should be made to make maximum use of these facilities. Mr Brown put it to the Committee that, with a bit of imagination, the residential facility could be reopened:

There is a problem, as I alluded to in the introductory remarks, with the type and quality of staff that were recruited. There is a lack of imagination in how you could handle a residential facility. There are plenty of contractors in Leeton who could provide meals, cleaning or whatever is required. You need a bit of imagination, a bit of lateral thinking and I think there was a lack of effort in terms of shoe leather in getting out there and promoting it in the right way, and you put all those together.

- 4.35** The Committee endorses this view and recommends that the Department make every effort to devise innovative means by which the residential facilities can be reopened. No specific suggestions were made but given the number of agencies, private companies and community

¹⁰⁷ Mrs Rodham, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p17

¹⁰⁸ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p3

groups that may conduct activities in rural NSW there is the need to maximise the use of these facilities.

Recommendation 2

That the Department explore with other agencies innovative ways by which the residential facilities at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture can be reopened, recognising that residential facilities are essential for isolated students, indigenous students and farmers who may attend short courses at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture.

Recommendation 3

That the Departmental working party examining the future of the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture infrastructure develop a strategy for use of the residential facilities in consultation with the local community.

Recommendation 4

That the residential facilities at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture remain intact and functional until such time as the working party examining the future of the college has completed its deliberations and reported.

Chapter 5 The Colleges and the Department of Education and Training

This chapter addresses term of reference 1(d) which required the Committee to inquire into and report on:

The reasons why Murrumbidgee and Tocal Colleges have not been transferred to the Department of Education and Training.

In addressing this term of reference, this Chapter looks at:

- The Department of Primary Industries's commitment to agricultural education
- The benefits of transferring the Colleges to the Department of Education and Training (DET)

The views of stakeholders regarding a possible transfer of the Colleges to DET are also canvassed.

Background – Australian National Training Authority funding

- 5.1** New South Wales is the only Australian state or territory providing both extension and vocational education and training (VET) services to the food and fibre industries. A quarter of a century ago there were five residential agricultural colleges in New South Wales, at Wagga Wagga, Hawkesbury, Orange, Tocal and Murrumbidgee. Of these five, three – Hawkesbury, Wagga Wagga and Orange – have been absorbed by universities and their students now get a university education. Since the closure of the residential facilities at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture (MCA) there is only one agricultural college left that offers residential farmed based, vocational education courses – Tocal.
- 5.2** The 2001 review, *Extending Education: Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture*, (hereafter referred to as *Extending Education*) noted that NSW Agriculture receives funding from the DET, sourced from the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) on an annual basis, which is linked to a 'maintenance of effort' agreement between ANTA, the States and the Commonwealth. Under this agreement, it was agreed to maintain the state Government's overall level of effort (measured by financial input) to vocational education and training at 1992 levels.¹⁰⁹
- 5.3** The review flagged a desire for NSW Agriculture and TAFE NSW staff to work more collaboratively.¹¹⁰ The review recommended that

¹⁰⁹ NSW Agriculture, *Extending Education: Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture* (2001), p21

¹¹⁰ *Extending Education*, p28

... liaison and cooperation with external agencies and training providers be continued, particularly in order to encourage enhanced collaboration, and reduce duplication and competition, where appropriate.¹¹¹

The Department's commitment to agricultural education

- 5.4 Dr Richard Sheldrake, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Primary Industries and Natural Resources, indicated that provision of education would continue under the aegis of the new Department rather than be transferred to the Department of Education and Training, saying:

The Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture will focus on its strength in short course development and delivery in the future. However, there is still sufficient demand for residential style agricultural courses to maintain one college focused on delivering that service. Hence residential education will continue at Tocal Agricultural College, which has been favoured by students for that purpose for many years. ... Similarly, all on-farm skills training has been conducted at Tocal in an identical fashion to how it was run at the Murrumbidgee college.¹¹²

- 5.5 Dr Sheldrake also discussed the Department's future plans for the Colleges, asserting that MCA:

... remains an important and growing centre for continuing education. More than a dozen new short courses and distance learning courses are being introduced to Murrumbidgee College this year, and, as the Minister announced recently, a strong push is being made to expand it into irrigation training in co-operation with Charles Sturt University.

Planning is also under way for a suite of programs in natural resource management to be available to support the newly formed catchment management authorities ... part of the plan to strengthen the College's nationally recognised continuing education efforts and improve access to lifelong learning for farmers and farming professionals. In addition, the successful indigenous rural training program at the College is continuing to expand with course programs for areas like Warren, Narrandera, Monnus Correctional Centre, Shepherds Park and the Yorta Yorta group. The College is joined in a memorandum of understanding with Charles Sturt University to look into collaborative development of educational activities. This has already led to the irrigation training concept announced by the Minister.¹¹³

- 5.6 The Committee is pleased to note that the Minister, in response to a question without notice in the Legislative Council on Tuesday 31 August 2004, confirmed 'that the funding arrangements for Tocal are secure.'¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ *Extending Education*, p29

¹¹² Dr Richard Sheldrake, Deputy Director-General of Agriculture and Fisheries, Department of Primary Industries, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p3

¹¹³ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p3

¹¹⁴ Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, answer to question without notice from the Hon Gordon Moyes MLC, Legislative Council, New South Wales, *Hansard*, 31 August 2004, (proof) p31

Benefits of agricultural education remaining within the Department

5.7 The evidence received by the Committee overwhelmingly supported the retention of MCA and Tocal within the Department of Primary Industries. There was a feeling that TAFE has failed in the field of training young people for agriculture.¹¹⁵ The primary reasons given to the Committee include:

- The uniqueness of agricultural education
- The costs of providing agricultural education
- TAFE's 'modular' education structure

Uniqueness of agricultural education

5.8 The submission from the NSW Farmers' Association provides an exposition of the uniqueness of agricultural education offered at the MCA:

The unique value of courses offered at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture lies in their provision of a 'middle option' between TAFE and university. It is essential that this accredited training is not lost from the agricultural sector, and brings into question whether TAFE could adequately service this niche of the market.¹¹⁶

5.9 Mr Glen Evans from the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority listed the following reasons agricultural education is unique in his submission:

Unique benefits of agricultural education

- ... a student employment record over 95 per cent
- provision of an external Diploma of Conservation and Land Management
- exposure to Property Management Planning education, vital for sustainable agriculture
- provision of expert training and experience in sustainable and practical land management processes, consistent with the NSW Government's natural resource management reforms
- opportunity for students to access the resources of the operating farm, enabling first hand participation in implementing environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural practices.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Submission 5, Mr Mulcahy, p1

¹¹⁶ Submission 24, McCredie, p7

¹¹⁷ Submission 18, Mr Glenn Evans, Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority, p1

5.10 Other benefits of NSW Agriculture's direct involvement and provision of full-time residential training include:

- opportunities for Year 10 rural students to further their studies in an appropriate environment, providing full residential and pastoral care
- exposure to resource centres and research stations as part of the vocational education and training
- provision of hands-on one-to-one training in a comprehensive range of agricultural pursuits such as broad acre farming, sheep industry, pastoral management, flood irrigation, beef industry/grazing, dairying, equestrian, general agriculture and environmental studies
- provision of basic management training, leading into Diploma courses, gaining credits towards degree courses
- provision of a fully commercial agricultural situation for students to obtain relevant industry basic training in a realistic environment
- provision of an Aboriginal Rural Training Program.

Difficulties with TAFE

5.11 Reflecting on the nature of agricultural education, Mr Whiston, representative of the Tocal Ex-Students Association, felt that taking Tocal into the TAFE system would not be in the best interests of agriculture:

I am sure it [Tocal] would not have the access to information that it has now through the department, and probably not the same support from farmers. Tocal has huge support from farmers all over the State through its involvement in off-campus work. ... they know the Department of Agriculture—now the Department of Primary Industries—is the mother ship; it is the government department that holds their hand.¹¹⁸

5.12 In addition, TAFE require a minimum of 12 students to run a course. As Mrs Rodham explained, in agricultural education it can sometimes be difficult to attract that many students to a particular course:

TAFE colleges do not run any courses unless there are 12 students or more in each class. Therefore, a lot of the TAFE courses did not suit our needs, especially from West Wyalong and places like that. They had to have 12 children to run a course. Out in that area it is very hard to get. That was the reason that MCA was the central place for us to bring Tristan and when it closed it was just devastating to us. We did not know where we were going to go with our young son. His education in this area has now finished completely because unless Murrumbidgee college reopens, he would come back then but other than that there is no way he will go anywhere to further his education.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Mr Whiston, Evidence, 5 July 2004, pp49-50

¹¹⁹ Mrs Rodham, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p17

5.13 Mrs Barbara Sherlock also felt that TAFE's standards were inadequate:

The quality of TAFE courses now being provided for students leaves a lot to be desired. My husband, ... a teacher in TAFE for twenty years before his retirement, was very disappointed by the watering down in both course content and standards, particularly of the paraprofessional level courses with which he was involved.¹²⁰

5.14 Mr David Lightfoot, associated with the William and Susannah Gill Memorial Scholarship at Tocal submitted that through its scholarships Tocal provides access to education for disadvantaged students that could not be matched by TAFE:

... all Tocal College scholarships are now primarily focused on assessed disadvantage – we believe this to be a unique situation within Australia, if not world-wide.

We frankly have no confidence that the Department of Education and Training can maintain such a focus ...¹²¹

5.15 Crucial to the success of the agricultural colleges is their collaborative arrangements with the Department. Ms Yeend, an ex-Tocal student, submitted that this benefit would be lost if the Colleges were transferred to TAFE:

A crucial ingredient to the College's success and respected standing amongst our rural communities has been its direct connection with the Ministry for Agriculture (now Ministry for Primary Industries). The reputation and capacity to deliver relevant and responsive education and training across the rural and environmental sectors would be compromised should the College be absorbed within the Department of Education and Training.¹²²

Cost of agricultural education

5.16 Agricultural training is extremely cost-intensive, requiring a very high ratio of staff to students (both teaching and support), access to a range of facilities and geographical terrain and use of large and expensive equipment. As Mr Brown from NSW Farmers commented 'everything around agriculture is pointy, or hot or dangerous not only to the operator but for everyone involved.'¹²³ Mr Brown has been a part time agriculture teacher in TAFE for 10 years. He cited the inherently high costs for practical agricultural skills-based training compared to other classroom-based courses:

Agricultural skills often involve one-on-one. A lot of what I do is actually one-on-one stuff, and that is very expensive, but there is no other way you can deliver practical training on, say, chainsaws, tractors, motorbikes, four-wheel drives. All that sort of stuff is one-on-one training. With practical classes, which I have done many of, I think they aim at 8:1 student to teacher ratio, which is half what they normally put into classrooms. So, that instantly doubles the cost. As soon as you get involved in some sort of specialised, hands-on training, it drops straight back to one-on-one. It is

¹²⁰ Submission 21, Ms Barbara Sherlock, p1

¹²¹ Submission 16, Mr D Lightfoot, p1

¹²² Submission 7, Ms Yeend, p1

¹²³ Mr Brown, Evidence, 5 July 2004, pp39-40

difficult to do because you have to find something else for the other students to do while you deliver that, but there is no other way you can do it. Plus, of course, you also have the high cost of any sort of machinery to train them on. It is no use putting them on a Dinky toy to teach them how to drive a tractor, you have to put them on a real tractor.¹²⁴

- 5.17** NSW Agriculture owns the physical resources contained within the two colleges, and also has access to research stations and specialised laboratories essential to a comprehensive education program for agricultural students. Its training provisions are far more ambitious and rigorous in their range and subject-matter than TAFE's at present. The NSW Farmers' Association submission expressed concerns about TAFE's budgetary limitations and its ability to finance agricultural courses.

The Association has seen no evidence that NSW TAFE could in fact provide the MCA courses in a satisfactory way, particularly without additional budget allocation. It is unlikely that TAFE would have the teaching skill sets required to conduct residential courses currently offered by MCA. For example, experience in irrigation and rangeland management is unlikely to be available at Wagga TAFE.

The unique value of courses offered at MCA lies in their provision of a 'middle option' between TAFE and university. It is essential that this accredited training is not lost from the agricultural sector, and brings into question whether TAFE could adequately service this niche of the market.¹²⁵

- 5.18** Mr Chaffey's submission also expressed concerns about the ability of TAFE to adequately finance agricultural education:

With the funding cut backs experienced by the Department of Education and Training over recent years, and the flow on effect to Agriculture study centres across the state, there is no guarantee that Tocal and Murrumbidgee colleges would not be placed in a worse economic position than they are now.

I cannot see any benefits to be gained by transferring the College system to the Department of Education and Training. The existing colleges provide unequalled training to rural industry, which is fully accepted by rural industry and is prepared to change as and when required to meet industry needs. This is not happening in the TAFE system.¹²⁶

- 5.19** Impacting on the costs of providing agricultural education is the withdrawal of an annual allocation of Commonwealth education and training funds by DET from NSW Agriculture in 2003. Dr Sheldrake discussed the reason for this withdrawal during his evidence on 5 July:

That decision, which is still being examined and still being worked on by the department and the Department of Education and Training, was as a result of the Commonwealth reducing its allocation to the State of New South Wales as a whole

¹²⁴ Mr Brown, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p38

¹²⁵ Submission 24, Ms Fiona McCredie, p7

¹²⁶ Submission 22, Mr Richard Chaffey, p3

and that then had subsequent impacts upon the Department of Primary Industries which receives its funding from VET.¹²⁷

TAFE's modular course structure

- 5.20** TAFE's standard provision of modular training provides a range of elements suitable for agricultural education. Witnesses to the inquiry, however, argued that because TAFE lacked the facilities previously provided by the agricultural colleges, it cannot pull those elements together into a coherent agricultural education. Ultimately, agricultural qualifications from TAFE remain disparate elements rather than providing students with an overarching understanding of their subject. As Mr Speers, Assistant Manager, Training Services Riverina, Department of Education and Training, explained:

Within the national training framework you can aggregate the building blocks to achieve a qualification. However, you cannot pull that together. The sum of the parts is greater than the whole. In the absence of a training facility or organisations that can do that, there is not a great deal of opportunity for that to occur. You can have a lot of little skill sets that are not tied together in any coherent way. The sort of training the College is providing is done within a framework of people rolling through a series of modules and competencies. You build up a coherence through that series. While it was deliberately skills based, because that is how the national training system is set up, the fact that they were doing it continuously through the one agency, and in most cases with one or two trainers or educators, meant they built up the connection between those skills and the framework within which they could be used.¹²⁸

- 5.21** Mr Brown, a farmer who has also taught in agricultural education, gave evidence concerning training in management skills for farmers:

Management is a skill of its own but it is also about linking all the various aspects that come together to actually make a farm enterprise. There is no short course that teaches that sort of management and interlinking. I spent a lot of energy trying to teach my students how to blend various enterprises together to make a farm work better, such as winter cropping with livestock because you need to be able to make them fit together to make the farm more profitable and often viable. That is where you need to teach management stuff which is basically what MCA and the higher levels of TAFE teach. University takes it up another step from there but that is essentially what we try to do with full-time students. There is no other way you can do that sort of training other than full-time, but some people do this sort of stuff at self pace by distance education but essentially it is a similar format in that you keep them in for a period and take them through a range of courses leading up to an overall management picture, if you like.¹²⁹

- 5.22** Mr Chaffey, a member of the Tocal Advisory Council, also emphasised the need for a holistic approach to agricultural education:

¹²⁷ Dr Sheldrake, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p3

¹²⁸ Mr Speers, Evidence, 21 June 2004, pp37-38

¹²⁹ Mr Brown, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p39

That is one of the things I have concerns about with the TAFE situation: they get some skills but they do not get them right down to the ground application of this is why it works and the whole thing starts to fit together. It needs a wholistic approach to the education of the individual and that is what I find is missing in some of the TAFE structures, it is intermittent, bits and pieces, and the linking is not there in a lot of cases. They have attempted it in some areas but it is not the same as that approach from the Colleges. The kids live in; they live and work together, they talk together, they work through processes together, they learn to live as individuals together too, and that gives them the benefit of rural industry, and particularly the nature of the work that they go out to do.¹³⁰

- 5.23** TAFE's modular system is inconsistent with providing residential services for its students. Many witnesses told the Committee that TAFE was 'not interested' in providing any full-time residential courses. When the Committee asked why TAFE is not an option, Mr Brown replied:

My understanding is that TAFE is not interested in any sort of residential thing. It is interesting where I teach, there are a lot of students who have to board or find some sort of accommodation arrangements. It is always difficult, because they are young, they rarely have motor vehicles. ... We would like to see a residential facility available, because these people tend to travel long distances and they tend to be straight from the home environment and it is a much easier step for them out into the workforce through a residential facility like Murrumbidgee. TAFE definitely would not provide anything like what was available at MCA.¹³¹

Tocal College as a charitable trust

- 5.24** Tocal is unique because it was set up as a charitable trust in 1963 under the responsibility of the Minister for Agriculture (now the Minister for Primary Industries) at the bequest of Mr CB Alexander. Mr Ian Dunlop, the solicitor acting on behalf of the CB Alexander Estate, gave evidence before the Committee on 5 July 2004. The key issue in Mr Dunlop's view is the bequest of Mr Alexander and his nieces, the Misses Curtis, which might be interpreted as blocking any transfer of the assets associated with Tocal College.

- 5.25** Mr Dunlop explained that legally, the trust could prove to constrain any moves to fundamentally alter the nature of the institution:

Indeed. ... About 10 years ago there was some suggestion that there would be some change in the administration. ... There is no doubt in my mind that Alexander's benefaction belongs to the public, the community. Tocal College is a community-based entity. ... So, if anyone thinks we might make some changes, they need to take into account all that.¹³²

- 5.26** If the Colleges (and in particular Tocal) were to be transferred to DET, it is unlikely that the operating resource – the farm - could also be transferred. Mr Dunlop noted that the return

¹³⁰ Mr Chaffey, Evidence, 5 July 2004, pp44-45

¹³¹ Mr Brown, Evidence, 5 July 2004, pp36-37

¹³² Mr Ian Dunlop, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p55

from the farm enables the training to be undertaken, and without that return the education provided at Tocal would be less viable:

if you had that operating resource removed entirely from Tocal – you just left the architectural buildings and you had a teaching resource there and you had none of the operating resources - with all its commercial rigour – how on earth could you conduct both the internal and external courses that are now being conducted by and at Tocal. You could not.¹³³

5.27 In conclusion Mr Dunlop stressed:

I underline the need for the conservation of the charitable trust and all it entails. That must predominate in any consideration of the future of Tocal.¹³⁴

5.28 Mr Dunlop was unable to provide the Committee with a proportion of Tocal's operating costs that were covered by farm revenue or from the Trust. He took that question on notice which was then forwarded to the Department. An answer was received on 8 September 2004 as follows:

The farm earnings from the College farm operations are largely managed by the Department's Corporate Services and these earnings are not accounted for in the costing of educational programs. The farms are run on a commercial basis and are as self-sufficient as possible given their nature. The CB Alexander Foundation owns and operates the College's Numeralla chicken farm, an enterprise it purchased in 1980. These funds are put to the purposes of the CB Alexander Foundation and are not accounted for or involved in the costing or operation of the student programs.¹³⁵

5.29 The Committee notes the unique nature of Tocal and that this makes any transfer of funding to DET as highly unlikely.

Benefits of transferring the Colleges to DET

5.30 Several submissions and witnesses were of the opinion that a transfer of MCA and Tocal to DET would have a positive effect on provision of agricultural training. There was also some support for the Colleges transferring to DET as a 'least worst' option. Reasons for these views included:

- Education is DET's core business, but only an ancillary business for the Department of Primary Industries
- Possible continuation of agricultural studies towards a degree

5.31 Mr Brassil, Deputy Chairman of the Riverina Regional Development Board (RRDB), provided a clear rationale for transfer of the Colleges to the DET:

Being part of the Department of Agriculture seems to me to indicate that it [the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture] is an ancillary activity of the Department of

¹³³ Mr Dunlop, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p54

¹³⁴ Mr Dunlop, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p54

¹³⁵ A C Archer, Director, Tocal Agricultural College, fax, 8 September 2004, p2

Agriculture, which is concerned with other aspects of agriculture besides educating people in it.¹³⁶

- 5.32** The proposal would see all resources, including any staff, facilities and NSW and Commonwealth Treasury allocations being transferred to DET. Charles Sturt University (CSU) would participate as it is already linked to MCA through an Affiliate Institute Agreement. In Mr Brassil's view, an additional benefit would be a broadening of what is taught at the Colleges and the possibility of progressing towards a degree qualification. Mr Brassil told the Committee that:

I can see it being wider than just agriculture, yes, so that I do not think it should be continuously just agricultural specific. ... there should be some sort of set-up so that the importance of agriculture to that particular college is recognised; that it is the specialty of that college, and that it should be maintained. ... but I do not see anything wrong with teaching other aspects that are fairly normal to TAFE. ... I do not see why some other skills should not be taught, for instance welding or metal work generally, or a number of other skills.¹³⁷

- 5.33** In its submission, the Riverina Area Consultative Committee expressed cautious support for a plan designed 'as a mechanism to deliver regionally appropriate training' and 'to ensure the next generation of farm workers are afforded the opportunity of flexible and locally based training.'¹³⁸ The Riverina Regional Development Board submitted that it 'cannot understand why Murrumbidgee and Tocal Colleges have not been transferred to the Department of Education and Training under a model as proposed or similar.'¹³⁹

- 5.34** The MCA Advisory Council (Advisory Council) raised doubt over the Department's continued commitment to youth education at the MCA. Although not seen as the best possible outcome, the Advisory Council suggested that the next best possible outcome would be the transfer to DET and TAFE system.¹⁴⁰ The question of where the Colleges were situated is secondary to Mr Geltch, Chairperson of the Advisory Council, who told the Committee the focus should be on providing skills-based agricultural training:

... There has been almost a divergence in the way education has been delivered to the agricultural sector in New South Wales. It has moved away from multifaceted, multidisciplinary education into a more streamlined, academic versus skills-based system. Tocal and MCA were doing skills-based training very well. TAFE carries out that role as well. We must ask the question whether this institution would be better off in the TAFE system. ... Whether it is provided by the Department of Education and Training or the Department of Agriculture, there is a need for skills-based training in southern and western New South Wales. ... currently not being fulfilled by TAFE or Tocal.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ Mr Pat Brassil, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p41

¹³⁷ Mr Brassil, Evidence, 21 June 2004, pp42-43

¹³⁸ Submission 36, Mr Watson, p1

¹³⁹ Submission 35, Mr Dale, p4

¹⁴⁰ Submission 23, Mr Geltch, pp5-6

¹⁴¹ Mr Geltch, Evidence, 21 June 2004 p32

5.35 The Advisory Council submission continued:

If the NSW Department of Agriculture is not prepared to commit the human, physical and financial resources to agricultural youth education, then we believe that there should be a transfer of this responsibility because:-

- 1 Provision of VET is the core business of the Department of Education and Training – this is not the core business of NSW Agriculture, NSW Fisheries, Department of Mineral Resources or NSW Forests.
- 2 DET should be responsible for all government provision of education and training. This will ensure:
 - a. More efficient use of limited public resources (human, physical and financial)
 - b. Consistency of:
 - i. Policy implementation, including reporting and accounting to NSWBVET and ANTA.
 - ii. Quality of VET provisions and outcomes.
 - iii. Meeting the needs of equity groups.
 - c. That rural VET provision across NSW will address environmental issues including water management, salinity and maintaining the well being of rural resources and assets.¹⁴²

5.36 Mr Speers suggested that transferring MCA and Tocal to the DET might open the Colleges to part privatisation of vocational education and training with an effect on both educational delivery and educational take-up in the rural sector. He informed the Committee that:

The vocational education and training sector was opened up to the user-choice policy from about 1994. So, rather than being a TAFE-based sector, private providers could become registered and be accredited to deliver training and, in particular, to receive public funding. A number of shifts have occurred in the way training is delivered and in the way that people have approached accessing the education and training system. One of those shifts has been towards work-based delivery. That has probably been one of the biggest shifts. The other significant shift, primarily since 1998-99, has been the move away from people enrolling in what one would call full certificate courses at various levels to training that is specific to their immediate needs. Unfortunately, the statistics do not go back that far. That trend was picked up in only about 2000 in the official data collection process.¹⁴³

Community support for Tocal College**5.37** The Committee received 121 form letters signed by individuals, families and businesses expressing support for Tocal College in the strongest terms and requesting that its funding

¹⁴² Submission 23, Mr Geltch, p6

¹⁴³ Mr Speers, Evidence, 21 June 2004, p37

remain within the Department of Primary Industries. Some of the signatories also gave evidence. Mr Hodgens for instance expressed concerns for the future of NSW agricultural colleges and their students:

It worries me deeply ... Queensland ... from memory, they have still got five ... residential colleges. Tocal is not pure academic, it is not trying to be a university, it is a hands-on college where we are trying to get them to put all their skills together into management as well as hands-on driving a tractor properly, spraying properly. Yes, I am extremely concerned.¹⁴⁴

5.38 Mr Chaffey expressed why Tocal fills needs that TAFE cannot:

There is such a thing as being on the spot at the right time and place to be able to apply the different principles of those industries, and if you are not living and working in that industry where it is you do not learn the principles. ... with its beef management course and all the practical beef stuff that goes on there, when things are happening [at Tocal] the students are there, they are there right where it is happening; they are learning from experience; they are learning things are real. ... I think you have got to live in that environment to learn those things. I grew up on a farm. A lot of what I learnt on the farm cannot be passed on to other people because I have lived and experienced it. ... the real practical farmers of today ... have got to actually live and experience the environment in which they are working to be able to achieve.¹⁴⁵

Conclusion

5.39 The Committee notes that at the date of this report the Minister has not made available correspondence between himself and the Minister for Education on the funding of the College. The Committee does not agree with the statement by the Minister that this matter is not within the terms of reference or within the Committee's powers. The Committee is pursuing the matter, as discussed in Chapter 1. In the absence of this information the Committee recognises that there are reasonable arguments both for and against funding the colleges through the Department of Primary Industries.

5.40 The Committee heard a large amount of evidence about the importance of initial training and continuing education for farmers, a result of constantly changing technology and the need for more efficient use of natural resources. On balance the Committee believes that farmers in New South Wales will be best served if this education continues to be provided by the Department of Primary Industries in specialist agricultural colleges, and recommends that the Department make a long term commitment to developing centres of excellence at MCA and Tocal.

¹⁴⁴ Mr John Hodgens, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p46

¹⁴⁵ Chaffey, Evidence, 5 July 2004, p45

Recommendation 5

That the Government recognise the uniqueness and importance of agricultural education in New South Wales and continue to provide adequate financial human and capital resources to Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, Yanco and CB Alexander Agricultural College, Tocal.

Recommendation 6

That the Minister, in conjunction with the advisory councils of the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture and Tocal colleges, continue to seek improvement of courses offered at the Colleges and effectively market these courses, to ensure both colleges remain centres of excellence in agricultural education.

Appendix 1 Submissions

No	Author
1	Rodham, Mr Chris
2	Slennett, Mrs J N
3	Young, Mr Ron
4	Sternbeck AM, Mr Harold J, Sternbeck's Real Estate
5	Mulcahy, Mr Tom
6	Edwards, Ms Michelle
7	Yeend, Ms Kylie
8	Pluis, Mr R C, General Manager, Leeton Shire Council
9	Butler, Mrs Louise
10	Butler, Mr John
11	Butler, Ms Claire
12	Butler, Mrs Mary, Hon Secretary, Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW Inc
13	Edwards, Mr P J, Principal, Leeton High School
14	Piccoli MP, Mr Adrian, Member for Murrumbidgee
15	Hodgens, Mr John
16	Lightfoot, Mr D H, William and Susannah Gill Memorial Scholarship
17	Star, Mr David
18	Evans, Mr Glen, Executive Officer, Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority
19	Star, Mr Greg
20	Crakenthorp, Mr Andrew, Assistant General Manager (Corporate), Griffith City Council
21	Sherlock, Mrs Barbara
22	Chaffey, Mr Richard, Chairman, C B Alexander Agricultural College Advisory Board
23	Geltch, Mr Jim, President, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture Advisory Council
24	McCredie, Ms Fiona, General Manager, Policy, NSW Farmers' Association
25	Fretwell, Ms Kylie
26	Speers, Mr Geoff
27	Gibbs, Ms Diana, Regional Communities Consultative Council
28	Hunt, Mr David, Life Member, C B Alexander Foundation
29	Alford, Mr Brian, President, Friends of Tocal Inc

No	Author
30	Mordue, Mr Amos
31	Brooks, Mr Sandy
32	McDonald, Mr Ray
33	Perkins, Mr Roger, Chief Executive, Royal Agricultural Society of NSW
34	Speers, Mr Geoff, NSW Department of Education and Training
35	Watson, Mr Tom, Chairperson, Riverina Area Consultative Committee Inc
36	Dale, Mr Peter, Executive Officer, Riverina Regional Development Board
37	Dalton, Mrs Helen, Secretary, Condobolin Progress Association
38	Zaknich, Mr Frank, General Manager, Bland Shire Council
39	Dunlop, Mr Ian, Member, Friends of Tocal

Appendix 2 Form letter signatories (Friends of Tocal)

No	Author
40	Alford, Ms Julianne
41	Anderson, Mr V J
42	Baillie, Mr Barry G
43	Bain, Mr D S
44	Balson, Mr W
45	Bartlett, Mr G M & Mrs B A
46	Baumann, Mr AB & Mrs J I
47	Beech, Mr Ron & Mrs E
48	Benecke, Mr F S & Mrs M A
49	Bentley, Mr Robin
50	Bloom, Mr J, Executive Director, Rural Skills Australia
51	Bottriew JP, Mr H R
52	Bower, Mr Daryl K
53	Bowman, Mrs I H
54	Brinklow, Ms Zara V
55	Brosi, Mr O
56	Brouwer, Mr David & Mrs Heather
57	Brown, Cr Helen, Port Stephens Council
58	Browning, Ms Anna
59	Bryden, Ms Gay
60	Burg, Mr William & Mrs Bernadette M
61	Burns, Mr Arthur
62	Carter, Mr John
63	Clancy, Mr Brian
64	Collison, Ms Freda
65	Cruzzin Pty Ltd
66	Dale, Mr Paul
67	Darwen, Mr W J & Mrs P D
68	Dent, Mr C & Mrs M
69	Dircks OAM, Mr R
70	Doughty, Dr F R
71	Drinan, Mr John

No	Author
72	Driscoll , Mr M
73	Duball , Mr Hinten, President, Hunter Harvest
74	Duball , Mr Robert
75	Duncan , Mrs Margo
76	Dunlop , Mr Allen & Mrs Helen
77	Dunlop , Mr I & Mrs Rosemary
78	Dunn , Mr R & Mrs J
79	Edwards , Ms Michelle
80	Ellis , Mr C & Mrs Hilma
81	Entwistle , Mr Keith
82	Evans , Mr Peter J
83	Fairfax , Mr J O
84	Fallon , Ms Marion R
85	Fibbens , Mr C & Mrs Judi
86	Garnsey , Revd George
87	Germany , Ms Leanne & Mr G F L
88	Grainger , Mr Paul & Mrs
89	Gray , Mr I J & Mrs Evelyn
90	Greig , Mr Roger
91	Harrison , Mr Ivan & Mrs Amanda
92	Hawley OAM , Mr G G
93	Henderson , Mr Rob, Manager, Kooragang City Farm
94	Herft , Mr Roger
95	Hodgson , Ms Anne
96	Holliday OAM , Mr E G
97	Holt , Ms Deborah
98	Holz , Mr Neville, Mr N J & Mrs L
99	Humphery JP , Cr Arch
100	Hunt , Mr Ian S
101	Hunter , Ms Cynthia
102	Kearney , Mrs Pennie & Mr Mal
103	Keating , Mr Tony
104	Kemfer , Mr Robert
105	Keppie , Mr W L & Mrs M V
106	Kepple , Mr G W

No	Author
107	Kingston , Mr J R & Mrs Maureen
108	Leslie , Ms Ellen J
109	Leverence , Mr Edward A
110	Macaulay , Mr Ian
111	Maher , Mr David
112	Mann , Ms Freda E
113	Martin , Mr Eric, Eric Martin & Associations
114	Martin , Mr Ray & Mrs Nancy
115	McEvoy , Mr R I
116	McFarlane , Mr George C
117	McGrath , Mr Vivian John
118	McLaren , Mr A & Mrs H
119	McMahon , Mr Gregan
120	McMahon , Ms Margaret
121	Mead , Mr N J & Mrs B A
122	Mitchell , Mr David & Mrs Penelope
123	Morris , Mr Rod, Member, Tocal Advisory Council
124	Muddle , Mr Ray
125	Mulcahy , Mr T P
126	Newham , Ms Lucy
127	O'Donohue , Mr Ray
128	Parker , Mr C
129	Pattison , Dr Allan
130	Pearson , Mr K W
131	Pearson , Mr W M
132	Petersen , Ms Brenda J
133	Price , Mr J
134	Pyle , Mr Ernest Douglas & Mrs Nell McLeod
135	Reynolds , Ms Jane
136	Richardson , Mr E C
137	Rogerson , Mr R T & Mrs E C
138	Roper , Mr Douglas & Mrs Daphne
139	Sands , Mr Rodger
140	Shaw , Mr M G
141	Sherlock , Mr Brian L

No	Author
142	Sherlock, Mrs Barbara
143	Skelding, Mr T
144	Skelton, Mr Bob
145	Skelton, Mr Dave
146	Snails Bon' Appetite
147	Sokoloff, Mr B A & Mrs S B
148	Soper, Ms Judy
149	Sparkes, Mr Ray & Mrs Jeanette, Owners, Absolutely Turf
150	Stacy, Mr John & Mrs Kaye
151	Swain, Mr R J, Hon Secretary, NSW Farmers' Association – Delungra Branch
152	Wearne, Ms Judy
153	Webeck, Mrs Valerie
154	Wile, Mr J M
155	Wilson, Mr John & Mrs Cathy
156	Wood, Mr R J & Mrs G M
157	Young, Mr Ron
158	Bailey, Ms Fay
159	Beutel, Ms Ashley, Mr Neil & Mrs Julie
160	Evans, Mr G

Appendix 3 Witnesses

Date	Name	Position and Organisation
21 June 2004	Butler, Ms Claire	Ex-student - Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture
	Slennett, Mr Daniel	Ex-student - Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture
	Crakanthorp, Mr Andrew	Griffith City Council
	Zappacosta, Cr Dino	Griffith City Council
	Rodham, Mrs Jeannette	Parent of ex-student - Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture
	Delves, Mr Alan	Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture Advisory Council
	Geltech, Mr James	Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture Advisory Council
	Speers, Mr Geoff	Department of Education and Training
	Brassil, AM, Mr Patrick	Riverina Regional Development Board
	Dale, Mr Peter	Riverina Regional Development Board
	Piccoli MP, Mr Adrian	Member for Murrumbidgee
	Dunlop, Mr Gordon	Isolated Children and Parents Association
	5 July 2004	Gleeson, Dr Alan
Howard, Ms Ellen		Department of Primary Industries
Scott-Orr, Ms Helen		Department of Primary Industries
Sheldrake, Dr Richard		Department of Primary Industries
Gibbs, Ms Diana		Regional Communities Consultative Council
Pluis, Mr Ray		Leeton Shire Council
Brown, Mr Alan		NSW Farmers' Association
Sorrell, Mr Jeff		NSW Farmers' Association
Chaffey, Mr Richard		C B Alexander Agricultural College Advisory Council
Hodgens, Mr John		Farmer and Grazier
Whiston, Mr Scott		Tocal Agricultural College Ex-Students Association
Dunlop, Mr Ian		Friends of Tocal

Appendix 4 Tabled Documents

Date		Tabled by	Document details
21 June 2004	1	Geltch, Mr James	<i>Extending Education: Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture</i> , NSW Agriculture, March 2001
	2	Geltch, Mr James	Letter to Ms Ellen Howard, Program Manager, Education & Training), NSW Agriculture, 2 April 2001, from Chairman, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture Advisory Council, 2 April 2001
	3	Geltch, Mr James	Letter to Dr K Sheridan AO, Director-General, NSW Agriculture, from Chairman, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture Advisory Council, 30 June 2001
	4	Geltch, Mr James	email – summary of college data for 2000 – 2002 from Carolyn Huckel, 17 September 2003
	5	Geltch, Mr James	Consolidation of the provision of public agricultural education in NSW, author and date unknown
	6	Geltch, Mr James	Letter to Mr Jim Geltch, AO from K P Sheridan AO, Director-General, NSW Agriculture, 8 August 2001
	7	Dale, Mr Peter Stanley	A new collegiate system for rural and remote students – rural education & training precincts, by Geoff Creek, Principal, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, 9 October 2003
	8	Dale, Mr Peter Stanley	Minutes of meeting held at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, Yanco, Monday 8 September 2003, by Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture Advisory Council
	9	Piccoli MP, Mr Adrian	NSW State Electoral Districts Ranked by 2001 Census Characteristics, by Mark D'Arney (NSW Parliamentary Library Research Service), 2003

Appendix 5 Extending Education - Summary of Recommendations

It is recommended:

To achieve greater integration between the Colleges and the Divisional Programs

- A. That NSW Agriculture reflect, in its corporate goals and planning, the complementarity of vocational education and training (VET) and extension services.
- B. That NSW Agriculture seek Registered Training Organisation (RTO) status on behalf of Divisional Programs to enhance the value that education adds to the wider extension network.
- C. That the primary focus of the Colleges be re-aligned such that their main goal can be stated 'the Colleges, in conjunction with NSW Agriculture's other product and service Programs, service farmers and agricultural industries.'
 - i. That the College Principals be responsible for ensuring all training activity conducted by College staff, including development and delivery, is in conjunction with other Divisional Programs.
 - ii. That education officers be utilised by other Divisional Programs for the purposes of enhancing VET capability for the Department.
 - iii. That the Education and Training Program devote necessary resources to 'selling' the benefits of VET to the rest of the Department.
 - iv. That a working group be formed, comprising the Program Manager Education and Training, the College Principals and at least two other Program Managers, to develop mechanisms to enhance integration between Programs and between the Colleges.
 - v. That physical and human resources currently located at NSW Agriculture's Centres of Excellence be utilised to improve the provision of accredited training on behalf of the whole organisation.
 - vi. That Commonwealth Capital Funds and Growth Funds be directed towards enhancing infrastructure at Centres of Excellence and the development and delivery of training resources at these Centres.
 - vii. That the Colleges increase their role in training Departmental staff through an expanded range of short courses and the adoption of a purchaser/provider arrangement with Staff Training and Development.

To achieve improved utilisation of resources:

- D. That administrative, financial and publication functions at the Colleges be standardised and consolidated to ensure quality assurance and to achieve efficiency gains by reducing unnecessary duplication.
- E. That a business development officer be appointed for a term of 5 years at Yanco and charged with furthering business development and marketing of NSW Agriculture's VET and extension functions.
- F. That three permanent full-time staff members be appointed at Yanco, and one of these be assigned to each of these programs:
 - Aboriginal Rural Training Program
 - Quality assurance (Food Processing) Program
 - Horticulture/Viticulture Program.
- G. That the feasibility and development of on-line learning opportunities be examined as a means of increasing flexible delivery for VET.
- H. That consideration be given to consolidating full-time residential activity to one College site by 2004 if the decline in full-time student numbers continues into 2003.
- I. That Commonwealth capital funds be used towards the refurbishment of existing College buildings to meet changing needs.
- J. That the accommodation buildings Calrose and Inga at Yanco be converted into office accommodation to facilitate rationalisation of administrative and clerical functions at the site.

To achieve improved internal systems:

- K. That prices charged for short courses delivered to farmers are based, as a minimum, on the direct costs derived from NSW Agriculture's Short Course Costing Module (minus the overheads and management costs).

To achieve enhanced links with external bodies:

- L. That liaison and cooperation with external agencies and training providers be continued, particularly in order to encourage enhanced collaboration, and reduce duplication and competition, where appropriate.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ NSW Agriculture, *Extending Education: Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture*, March 2001, Executive Summary, pp5-7

Appendix 6 Answers received to Questions on Notice



**NSW DEPARTMENT OF
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES**

Facsimile Message

Total Agricultural Centre
Total Paterson NSW 2421
Phone 4939 8888 / Fax 49398919 / Email tocal@agric.nsw.gov.au

To: Annie Marshall

Date: 8 September 2004

Fax: 9230 3371

From: Cameron Archer

Pages following: 2

Annie

Please find attached answer to the question posed to Mr Dunlop in the inquiry.

Regards

A C ARCHER
DIRECTOR



ACA:MM

Upper House Inquiry into Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture

The following information is provided regarding the question directed to Mr Ian Dunlop at this inquiry.

The Chair asked Mr Dunlop: What proportion of funding to Tocal comes from the farm earnings and what proportion comes from the Estate of CB Alexander? (Hansard p53).

Proposed answer: The farm earnings from the College farm operations are largely managed by the Department's Corporate Services and these earnings are not accounted for in the costing of educational programs. The farms are run on a commercial basis and are as self-sufficient as possible given their nature. The CB Alexander Foundation owns and operates the College's Numeralla chicken farm, an enterprise it purchased in 1980. These funds are put to the purposes of the CB Alexander Foundation and are not accounted for or involved in the costing or operation of the student programs.

A C ARCHER
Director

11 July 2004

Mr Ian Dunlop, Member, Friends of Tocal

General Purpose Standing Committee No 5.

INQUIRY INTO MURRUMBIDGEE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE.

J Hodgens reply to a question on notice.

Q : Mr Catanzariti asked Mr Hodgens : What sort of inquiries has Tocal had from people from Western New South Wales trying to get into Tocal to do courses?

Prereamble: As no specific time frame was included in the question my answer covers the past 12 months ie: 2003/04.

Western New South Wales is also an unspecified area and a large one so I have included figures from west of the Great Dividing Range. I trust that this is suitable.

A : My information, having been obtained from a most reliable source, indicates that the inquiries made to Tocal in the past 18 months relating to available residential courses is as follows ;

Moree	15
Bourke	3
Parkes	7
Forbes	8
Coonamble	8
Gilgandra	11
Gulgambone	5
Murray/Riverina	6
Wagga	4
Narrabri	48



I trust that this answers the question to the committee's requirements.

Yours sincerely,

John W Hodgens



LEETON SHIRE COUNCIL

Planning for Past. Enriching the Future

23-25 Chalmers Place
LEETON NSW 3705
Phone: (02) 6950 2511
Facsimile: (02) 6950 3337
Email: council@leeton.nsw.gov.au

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GENERAL PURPOSE
STANDING COMMITTEE
TO: MRS S. FAX NO: (02) 92303416
ATTENTION: RACHEL SIMPSON DATE: 30.7.2004
FROM: RAY PLUIS POSITION: GENERAL MANAGER
URGENT STANDARD CONFIDENTIAL FILE: 57.4.2

Cover sheet plusNil..... pages to follow.

Message:

RE: INQUIRY INTO MURRUMBIDGEE COLLEGE
IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION ON NOTICE FROM MY
PRESENTER ON 5TH JULY, OUR BEST ESTIMATE OF
PUBLIC SECTOR JOBS IN LEETON IS AS FOLLOWS:

- DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE	120
- POLICE AND COURT HOUSE	18
- AMBULANCE SERVICE	7
- DEPARK	47
- VARIOUS SCHOOLS	134
- HOSPITAL & HEALTH	115
- TAPE	33
- AVST POST	12
TOTAL	486

RECORDS

R. C. Pluis

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Thank you for your assistance. Our phone number is listed above.



THE NATIONALS
ADRIAN PICCOLI MP
 MEMBER FOR MURRUMBIDGEE
 SHADOW MINISTER FOR MINERAL RESOURCES
 SHADOW MINISTER ASSISTING IN NATURAL RESOURCES & ETHNIC AFFAIRS

30 June 2004

The Chairman
 General Purpose Standing Committee No.5
 Legislative Council
 Parliament House
 Macquarie Street
 SYDNEY NSW 2000 00

Dear Sir,

You will recall that during my evidence to your Committee at the recent inquiry into the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture that I was asked a question by the Chairman relating to my written submission. The question was how did I come up with the figures of \$2.5m in direct wages and the \$10m ripple effect being the costs of the closure to the local economy.

I agreed to take the question on notice. I now provide the following information.

Those figures were taken from budget documents supplied to Leeton Shire Council. The figures of a \$2.2m wages loss with a multiplier effect of 3.5 meant a reduced economy of at least \$7.7m.

However on September 16 the PSA released a document saying the removal of corporate service people alone would cost Yanco \$594,000. Added to that is Yanco's loss of educational wages, a total of \$2,000,146.

When both are added together, the corporate and education sectors total of \$2,594,146. There is then the generally accepted multiplier effect of 4.

I hope this additional information answers your question.

Yours sincerely,



Adrian Piccoli, MP
 Member for Murrumbidgee



Parliament of NSW
 Legislative Assembly

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 Murrumbidgee@parliament.nsw.gov.au
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3 August 2004

Mr Ian Cohen,
 Chair
 Parliamentary Inquiry
 The Closure of Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture

Dear Mr Cohen

I would like to reply to questions taken on notice at the appearance of NSW Farmers' Association before the inquiry chaired by you. I apologise for the late submission of these answers, but unfortunately I have been unable to respond in a more timely manner.

The first question asked by Tony Calanzani: "Was Duncan Fraser consulted (as a member of the MCA Advisory Council) on the closure of MCA"? The answer given by Duncan is that there was no consultation prior to the day that the closure was announced. The only consultation was on the day the closure was announced.

The second question asked by Tony Calanzani: "Was the NSW Farmers' Association aware of the proposed changes in any form from 2000 onwards"? The answer is no, the Association was aware of a review into both MCA and Toccal in response to falling enrolments, but was not aware of other proposed changes.

The third question was: "Where do you think the figures are flawed and give examples". The figures are flawed as they are used selectively to show MCA in the worst possible light. An example is the enrolment levels. The figures show that, in reality the numbers had declined, but recently had then begun to increase.

Another example is the cost figures used to justify the closure. The accepted benchmark is cost per annual student contact hour. When this benchmark is applied to MCA the cost of educating students at MCA compares well with the cost of education through TAFE in NSW.

I hope these answers are of some value to your inquiry deliberations.

Yours sincerely



Alan Brown
 Chair, Rural Affairs Committee

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 Level 10 • 255 Elizabeth St Sydney NSW 2000 • GPO Box 1363 Sydney NSW 2001
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QUESTION ON NOTICE

PORTFOLIO: PRIMARY INDUSTRIES
 ISSUE: INQUIRY INTO THE MURRUMBIDGEE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

QUESTION:

On 5 July 2004

- (1) **Mr Cohen asked Ms Howard, Department of Agriculture--**
 Were VET funds used for the construction or maintenance of roads in Tocol? (Hansard p4)
- (2) **Mr Cohen asked Ms Howard, Department of Agriculture--**
 (a) How was student curriculum hours calculated in the audited statement of curriculum hours at Tocol and Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture in 2002?
 (b) How was student curriculum hours at Tocol and Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture calculated in the Department Agriculture's 2002 Annual Report?
 (c) What activities were included in both calculations for each institution? (Hansard p5)
- (3) **Mr Colless asked Ms Howard, Department of Agriculture--**
 (a) How many statewide school visits were undertaken to advertise the benefits of studying at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, Tocol or both?
 (b) What schools were visited? (Hansard pp5-6)
- (4) **Ms Hale asked Dr Gleeson, Department of Agriculture--**
 Can you please provide the Committee with a copy of the regional communities impact study that was completed regarding the decision to close full time residential courses at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture? (Hansard p12)

Additional questions placed on notice by the Committee Chair to Dr Sheidtrake:

- (5) Please provide details of funding to the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture and Tocol for the years 1999 to 2004.
- (6) Please provide details of staffing (number and type of positions) at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture from 1999 to 2004 including numbers of academic and support staff.
- (7) Please provide details of staff vacancies at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture from 1999 to 2004 including:
 (a) The date the position became vacant
 (b) The date the position was filled
 (c) The qualifications of the person filling the vacancy
- (8) Please provide details of student numbers at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture from 1995 to 2004 including:
 (a) Full time residential students
 (b) Full time day students



NEW SOUTH WALES

MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

8 AUG 2004

PQ04/31



The Hon Ian Cohen MLC
 Chair
 General Purpose Standing Committee No.5
 Parliament House
 Macquarie Street
 SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Cohen

Inquiry into the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture

I refer to your various letters of 8 July 2004, to the Department of Primary Industries, concerning the current Standing Committee Inquiry into the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, and the questions placed on notice both during the hearing and additional questions by the Committee.

Please find attached the answers to the questions provided.

Yours sincerely

IAN MACDONALD MLC
 NSW MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

LEVEL 30 GOVERNOR MACQUARIE TOWER 1 PARKER PLACE SYDNEY NSW 2000 AUSTRALIA
 TELEPHONE: (02) 9228 3344 FACSIMILE: (02) 9228 3452
 E-MAIL: office@macdonald.minister.nsw.gov.au

Education and Training (BVET), the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), local government, regional development boards as well as regional organisations and industries in the development of the Review of the Agricultural Colleges that you chaired and managed?

- (20) Why did the Review Panel not include anyone with educational qualifications, experience and expertise?
- (21) Why was the Draft Review *not* submitted to the NSW Government agency responsible for VET policy, the NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training (BVET), for comment and feedback?
- (22) Why did you not provide a copy of the Review to all other for their information and comment?
- (23) Why did the Department's two most senior and qualified educators, the College Principals, discredit the Report?
- (24) Why has such a non-consultative and discredited Review been used to justify the closure of residential courses at Murrumbidgee College?
- (25) Why have not any Murrumbidgee college staff transferred to Tocal?
- (26) The Review resulted in the appointment of a permanent Education Officer (Food Processing) at Murrumbidgee College and an Education Officer (Viticulture) at Wagga Wagga. Why have you stopped these officers from providing viticulture and food processing traineeships when these are in great demand by industry and BVET and DET – particularly with all the considerable support provided by BVET through funding traineeships, buildings and plant and equipment.
- (27) Why have you stopped Murrumbidgee College's outstanding VET in Schools programs when they were meeting such an important need for regional young people, schools, industries, families and educational systems? This contribution was commended and recommended by BVET, including the College being a finalist in the VET in Schools section of the NSW Training Awards.
- (28) How does your decision improve access and equity to VET for disadvantaged young people in rural, remote and regional NSW?
- (29) Why has the NSW Minister for Education and Training withdrawn Commonwealth VET funding from NSW Agriculture this year?
- (30) What proportion of your budget did these withdrawn Commonwealth VET Funds comprise?
- (31) What impact will the loss of these Commonwealth funds have on the further reduction of accredited VET to regional young people, industries and communities by Murrumbidgee College?
- (32) Why is Murrumbidgee College now using its scant resources on a skills recognition program when there is such an enormous unmet demand for skills training in the region?

(c) Part time (short course students)
(d) Trainees
(e) Aboriginal rural trainees
Please include total student contact hours for each category.

- (9) Please provide details of full time courses offered at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture from 1995 to 2003.
- (10) In its 2000 review, did the Department identify the number of students required to make the full time residential courses at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture economically viable?
If so, what was that figure?
How was that figure communicated to the College and its Advisory Council?
- (11) Please provide details of the irrigation courses offered in 2004 or scheduled to be offered at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture?
- (12) Please provide details of the formula used to calculate the cost of providing courses at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture and Tocal. What is the cost of providing:
(a) Full time residential courses
(b) Full time day courses
(c) Short courses
(d) Traineeships
(e) Aboriginal rural traineeships
How does this cost compare to the cost of providing equivalent courses at TAFE?

Additional questions placed on notice by the Hon Rick Colless MLC

Ms Scott-Orr:

- (13) Did you advise the Chairman of the Advisory Council, Mr Jim Getch, either verbally or formally, that the short course program at MCA would be "ramped up" during 2004?
- (14) Has there been an increase in the financial, physical and human resources allocated to the short course program this year?
- (15) Can you provide details of allocations to the short course program for the previous five years?

Ms Howard:

- (16) When you met with Mr Getch on 13th June 2001, you discussed the Review, but according to Mr Getch's evidence, you did not give him a copy of the Review. Why did you not give Mr Getch a copy of the Review?
- (17) Did you discuss some of the recommendations with him?
- (18) Why did you not discuss all of the recommendations with him, particularly Recommendation H?
- (19) Why was there no consultation with the Advisory Council of Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, agricultural and food industries, the NSW Board of Vocational

- (33) Why is this change of policy not consistent with the NSW Government's current regional VET policies – as developed, published and implemented by BVET and DET?
- (34) Why were the Advisory Council and regional stakeholders not consulted in this change of direction? How can this skills recognition program meet the region's need for increased skills training and development for the agricultural and food industries?

ANSWERS:

- (1) No.
- (2) (a) Curriculum hours are recorded for each student enrolled in each unit of each course on the college's database. These are then reported to the Australian National Training Authority and audited annually by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. The audit verifies that the data forms an accurate record of student enrolments and course hours.
- (b) There were no curriculum hours listed in the 2002/3 Annual Report. There are lists of student attendances for both colleges based on actual attendance at short courses and in external programs.
- (c) See answer to (a) above.
- (3) (a) Approximately, 100 schools were visited by staff to promote agricultural careers and course options at both colleges. A large number of Careers Markets were also attended around the state.
- (b) Attached is a list of schools and Careers Markets visited. (Appendix 1)

- (4) Regional communities impact statement attached. (Appendix 2)

(5)

Murrumbidgee College ConFund Expenditure					
Financial years ending 1999 to 2003					
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Expenditure	2,016,905	1,792,132	1,757,304	1,910,546	2,020,272

NB: The 2004 expenditure is not available at this time.

- (6) Staffing numbers attached. (Appendix 3)

- (7) The Department does not have this information in a readily accessible format. Professional officers (educational officers) require a degree in Agriculture with a minimum of Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment or educational degree with experience in agriculture.

- (8) Student enrolment information is available in the Annual Report.

Information requested on contact hours is readily available for the years 2000 to 2003 and as such, Appendix 4 includes the audited student contact hours for 2000 to 2003. The department is currently determining if student contact hours are available for earlier years and the time necessary to obtain this information.

- (9)

Cert III Agriculture
Cert IV Agriculture
Past IV Pastoral Property Management

- (10) No the review did not identify this number.

- (11) The department has been developing a number of new courses including the following specifically for irrigation:-

- Managing Horticulture Irrigation Systems
- Service and Repair of Bores and Windpumps
- Water Management for Grapevine Production

- (12) Methodology for calculation of costs of provision of costs is attached as Appendix 5.

The costs relating to each course type was calculated in 2000 for the College Review (Attached, pages 36-37, Appendix 5) The costing for short courses, traineeships and Aboriginal rural traineeships have not been costed over the last 3-4 years.

The Department does not have the information from TAFE to allow this comparison. TAFE does not provide residential services.

- (13) Yes.

- (14) Yes.

- (15) No, this was left to the discretion of the Principal.

- (16) The review was discussed at length with the Advisory Council according to the Advisory Council minutes of 13 June 2001.

- (17) Yes.

- (18) According to the minutes of the Advisory Council meeting, recommendation H was discussed on this date. Jim Gelch was at this meeting.

has been implemented in many areas of NSW and has now been extended to the south-west of the state.

- (34) The Advisory Councils of both Colleges have been consulted and supported the skills recognition and short course programs at both Murrumbidgee and Tocal Colleges.
- Skills recognition programs provide farmers with credit for skills they have achieved on-the-job and highlight areas where they need to gain further training. Consequently, those involved in the program are more likely to enrol in short courses and external diploma programs. This has been the experience in other areas of NSW.

(19) Consultations were held with the Advisory Council in November 2000 and June 2001.

(20) The Director-General at the time did not deem this necessary for the purpose of this review.

(21) It was an internal review. See response to question 19 above.

(22) Question is incomplete and not understood.

(23) Both College Principals in consultation with senior management and the Advisory Council were provided opportunity to comment, which they did. Both College Principals provided constructive comment.

(24) This review did not provide the justification for closure. The drop in student numbers after the review did.

(25) The decision of whether or not to accept a transfer to Tocal was an individual decision for affected staff.

(26) These decisions were taken to address concerns of duplication of education service delivery in the Riverina.

(27) Response is the same as for question 26.

(28) This is largely the responsibility of the Department of Education and Training. Access and equity to VET for ALL youth is an issue that has ongoing support and is addressed by the Principal of Tocal and Murrumbidgee and respective Advisory Councils.

(29 - 31) Questions should be directed to the NSW Department of Education and Training.

There is no expected impact on service delivery.

(32) The range of short courses offered at Murrumbidgee College and other centres in the region has been expanded to meet the needs for skills training. In some cases, these courses are not fully subscribed despite wide promotion of courses.

There is a strong demand by industry for skills recognition programs to provide farmers with credit for competencies gained through training and work experience. These programs go hand in hand with further training opportunities such as short courses and external programs as skills recognition is an excellent way of highlighting the need for further training and development and invariably leads to increased participation in further training.

Skills recognition has been strongly supported by industry groups, in particular the dairy industry for rural readjustment and is an important element of rural readjustment for rural industries right across NSW.

(33) Current National VET strategies and regional VET policies emphasise the need to provide Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programs for industry. This has been the case for many years. The department has developed an excellent skills recognition program in response to these priorities and strong demand by industry. This program

2003 CAREERS MARKETS

DATE	TOWN	VENUE	TIMES	STAFF
*6/5	Moree	Moree Civic Centre	9.00-1.30	ZP
*7/5	Tamworth	Regional Entertainment Centre	9.00-3.30	ZP
*8/5	Armidale	UNE Wright Centre	9.00-3.30	ZP
*13, 14/5	Wollongong	BHP Sports Stadium	8.45-7.30	ZP/MD
*13/5	Wellington	Civic Centre	9.30-2.30	DNA
*27/5	Maitland	Basketball Centre	9.00-3.00	WK
*28/5	Newcastle	ClubNova	9.00-5.00	MI
3/6	Forbes			JH
4/6	Dubbo			JH
*5/6	Bathurst	Charles Sturt Uni	10 - 2	JH
*11-13/6	Cumberland	Valentine Park	9.00 - ?	WK
*20/6	Macarthur	Centennial Basketball Stadium, Minto	9.00-1.30	MD
*1/7	Central Coast	Central Coast Youth Club	8.45-4.00	ZP
*24&25/7	Nepean	UWS, Nepean, Kingswood		WK
*30/7	Coffs Harbour	Coffs Senior College	9.30-3.00	MD
*6&7/8	Canberra	Aust Institute of Sport	9.00-8.00	JH
*28/8	Southern Highlands		9--2	LW

SCHOOL VISITS 2003

SCHOOL VISIT AREA	Schools/Towns covered
CENTRAL WEST	Lithgow HS, Oberon HS, Bathurst HS, Kelso HS (Bathurst), Orange HS, Canobolas HS (Orange), James Sheahan HS (Orange), Parkes HS, Peak Hill Central School, Forbes HS, Redbank College (Forbes), Canowindra HS, Cowra HS, Blayney HS
NORTH WEST	Gulgong HS, Mudgee HS, Merriwa CS, Dunedoo CS, Coolah CS, Binnaway CS, Cootabarabran HS, Baradine CS, Coonamble HS, Gulgambone CS, Gilgandra HS, Wellington HS
NEW ENGLAND	Armidale HS, Duval HS (Armidale) The Armidale School, Guyra Central School, Glen Innes HS, Inverell HS, Macintyre HS (Inverell), Warialda HS, Moree HS, Wee Wee Central School, Narrabri HS, Gunnedah HS, St Mary's College (Gunnedah), Quirindi HS
MID NORTH COAST	Bulahdelah CS, Taree HS, Chatham HS (Taree), Wingham HS, Camden Haven HS (Laurieton), Port Macquarie HS, Wauchope HS, Kempsey HS, Melville HS (Kempsey)
FAR NORTH COAST	Coffs Harbour HS, Coffs Harbour Christian College, Woolgoolga HS, Grafton HS, South Grafton HS, MacLean HS, Evans Head HS, Richmond River HS (Lismore), Kadina HS (Lismore), Casino HS, Kyogle HS
SOUTH COAST - Lower	Goulburn HS, Mulwaree HS (Goulburn), Braidwood CS, Bateman's Bay HS, Moruya HS, Carroll College (Moruya), Narooma HS, Bega HS, Bega Valley Christian College, Eden HS, Bombala HS, Monaro HS (Cooma), Queanbeyan HS, Karabar HS (Queanbeyan)
SOUTH COAST - Upper	Corrimal HS, Dapto HS, Albion Park HS, Oak Flats HS, Nowra HS, Bomaderry HS, Shoalhaven HS, Vincentia HS, Moss Vale HS, Pictou HS, Camden HS, Elizabeth Macarthur HS (Camden), St Gregories College (Campbelltown)
SYDNEY	Mt Druitt HS, Macarthur Girls HS (Parramatta), Jamieson HS (Penrith), Cranebrook HS, Oakhill College (Castle Hill), Crestwood HS (Baulkham Hills), Terra Sancta HS (Schofields), Dunheved HS (St Marys), Prairiewood HS (Wetherall Park), Bidwell HS, Muirefield HS (North Rocks)

Rural Community Impact Statement

1. Introduction and Background

To achieve organisational efficiencies, NSW Agriculture is proposing to

- consolidate all future full and part time residential education courses at Toccal
- implement a shared corporate services strategy.

These initiatives would involve the possible transfer of approximately 44 staff from Yanco to either Orange or Toccal, approximately 17 staff from Wollongbar to Orange and 14 staff from EMAI to Orange. Alternatively, these staff will be offered voluntary redundancies.

Rural community impacts associated with the two proposals fall primarily into the categories of:

- changes in education service delivery to regional communities; and
- loss of government salaries from regional communities.

Given the transfer of both education services and administrative staff from Yanco (Leeton) and the smaller size of the local communities, there is greater potential for more identifiable and significant rural community impacts in the Leeton area. As a result, this statement focuses on the impacts in the two rural communities of Leeton (Griffith and Lismore/Ballina (see maps attached)). The loss of a possible 14 positions from EMAI in the rapidly growing Camden area of outer metropolitan Sydney within a very large and dynamic employment market is considered to be too small to warrant further realistic consideration in this statement.

Whilst job losses have a negative impact for individuals and communities of any size, there are a number of factors which may offset these impacts both within and beyond those communities immediately affected. These factors are considered in the following analysis.

2. Rural Community Impacts

2.1 Service Delivery – Education

Face to face/residential teaching will no longer be offered at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture. Student numbers have declined over recent years with 35 enrolled in 2002-03. Of these enrolments, only 9 were from the Riverina and a significant number from Victoria. Hence, service delivery to the local area was minimal and will be fully replaced by education services provided from Toccal with other educational providers continuing to offer a number of related agricultural courses. It is anticipated that travel scholarships will be available to assist in offsetting any additional costs incurred by current Yanco students transferring to Toccal for the remainder of their course.

Any course improvements resulting from the transfer of staff to Toccal would generate considerable benefits across its greater current (and likely future) student numbers.



Proposed Consolidation of Corporate Services and Education Functions by NSW Agriculture:
Rural Communities Impact Statement



NSW Agriculture

2.2 Income and flow on effects – Yanco and Wollongbar

Approximately 60 staff will be transferred from Yanco and Wollongbar to either Orange or Tocal, or will accept voluntary redundancies. If it is assumed that approximately 50% accept VRs, then around 22 people will leave the Yanco/Leeton area and around 8 will leave the Wollongbar/Lismore area.

The loss of 44 salaries from Yanco and 17 from Wollongbar is small relative to the total workforce and positive employment growth in the Leeton and Lismore regions.

- *In the Leeton region*, at the 2001 census there were approximately 4930 people employed. Significantly, employment has increased steadily in Leeton over the past decade with numbers of employed having risen by 600 between the 1991 and 2001 census periods. Similarly, employment growth has been firm in Griffith with employment numbers increasing by 2300 in the same period. Unemployment has halved – from about 10% to 5% in both Leeton and Griffith over the same period. Overall, the 44 salaries lost would represent less than 1 percent of the total number of Leeton salaries and less than 0.3% Leeton/Griffith salaries (see Table 1).

- *In the Lismore region*, approximately 11,100 people were employed in 2001 and hence the 17 who may transfer represent a very small percentage (0.15%) of the employed sector. Whilst population and employment levels have been stable in Lismore, employment levels have increased by 37% (almost 4000) in Ballina between the 1991 and 2001 census periods. This was faster than the rate of population growth at 24% over the same period (see Table 2). Unemployment levels had also declined from over 15% in Lismore and Ballina to about 13% and 10%, respectively in those areas over the same period.

The regional impacts associated with the loss of government salaries are also dependent on the spending patterns of those involved. A significant proportion of salaries are likely to be spent outside the region. Hence, the actual income loss effect in the particular regions concerned will be less than the dollar value of the 60 salaries directly involved. Further, in the short term VR payments may boost regional income flows. The extent of this effect is again dependent upon spending patterns and the number of recipients who choose to remain in the region.

The impacts from loss of government salaries will also be offset by any subsequent employment of VR acceptors as well as by local employment growth more generally - ie incomes lost may be replaced by incomes earned in other industries minimising the impact on the local economy. The relevant occupation categories of clerical workers, associate professionals and professionals have been expanding at a faster rate than employment as a whole in both the Leeton and Lismore regions offering favourable prospects for re-employment (see Tables 1 and 2).

From a statewide perspective the income and employment impacts in Yanco and Wollongbar will be offset to some extent by positive impacts in Orange and Tocal. The regional centre of Orange will also benefit from staff being transferred from EMAL.

3. Overall Assessment

Education service delivery – enrolments at Yanco are small and declining in number and services will continue to be provided from Tocal. Regional disadvantage is therefore minimal with the potential for widespread gains from any future improvements in education programs/services delivered from Tocal.

Income and Employment – Because of the smaller community size, the impact of lost regional salaries will be greatest in the Leeton area. This will however be limited/offset by:

- the small number of jobs in comparison to the total numbers employed in Leeton and the expanding Leeton/Griffith economy;
- positive income effects associated with VR payments;
- favourable prospects for regional employment growth and re-employment
- positive employment effects in Orange and Tocal.

Table 2: Employment data, Lismore / Ballina Statistical Local Areas: 1991-2001

NSW	1991		1996		2001		Change % 1991-2001
	People	Rate	People	Rate	People	Rate	
Employment	2,388,916	88.60%	2,583,875	91.20%	2,746,396	92.80%	15%
Unemployment	303,764	11.20%	247,689	8.80%	213,196	7.20%	-30%
LISMORE							
Population	11,128	84.60%	11,532	86.70%	11,149	87.20%	0%
Employment	3,252	29.2%	3,957	34.3%	3,063	27.4%	-1%
Unemployment	2,027	18.4%	1,910	16.6%	1,634	14.8%	-19%
Occupation							
Managers and Administrators	780	7%	679	5.9%	644	5.8%	-17%
Professionals	1669	15%	2052	17.8%	1951	17.5%	17%
Associate Professionals	910	8.2%	1258	11.0%	1248	11.2%	37%
Intermediate Clerical, Sales & Service Workers	1420	12.8%	1976	17.1%	1981	17.8%	40%
Employment by Industry							
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing					391		
Government Administration and Defence	1004	9%	1150	9.9%	1143	10.3%	14%
Education	1366	12.3%	1719	14.9%	1668	15%	22%
Health and Community Services							
Median weekly individual income			\$200-\$299		\$200-\$299		\$200-\$299
BALLINA							
Population	30,110	84.80%	34,702	87.4%	37,218	89.0%	24%
Employment	10,315	34.3%	12,598	36.3%	14,166	38.1%	37%
Unemployment	1843	6.1%	1812	5.2%	1589	4.3%	-14%
Occupation							
Managers and Administrators	1228	4.1%	1273	3.6%	1414	3.8%	15%
Professionals	1473	4.9%	2013	5.8%	2495	6.7%	69%
Associate Professionals	866	2.9%	1513	4.4%	1843	5.0%	113%
Intermediate Clerical, Sales & Service Workers	1194	3.9%	1926	5.5%	2210	5.9%	85%
Employment by Industry							
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing					1004		
Government Administration and Defence					519		
Education	789	2.6%	1121	3.2%	1385	3.7%	73%
Health and Community Services	1054	3.5%	1460	4.2%	1678	4.5%	58%
Median weekly individual income			\$200-\$299		\$200-\$299		\$300-\$399

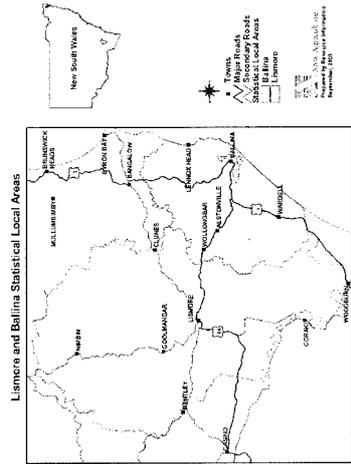
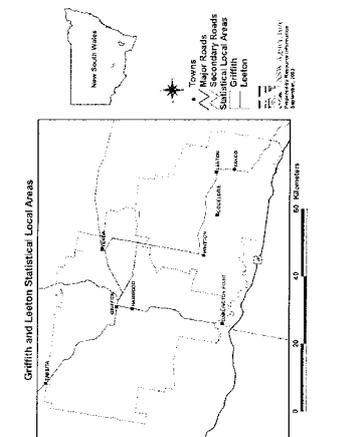


Table 1: Employment data, Leeton and Griffith Statistical Local Areas: 1991-2001

NSW	1991		1996		2001		Change % 1991-2001
	People	Rate	People	Rate	People	Rate	
Employment	2,388,916	88.60%	2,583,875	91.20%	2,746,396	92.80%	15%
Unemployment	303,764	11.20%	247,689	8.80%	213,196	7.20%	-30%
LETON							
Population	10,785	90.0%	11,031	93.3%	11,469	94.8%	6%
Employment	428	4.0%	465	4.2%	493	4.3%	15%
Unemployment	478	4.5%	335	3.0%	288	2.5%	-44%
Occupation							
Managers and Administrators	714	6.6%	671	6.1%	614	5.4%	-6%
Professionals	448	4.1%	351	3.1%	515	4.5%	37%
Associate Professionals	283	2.6%	407	3.7%	432	3.8%	64%
Intermediate Clerical, Sales & Service Workers	375	3.5%	393	3.5%	624	5.5%	66%
Employment by Industry							
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing					970		
Government Administration and Defence	408	3.8%	412	3.7%	465	4.1%	14%
Education	235	2.2%	255	2.3%	238	2.1%	0%
Health and Community Services							
Median weekly individual income			\$200-\$299		\$200-\$299		\$300-\$399
GRIFFITH							
Population	28,542	86.3%	21,694	66.3%	23,044	70.8%	16%
Employment	8676	26.5%	9637	28.3%	10,640	32.0%	21%
Unemployment	1038	3.2%	928	2.7%	589	1.8%	-42%
Occupation							
Managers and Administrators	1576	4.5%	1895	5.5%	1743	4.7%	10%
Professionals	857	2.4%	1075	3.1%	1289	3.8%	50%
Associate Professionals	508	1.4%	819	2.4%	965	2.9%	94%
Intermediate Clerical, Sales & Service Workers	806	2.3%	1233	3.6%	1302	3.9%	62%
Employment by Industry							
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing					1980		
Government Administration and Defence					287		
Education	474	1.3%	524	1.5%	602	1.8%	27%
Health and Community Services	653	1.8%	730	2.1%	724	2.2%	11%
Median weekly individual income			\$200-\$299		\$300-\$399		\$300-\$399



Education and Training Staff at Yanco - Fin Yr. End. 30/6/2000

No. Staff	Position Title	Location
3	Clerical Officers	Yanco
1	Clerk	Yanco
13	Domestic Services Officers	Yanco
14	Professional Officers	Yanco/Wagga (2)
4	Technical Assistants	Yanco
35	Total	

Aurion Systems Admin 12-Jul-04

Education and Training Staff at Yanco - Fin Yr. End. 30/6/2000

No. Staff	Position Title	Location
3	Clerical Officers	Yanco
1	Clerk	Yanco
13	Domestic Services Officers	Yanco
1	Operational Staff	Yanco/Wagga (2)
16	Professional Officers	Yanco
4	Technical Assistants	Yanco
38	Total	

Aurion Systems Admin 12-Jul-04

Education and Training Staff at Yanco - Fin. Yr. End. 30/6/2002

No. Staff	Position Title	Location
4	Clerical Officers	Yanco
1	Clerk	Yanco
13	Domestic Services Officers	Yanco
2	Lecturers	Yanco
15	Professional Officers	Yanco/Wagga (3)
3	Technical Assistants	Yanco
38	Total	
	Aurion Systems Admin	12-Jul-04

Education and Training Staff at Yanco - Fin. Yr. End. 30/6/2001

No. Staff	Position Title	Location
4	Clerical Officers	Yanco
1	Clerk	Yanco
15	Domestic Services Officers	Yanco
13	Professional Officers	Yanco/Wagga (2)
3	Technical Assistants	Yanco
36	Total	
	Aurion Systems Admin	12-Jul-04

Education and Training Staff at Yanco - Fin Yr End 30/06/2004

Emp Staff	Position Title	Location
7	Professional Officers	Yanco/Wagga (2)
2	Clerical Officers	Yanco
9	Total	
Aurion Systems Admin		12-Jul-04

Education and Training Staff at Yanco - Fin Yr End 30/06/2003

Emp Staff	Position Title	Location
5	Clerical Officers	Yanco/Wagga (1)
1	Clerk	Yanco
14	Domestic Services Officers	Yanco
2	Lecturers	Yanco
13	Professional Officers	Yanco/Wagga (2)
3	Technical Assistants	Yanco
38	Total	
Aurion Systems Admin		12-Jul-04

2002 Annual Report

COLLEGE ACHIEVEMENTS - 2002

The College's considerable reputation and achievements in the provision of vocational education and training for the food and fibre industries and rural communities were acknowledged by external agencies and outside organisations during 2002.

Ms Regina Dunlea, Executive Officer of the NSW Food Industry Training Council gave the Occasional Address at the College's 39th Conferring of Awards Ceremony where accredited vocational awards were conferred on graduates. Over 3,600 people enrolled and completed accredited courses or modules with the College during the year. Numbers of the 2002 graduates completed training programs that were funded by the Department of Education and Training.

A scholarship in memory of ex-student Warwick Tour, who was killed in a canyoning accident in Switzerland in 1999, was officially presented by Ms Kirsty Vidgen to the Deputy Director-General, Dr Richard Sheldrake, at the College's annual Graduation Ceremony. The \$1500 scholarship was awarded to Jayne Griffin, a Certificate IV in Pastoral Property Management student in 2002. Over 170 rural students who successfully completed a range of rural training courses at the College also received their certificates from Dr Sheldrake.

The positive participation rates in the College's educational programs continued to be maintained in 2002. Similar participation rates in the Department's educational programs also occurred at CB Alexander Agricultural College at "Total". This participation rate indicates the high level of confidence that rural industries have in the Department's educational programs. The College's enrolments over the last fifteen years are shown in the following table.

YEAR	FULL-TIME ENROLMENTS	PART-TIME ENROLMENTS		TOTAL ENROLMENTS	% OF 1987 ACTIVITY
		Trainees	Others		
1987	47			47	100
1988	66			66	140
1989	77			97	178
1990	69	20		80	155
1991	80	16		96	182
1992	81	36		117	198
1993	86	44		130	214
1994	78	46	28	152	218
1995	65	47	49	161	215
1996	63	72	116	251	301
1997	60	95	189	344	360
1998	44	59	689	792	378
1999	67	88	4920	5084	431
2000	57	72	4016	4145	360
2001	32	114	3305	3451	363
2002	28	127	2345	2500	344



28 April 2003

Manager,
Provider and Financial Collections
NCVER Ltd
252 Kensington Road
LEABROOK SA 5068

The figures for the data provided for the 2002 Vocational Education and Training collection are summarised below:

Number of Derived Course Enrolments	2,609
Number of Module Enrolments	5,469
Number of Nominal Hours - Supervised	135,379
Number of Annual Module Scheduled Hours	116,257
Number of Enrolled Clients	
Female	336
Male	2,113
Unstated sex	0
TOTAL	2,449
Number of Awards	
2002	689
2001	2
Total	691

Submitted on behalf of (T/O 122) Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture by:

Name: Leslie Loble
 Title: Deputy Director-General, Strategic Planning and Regulation
 Signature: [Signature]
 Date: 15.03

Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture

2002

Delivery Statistics

Course	Number of Course Enrolments	Number of Clients	Course Hours	Total Hours
Full-Time Courses				
Certificate III in Agriculture	15	15	1310	19650
Certificate IV in Agriculture	5	5	1310	6550
Certificate IV in Pastoral Property Management	8	8	1364	10912
SUB TOTAL	28	28		37112
Traineeships				
<i>Agriculture</i>				
Certificate II in Agriculture	37	37	450	16650
Certificate II in Agriculture Part time Schools	23	23		1653
Certificate II in Agriculture (Dairy Production)	1	1	450	450
Certificate II in Agriculture (Pig Production)	2	2	450	900
Certificate III in Agriculture	17	17	540	9180
Certificate III in Agriculture (Poultry Production)	1	1	540	540
Certificate III in Agriculture (PML30199)	4	4	390	1560
<i>Horticulture</i>				
Certificate II in Horticulture	1	1	400	400
Certificate III in Horticulture	3	3	540	1620
<i>Business</i>				
Certificate III in Business (Office Administration)	2	2	400	800
<i>Food Processing</i>				
Certificate I in Food Processing	1	1	390	390
Certificate II in Food Processing	1	1	410	410
<i>Viticulture</i>				
Certificate I in Food Processing (Wine)	13	13	390	5070
Certificate II in Food Processing (Wine)	21	21	510	10710
SUB TOTAL	127	127		50333

MCA 2002 Overall Statistics

Short Courses - Units of Competence			
<i>Agriculture</i>			
Certificate I in Agriculture (Mannus)	3	3	45
Certificate II in Agriculture Chainsaws	8	8	240
Certificate II in Agriculture (ARTP Program)	47	47	2025
Certificate III in Agriculture (Mate pigs/monitor sow performance)	43	43	1935
Certificate III in Agriculture (Identify and select pigs)	43	43	1935
Certificate IV in Agriculture (Process Records)	15	15	225
Certificate IV in Agriculture (Plan/Implmt. Pest & Weed Control)	16	16	960
Certificate III in Agri-Food Quality Management	5	5	750
Certificate IV in Agriculture Prod. Hort. (Supervise machinery maintenance)	14	14	840
Certificate IV in Agriculture Prod. Hort. (Manage notify chem. Spillage leakage)	32	32	1440
Certificate IV in Agri-Food Quality Management	87	87	522
<i>Horticulture</i>			
Certificate I in Horticulture (ARTP Program)	10	10	2340
Certificate II in Horticulture (ARTP Program)	18	18	1050
<i>Food Processing</i>			
Certificate I in Food Processing	6	6	120
<i>Viticulture</i>			
Certificate I in Food Processing (Wines) (Hand Prune Vines)	9	9	252
<i>Other</i>			
Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training	97	97	20,885
Certificate III in Laboratory (Obtain samples in accordance with sample plan)	20	20	420
Certificate III in Laboratory (Perform basic tests)	24	24	503
SUB TOTAL	497	497	36487

Short Courses - Other			
<i>Farm Chemicals</i>			
Course in Chemical Application Risk (Chemical Safety)	74	74	1480
Course in Chemical Application Risk (Chemical Appl.)	381	381	7620
Course in Chemical Application Risk (Managing Chemical Use)	117	117	3510
<i>Agriculture</i>			
Applied Mushroom Science and Technology Course	32	32	960
Basic Agricultural Skills	19	19	399
Irrigated Lucerne	38	38	532

MCA 2002 Overall Statistics

Water Wise Irrigation Management course	1122	1122	23562
Light Brown Moth Assessor	20	20	340
Operate and Maintenance of All Terrain Vehicles	14	14	98
Links to Learning Program (ARTP Program)	31	31	8680
SUB TOTAL	1848	1848	47781
SHORT COURSES TOTAL	2,345		83668
Home Study Courses			
Pastoral Property Management	8	25	200
Commercial Layer Chicken Management Health & Welfare	20	25	500
Commercial Meat Chicken Management Health & Welfare	34	25	850
Vertebrate Pest	4	25	100
Introduction to Poultry	1	25	25
Videos	68		
SUB TOTAL	135		1675
Other			
Professional Officer Training	453	15	6795
Field Days	160	2	320
School Visits	461	4	1844
SUB TOTAL	1074		8959
TOTAL	3709	2500	181747

MCA 2002 Overall Statistics

Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture

2001

Delivery Statistics

P.02/02

TO 063913244

FROM SCHOOL INFORMATION UNIT

01/6247 faxed 12.00 2/15/02 MS

24 April 2002

Manager,
Information Technology Systems & Collections
NCVER Ltd
252 Kensington Road
LEABROOK SA 5068

MCA 2001 revised

The figures for the data provided for the 2001 Vocational Education and Training collection are summarised below:

Number of Derived Course Enrolments	3,595
Number of Module Enrolments	7,024
Number of Nominal Hours - Supervised	161,110
Number of Annual Module Scheduled Hours	144,251
Number of Enrolled Clients	
Female	896
Male	2,417
Unstated sex	0
TOTAL	3,313
Number of Awards	
2001	1,656
2000	0
Total	1,656

Submitted on behalf of (T/O 122) Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture by:

Name: M. Bourke
 Title: Policy Officer (Education)
 Signature: Michael Bourke
 Date: 2/5/02

TOTAL P.02

Course	Number of Course Enrolments	Number of Clients	Course Hours	Total Hours
Full-Time Courses				
Certificate III in Agriculture	19	19	1310	24890
Certificate IV in Agriculture	9	9	1310	11790
Certificate IV in Pastoral Property Management	4	4	1310	5240
TOTAL	32	32		41920
Traineeships				
<i>Agriculture</i>				
Certificate II in Agriculture	17	17		7650
Certificate II in Agriculture Part time	10	10	60	600
Certificate II in Agriculture (Rural Merchandising)	3	3		1860
Certificate II in Agriculture (Horticulture Prod.)	3	3	570	1710
Certificate III in Agriculture	3	3	540	1620
Certificate III in Agriculture (Sheep/Wool)	1	1	540	540
Certificate III in Laboratory Skills (PML30199)	6	6		1392
Certificate III in Laboratory Skills (Old Course)	2	2		710
<i>Horticulture</i>				
Certificate II in Horticulture	1	1	400	400
Certificate II in Horticulture (Parks & Gardens)	2	2		1170
Certificate II in Horticulture (Production)	2	2		1320
Certificate II in Horticulture (Nursery)	1	1		585
Certificate III in Horticulture	2	2		1470
<i>Business</i>				
Certificate II in Business (Office Administration)	2	2		710
Certificate III in Business (Office Administration)	2	2		1020
Certificate IV in Business (Administration)	8	8		1760
<i>Food Processing</i>				
Certificate II in Food Processing	1	1		244
<i>Viticulture</i>				
Certificate I in Food Processing (Wine)	9	9		3171
Certificate II in Food Processing (Wine)	6	6		2650

MCA 2001 Overall Statistics

Certificate III in Food Processing (Wine)	10	10	2205
SUB TOTAL	97	97	32787

Short Courses - Units of Competence

Certificate I in Food Processing	148	148	7400
Certificate III in Food Processing	9	9	450
Certificate I in Agriculture (Beef Cattle Production)	220	220	9195
Certificate II in Agriculture School Groups	251	251	7057
Certificate II in Agriculture Chainsaws	9	9	180
Certificate II in Agriculture (Pig Production)	15	15	2700
Certificate II in Agriculture (ARTP Program)	77	77	3524
Certificate I in Horticulture (ARTP Program)	13	13	2925
Certificate II in Horticulture (ARTP Program)	34	34	1320
Certificate II in Horticulture (Production) Chainsaws	14	14	420
Certificate II in Horticulture	105	105	9605
Certificate in Horticulture (School Groups)	25	25	2430
Certificate III in Agriculture (Process Records)	197	197	2955
Certificate III in Agriculture (Select Sheep for Markets)	14	14	630
Certificate III in Agriculture (Manage Working Dogs)	15	15	675
Certificate IV in Agriculture (Pig Production)	7	7	2100
Certificate IV in Agri-Food Quality Management	17	17	238
Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training	157	157	3532
SUB TOTAL	1327	1327	57336

Short Courses - Other

<i>Farm Chemicals</i>			
Course in Chemical Application Risk (Chemical Safety)	4	4	80
Course in Chemical Application Risk (Chemical Appl.)	472	472	9440
Course in Chemical Application Risk (Managing Chemical Use)	276	276	820
<i>Farm Business Management</i>			
Introduction to Audit Management	8	8	56
PAM2000 Production Management Software	5	5	35
<i>Agriculture</i>			
Electro Magnetic Survey Short Course	18	18	270

MCA 2001 Overall Statistics

Farm Diversification	21	21	14	294
Irrigated Lucerne	24	24	14	336
Rice for Profit	16	16	24	384
Weed Identification and Management	3	3	6	18
Water Wise Irrigation Management course	285	285	21	5985
Light Brown Moth Assessor	35	35	7	245
Operate and Maintenance of All Terrain Vehicles	32	32	7	224
<i>Quality Assurance/Food Processing</i>				
Australian Pork Industry Quality Program	39	39	25	975
HACCP Principles, Guidelines, Implem. and Use	6	6	20	120
Approved Supplier Req. Sys Food & Fibre Industry	646	646	6	3876
System and Pest ID Proc. for Phytosanitation	47	47	14	658
Brewarrina Links to Learning Program (ARTP Program)	15	15		3440
Narrandera Links to Learning Program (ARTP Program)	17	8		6100
<i>Other</i>				
Certificate III in Agriculture (First Aid)	7	7	20	140
SUB TOTAL	1976	1967		33496
<i>TOTAL 5 Hours Courses</i>	<u>3303</u>			90,832
Home Study Courses				
Pastoral Property Management	3	3	40	120
Commercial Layer Management	13	13	40	520
Commercial Meat Chicken Management	8	8	40	320
Vertebrate Pest	7	7	40	280
Introduction to Poultry	1	1	40	40
SUB TOTAL	32	32		1280
Other				
Professional Officer Training	592	592	15	8880
Field Days	1500	1500	2	3000
Tutoring	0	0		0
School Visits	560	560	4	2240
SUB TOTAL	2652	2652		14120
TOTAL	6110	6101		180939

MCA 2001 Overall Statistics

Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture

2000

Delivery Statistics

03 May 2001

Manager,
Information Technology Systems & Collections
NCVER Ltd
252 Kensington Road
LEABROOK SA 5068

The figures for the data provided for the 2000 Vocational Education and Training collection are summarised below:

Number of Derived Course Enrolments	4,452
Number of Module Enrolments	9,555
Number of Nominal Hours - Supervised	179,035
Number of Annual Module Scheduled Hours	161,041
Number of Enrolled Clients	
	Female 1,357
	Male 2,884
	Unstated sex 0
	TOTAL 4,241
Number of Awards	
	2000 3,189
	1999 0
	Total 3,189

Submitted on behalf of (T/O 122) NSW Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture by:

Name: _____
 Title: _____
 Signature: _____
 Date: _____

Murrumbidgee College	Overall Training Delivery	2000
Short Courses - Other		
Farm Chemicals	84	20
Chemical Safety (SMARTTrain)	116	20
Chemical Application (SMARTTrain)	27	30
Managing Chemical Use (SMARTTrain)	66	30
Chemical Instructor (SMARTTrain)	16	7
Chennect Refresher Short Course	76	7
Farm Business Management	58	21
Introduction to the Internet	42	7
Phoenix 2000 Short Course	22	7
Advanced Quicken	11	20
Rural Wages	14	7
Agriculture		
Irrigated Farm Forestry Short Course	14	7
Rice for Profit	18	24
Weed Identification and Management	11	6
Water Wise Irrigation Management course	249	21
Quality Assurance/Food Processing		
Great Grain	41	7
HACCP Principles, Guidelines, Implm. and Use	20	20
Intro. Quality Man. Systems Food & Fibre Ind.	13	6
Approved Supplier Rec. Sys Food & Fibre Industry	1,367	6
System and Pest ID Proc. for Phyto sanitation	32	14
Other	1	30
Workplace Training Category 1	1	30
SUB TOTAL	2284	24590
Home Study Courses		
Pastoral Property Management	0	0
Commercial Layer Management	50	2000
Commercial Meat Chicken Management	55	2200
Vertebrate Pest Management	0	0
SUB TOTAL	105	4200
Other		
Professional Officer Training	768	15
Field Days	1500	2
Tutoring	0	1007
School Visits	276	4
SUB TOTAL	2544	16637
TOTAL	6771	208484

MCA 2000 Overall Statistics

Murrumbidgee College	Overall Training Delivery	2000		
Course	Number of Course Enrolments	Number of Clients	Course Hours	Total Hours
Full-Time Courses				
Certificate III in Agriculture	29	29	1310	37990
Certificate III in Agriculture (Rural Office Practice)	4	4	1310	5240
Certificate IV in Agriculture	12	12	1310	15720
Certificate IV in Pastoral Property Management	6	6	1310	10480
SUB TOTAL	53	53		69430
Traineeships				
Agriculture				
Certificate II in Agriculture (General)	18	18	450	8100
Certificate II in Agriculture (General - part time)	5	5	250	1250
Certificate II in Agriculture (Beer Cattle Prod.)	2	2	525	1050
Certificate II in Agriculture (Grain Production)	2	2	525	1050
Certificate III in Agriculture (General)	5	5	540	2700
Certificate III in Agriculture (Pig Production)	1	1	540	540
Horticulture				
Certificate II in Horticulture (Parks & Gardens)	7	7	510	3570
Certificate II in Horticulture (Landscape)	1	1	555	555
Certificate II in Horticulture (Turf Management)	2	2	540	1080
Certificate II in Horticulture (Aboriginal)	1	1	555	555
Business				
Certificate II in Small Business	1	1	400	400
Certificate II in Business Administration	1	1	400	400
Viticulture				
Certificate I in Food Processing (Wine)	11	11	390	4290
Certificate II in Food Processing (Wine)	11	11	510	5610
Certificate III in Food Processing (Wine)	4	4	540	2160
SUB TOTAL	72	72		33370
Short Courses - Units of Competence from				
Certificate I in Construction	15	15		4305
Certificate I in Food Processing	431	431		6020
Certificate I in Food Processing (Wine)	115	115		3082
Certificate I in Agriculture (Beef Cattle Production)	196	196		5190
Certificate II in Land Conservation & Restoration	3	3		40
Certificate II in Rural Skills (Aboriginal Community)	56	56		3439
Certificate II in Agriculture (General)	178	178		5877
Certificate II in Horticulture	6	6		210
Certificate II in Horticulture (Production)	41	41	35	2775
Certificate III in Agriculture (Process Records)	331	331	15	4905
Certificate III in Laboratory Skills	13	13		5365
Certificate III in Citrus production	61	61		377
Certificate III in Horticulture	44	44		1960
Certificate III in Horticulture (Production)	1	1		658
Certificate IV in Rural Business Management	11	11		2250
Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Trainir	200	200		4550
Certificate IV in Agriculture (Pig Production)	11	11		3240
SUB TOTAL	1773	1773		60323

MCA 2000 Overall Statistics

Attachment 1

**METHODOLOGY USED TO CALCULATE COST PER STUDENT
AT TOTAL AGRICULTURAL CENTRE & MURRUMBIDGE COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE**

The average student costs at each college for the years 2000 to 2003 inclusive (copy attached) were prepared using the methodology developed and applied for the Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture published March 2001 (copy attached).

The college review methodology was developed by the Registrars of both colleges in consultation with staff of the Management Accounting Unit (MAU) of the Finance & Administration Program to ensure a consistent and appropriate treatment of expenses.

The steps involved in the preparation of the costings include:

- All salaries expenditure and associated salary on costs were gathered (this included Consolidated Fund Salaries and Industry/Other funds). The staff included was as per the list in Appendix 5 of the "Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture".
- All staff were listed on a spreadsheet. The time each spent on various functions was allocated in hours per week. Categories included Administration, Domestic, Educational comprising (Full-time, Part-time, Short Course, External), Farm, Other. The hours each officer spent on various functions was arrived at by consultation with Section Leaders who in turn discussed the times with their staff to arrive at a fair figure. When totalled the hours for each category was converted to a percentage of the total hours. This percentage was used to arrive at the salary cost by function.
- All operating costs were added together and any expenditure that was not considered part of the education or college operation was removed. At Total, we removed such things as Total Homestead Maintenance expenditure, payments to the CB Alexander Foundation and Advisory Office expenses. Since Consolidated and Industry fund expenditure is largely split by section or Function anyway these figures were reasonable easy to gather. To Award Courses, Administration, Continuing Education etc). Section managers were asked to nominate the % of expenditure spent on each function. Where there were some mixed functions such as Farm and Assets expenditure was split in much the same way. From the information I have the costs included expenditure against Assets Cost Centres 1527, 1528, and 919 in order to ensure all expenditure was included.
- An allocation of \$100,000 Growth Fund Capital Equipment was treated as Full-time student expenditure.
- Income was gathered and split in much the same fashion as the last two points above. Income from Short Courses, Commonwealth Growth funds, By-Product Income Account, Student Fees and other external projects was split according to Full-time, Part-time etc.
- Management Accounting provided the depreciation figure, which together with the above process produced the figures contained in the "Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture".
- MAU also reviewed these figures to ensure that a similar process was followed.

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NB: The net cost referenced in Appendix 3 of the College Review for Total and Yanco (ie. \$1,085,276 and \$961,044 for Total & Yanco, respectively) was used to calculate the cost per student at both colleges over the years 2001 - 2003, inclusive, viz. the net cost for 2000 was divided by the number of students each year to arrive at the cost per student.

Ellen Howard
Program Manager, Education & Training
19 September 2003

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Financial Summary for Calendar Year 2000

	Full time	Part time	External (1)	Short course	Total Education	Other Expenditure (2)	Total
Total							
Expenses	1,914,195	259,821	795,147	328,792	3,297,955	1,520,563	4,818,518
Depreciation	219,466	73,050	22,387	47,473	362,376		362,376
Total Cost	2,133,661	332,871	817,534	376,265	3,660,331	1,520,563	5,180,894
Less Revenue	1,048,385	203,579	528,690	125,697	1,906,551	689,175	2,595,726
Net Cost	1,085,276	129,292	288,844	250,568	1,753,780	831,388	2,585,168
Student no's (3)	118	40	394	453			
Average cost per student	\$9,197.25	\$3,232.31	\$733.11	\$552.69			
Yanco							
Expenses	1,219,560	484,456	1,810,462	683,422	4,197,900	451,548	4,649,448
Depreciation	247,820	82,488	25,280	53,606	409,194		409,194
Total Cost	1,467,380	566,944	1,835,742	737,028	4,607,094	451,548	5,058,642

Less revenue	506,336	284,723	871,285	248,973	1,911,317	105127	2,016,444
Net Cost	961,044	282,221	964,457	488,055	2,695,777	346,421	3,042,198
Student numbers(3)	65	67	1,613	3,064			
Average cost per student	\$14,785.29	\$4,212.26	\$597.93	\$159.29			
Total							
Expenses	3,133,755	744,277	2,605,609	1,012,214	7,495,855	1,972,111	9,467,966
Depreciation	487,286	155,538	47,667	101,079	771,570	0	771,570
Total Cost	3,601,041	899,815	2,653,276	1,113,293	8,267,425	1,972,111	10,239,636
Less revenue	1,554,721	488,302	1,399,975	374,870	3,817,868	794,302	4,612,170
Net Cost	2,046,320	411,513	1,253,301	738,423	4,449,557	1,177,809	5,627,366
Student Numbers (3)	183	107	2,007	3,517			
Average cost per student	\$11,182.07	\$3,845.92	\$624.46	\$209.96			

Notes:

- 1 'External' at Total means home study students. At Yanco it means externally funded students eg ARTP, Horticulture, Quality Assurance
- 2 'Other' at Total includes the farm operation.
- 3 The student number figure is the number of participants. It is not a measure of lecturer workload, as different types of student require different levels of staff intervention, eg 1st year students have a higher level of lecturer input than Diploma students

Appendix 7 Minutes of Meetings

Minutes No 22

Tuesday 11 May 2004

Room 1108, Parliament House at 6.40pm

1. Members present

Mr Cohen (Chair)

Mr West

Mr Colless

Mr West

Mr Tsang

Ms Hale

Mr Lynn

Ms Fazio for items 1-6(Griffin)

Mr Catanzariti for items 7-8(Griffin)

2. Substitute members

The Chair informed the Committee that he had received written advice from the Government Whip that Ms Fazio would be substituting for Ms Griffin for the duration on the inquiry into the Hunter Economic Zone and the Tomalpin woodlands; and that Mr Catanzariti would be substituting for Ms Griffin for the duration of the inquiry into the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture.

3. Confirmation of Minutes No 21

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Fazio, that minutes No 21 be confirmed.

...

7. Inquiry into the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture

The Committee noted the resolution of the House of Wednesday 5 May 2004:

1. That General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 inquire into and report on the closure of residential training at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture and in particular:

(a) the process by which the decision was made to close the residential training,

(b) the community and industry consultation that preceded the announcement of the proposal,

(c) the impact on the Leeton and Yanco communities and district, and

(d) the reasons why Murrumbidgee and Tocal colleges have not been transferred to the Department of Education and Training.

2. That the Committee report by Thursday 23 September 2004.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that the Chair seek the leave of the House to extend the reporting date for the inquiry to Thursday 21 October 2004.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that the title for the inquiry be the Inquiry into the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that the closing date for submissions to the inquiry be Friday 11 June 2004.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that the Chair be authorised to place advertisements calling for submissions in the Griffith Area News, Wagga Wagga Advertiser, Leeton Murrumbidgee Irrigator, The Land, Sunraysia Daily, and the West Wyalong Advocate.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, to conduct a public hearing at Parliament House on Monday 5 July 2004 and a site visit and public hearing at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture on either Monday 21 June or Friday 2 July.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Tsang, that arrangements for the conduct of the public hearings and the site visit be left in the hands of the secretariat.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Lynn, that Members would advise the secretariat of persons or organisations to whom should be sent invitations to make submissions to the inquiry.

8. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned at 7.35pm sine die.

Robert Stefanic
Clerk to the Committee

Minutes No 25

Monday 21 June 2004

Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, Yanco, at 10:00am

1. Members present

Mr Cohen (Chair)
Mr West
Mr Colless
Ms Hale
Mr Lynn
Mr Catanzariti (Griffin)

2. Apologies

Mr Tsang

3. Advice of substitute members

The Chair informed the Committee that he had received written advice from the Government Whip that Mr Catanzariti would be substituting for Ms Griffin for the duration of the inquiry.

4. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following submissions received

- No 1 – Mr Chris Rodham
- No 2 – Mrs J Slennett
- No 11 – Ms Claire Butler
- No 12 – Isolated Children's Parents' Association
- No 14 – Mr Adrian Piccoli MP, Member for Murrumbidgee
- No 20 – Griffith City Council
- No 23 – Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture Advisory Council
- No 27 – Mr Geoff Speers
- No 32 – Mr Geoff Speers
- No 35 – Riverina Development Board

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that submissions numbers 1, 2, 11, 12, 14, 20, 23, 27, 32 and 35 be made public.

5. Public Hearing

The public and media were admitted. The Chair made a statement to Members regarding the broadcasting of proceedings.

Mr Daniel Slennett and Ms Clare Butler, ex-students, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, were admitted and examined.

The witnesses withdrew.

Cr Dino Zappacosta and Mr Andrew Crakanthorp, Griffith City Council, were admitted and examined.

The witnesses withdrew.

Mrs Janette Rodham, local resident, mother of ex student, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, was admitted and examined.

The witness withdrew.

Mr Jim Geltch AM and Mr Grant Delves, members of the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture Advisory Council, were admitted and examined.

Mr Geltch tabled the following documents with the Committee:

- Extending Education: Review of the Agricultural Colleges within NSW Agriculture
- Letter to Ms Ellen Howard, Program Manager (Education and Training), NSW Agriculture
- Letter to Dr K Sheridan AO, Director-General, NSW Agriculture
- Email – summary of college data for 2000-2002
- Consolidation of the provision of public agricultural education in NSW
- Letter to Mr Geltch from Dr K Sheridan AO, Director-General, NSW Agriculture

The witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned briefly at 1:00 pm for a tour of the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture facilities, accompanied by Mr Cameron Archer, Principal, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, Mr George Stevens, Manager, Yanco Agricultural Institute, and Mr John Collins, Manager, Continuing Education, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture.

The Hearing resumed at 2:00 pm.

Mr Geoff Speers, local resident, was admitted and examined.

The witness withdrew.

Mr Pat Brassil AM, Deputy Chair, Riverina Regional Development Board, and Mr Peter Dale, Executive Officer, Riverina Regional Development Board, were admitted and examined.

Mr Dale tabled the following documents with the Committee:

- A new collegiate system for rural and remote students – rural education & training precincts
- Minutes of Meeting held at MCA Yanco Monday 8 September 2003

The witnesses withdrew.

Mr Adrian Piccoli MP, Member for Murrumbidgee, was admitted and examined.

Mr Piccoli tabled the following document with the Committee:

- NSW State Electoral Districts Ranked by 2001 Census Characteristics

The witness withdrew.

Mr Gordon Dunlop, State President, Isolated Children and Parent's Association, was admitted and examined.

The witness withdrew.

The public and media withdrew.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless that the Committee publish the documents tabled with the Committee during the public hearing.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, write to the following organisations requesting their attendance as witnesses at a hearing to be held at Parliament House on Monday 5 July 2004.

- The Department of Agriculture
- Ms Helen Scott-Orr
- Ms Ellen Howard
- Dr Richard Sheldrake
- Leeton Council
- Rural Communities Consultative Council
- NSW Farmers' Association

- Total Advisory Council
- The Department of Education and Training
- Mr Kevin Sheridan AO, former Director-General, Department of Agriculture.

6. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned at 4:00 pm until 10am on Friday 5 July 2004 (Tomalpin Inquiry).

Rachel Simpson
Clerk to the Committee

Minutes No 27**Monday 5 July 2004****Room 814/815, Parliament House at 9.45 am****1. Members Present**

Mr Ian Cohen (Chair)
 Mr Tony Catanzariti
 Mr Rick Colless
 Ms Sylvia Hale
 Mr Charlie Lynn (Harwin)
 Mr Henry Tsang
 Mr Ian West (Griffin)

2. Substitutions

The Chair noted correspondence received from the Government Whip that the Hon Ian West MLC would replace the Hon Kayee Griffin MLC for the purposes of the hearing.

The Chair noted correspondence received from the Opposition Whip that the Hon Charlie Lynn MLC would replace the Hon Don Harwin MLC for the duration of the inquiry.

3. Minutes

Resolved on the motion of Mr West, that Minutes No 25 be confirmed.

4. Correspondence received***Submissions***

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Catanzariti, that submissions nos 3 to 10; 13; 15 to 19; 21 to 22; 24 to 26; 28 to 31; 33 to 34 and 36 to 37 be made public.

Correspondence to Ministers for Agriculture and Education

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that the Chair write to the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Education and Training requesting copies of correspondence between the Ministers regarding the withdrawal of Commonwealth Education and Training funds from NSW Agriculture.

5. Public hearing - Inquiry into the Closure of the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture

The public, the media and witnesses were admitted.

The Chair made an opening statement drawing attention to the broadcasting guidelines and other matters.

Dr Richard Sheldrake, Deputy Director General of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ms Helen Scott-Orr, Executive Director Research Advisory and Education, Ms Ellen Howard, Program Manager, Education and Training and Dr Alan Gleeson, Executive Director Corporate Services, Department of Primary Industries, were sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

Ms Diana Gibbs, Chair, Rural Communities Consultative Council, was sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

Mr Ray Pluis, General Manager, Leeton Shire Council, was sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

Mr Allan Brown, Member and Mr Jeff Sorrell, Campaign Manager, NSW Farmers Association, were sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

Mr Richard Chaffey, private citizen and Mr John Hodgins, Member, CB Alexander College Advisory Council, were sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

Mr Scott Whiston, Member, Tocal College Ex-Students Association, was sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

Mr Ian Dunlop, Member, Friends of Tocal, was sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

6. Deliberative

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that Members may provide the secretariat with additional questions on notice for today's witnesses by 5pm Wednesday 7 July 2004.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr West, to publish the submission of Mr Dunlop.

7. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned at 4.15pm *sine die*.

Rachel Simpson
Clerk to the Committee

Minutes No 33**Monday 18 October 2004****Room 1108 Parliament House at 11:00 am****2. Members Present**

Mr Ian Cohen (Chair)
 Mr Tony Catanzariti
 Mr Rick Colless
 Ms Kayee Griffin
 Ms Sylvia Hale
 Mr Henry Tsang (to 12:15pm)
 Hon Jan Burnswoods (from 12:15pm)

3. Substitutions

The Chair informed the Committee that he had received written advice from the Government Whip that Ms Burnswoods would be substituting for Mr Tsang from 12:15 pm for the duration of the deliberative meeting.

4. Minutes

Resolved on the motion of Mr Catanzariti that Minutes No 27 be confirmed.

5. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence received:

- 4 August 2004 - from Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, NSW Minister for Primary Industries, to the Chair, General Purpose Standing Committee No 5 on the subject of copies of correspondence between himself and the Minister for Education and Training.

The Committee noted the following correspondence sent:

- 12 July 2004 - from Ian Cohen MLC, Chair General Purpose Standing Committee No 5, to the Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, NSW Minister for Primary Industries requesting copies of correspondence between himself and the Minister for Education and Training.
- 12 July 2004 - from Ian Cohen MLC, Chair General Purpose Standing Committee No 5, to the Hon Andrew Refshauge MP, NSW Minister for Education and Training requesting copies of correspondence between himself and the Minister for Primary Industries.
- 28 July 2004 - from Ian Cohen MLC, Chair General Purpose Standing Committee No 5, to Mr John Hodgens, re invitation to visit to Tocal College.
- 8 September 2004 - from Ian Cohen MLC, Chair General Purpose Standing Committee No 5, to the Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, NSW Minister for Primary Industries requesting an explanation of the basis upon which the Minister considered the request for correspondence between himself and the Minister for Education and Training.

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that the Committee write to the Hon Andrew Refshauge MP, NSW Minister for Education and Training requesting a response to the Committee's letter of 12 July 2004, and send a follow-up letter to the Hon Ian Macdonald.

The Committee noted the following answers to Questions on Notice received:

- Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, Minister for Primary Industries
- Mr Ray Pluis, Leeton Shire Council
- Mr John Hodgens, Farmer
- Mr Adrian Piccoli MP, Member for Murrumbidgee
- Mr Alan Brown, NSW Farmers' Association
- Mr Ian Dunlop

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that responses to the Questions on Notice be made public and added as an attachment to the report.

The Committee noted the receipt of submissions 38 and 39.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that all public submissions be published on the web.

6. Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture

Chair's draft report

The Chair tabled his draft report which, having been circulated, was taken as being read.

Chapter One read.

Chapter Two read.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that, subject to the information being available from the Committee's evidence, an additional table (2.2) be created showing a breakdown of student contact hours and that if the breakdown into full time or part time hours is not available, a column be added to Table 2.1 showing the total contact hours.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Tsang, that the following phrase be added at the end of paragraph 2.35

“ as a consequence of a community awareness campaign.”

Mr Colless moved a motion that the word “unfortunate” be changed to the word “regrettable” in paragraph 2.36, line 3.

Question put.

Ayes: Mr Colless
Mr Cohen
Ms Hale

Noes: Mr Tsang
Ms Griffin
Mr Tsang

Question resolved in the affirmative on the casting vote of the Chair.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that a recommendation be inserted after Recommendation 3, that

“That the residential facilities remain intact and functional until such time as the working party examining the future of the College has completed its deliberations and reported.”

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that the Committee adjourn for thirty minutes to allow Mr Catanzariti to devise a suitable form of words to propose as an amendment to paragraph 3.10.

The Committee adjourned at 12:35pm.

The Committee resumed at 1:05pm.

Chapter Three read.

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Catanzariti, that paragraph 3.10 be amended by deletion of the words “superficial” and that the words “appear to have been” be replaced by “were”, and that a new paragraph 3.11 be inserted immediately after 3.10 which reads:

“Government members of the Committee believe that there is conflicting evidence as to the nature or level of consultation that occurred between the Department and the Advisory Council.”

Chapter Four read.

Chapter Five read.

The Chair indicated that his foreword would be circulated to Members of the Committee for approval to include in the report.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Colless, that the report, as amended, be adopted.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Hale, that the report be signed by the Chair and presented to the Clerk of the House on Thursday 21 October 2004 in accordance with the resolution establishing the Committee of 3 July 2003.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Hale, that the Committee secretariat be authorised to make any grammatical or typographical changes to the report prior to tabling.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Hale, that pursuant to the provisions of section 4 of the Parliamentary Papers (Supplementary Provisions) Act 1975 and under the authority of Standing Order 223, the Committee authorise the Clerk of the Committee to publish the report, correspondence, submissions and tabled documents, except for those for which confidentiality has been requested.

7. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned at 1:45pm *sine die*.

Rachel Simpson
Clerk to the Committee