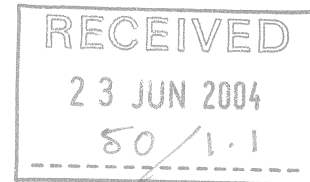


Condobolin Progress Association  
PO Box 62 Condobolin NSW 2877

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2004

The Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No 5  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St Sydney NSW 2000



Sir,

The Condobolin Progress Association is most concerned that the decision to close Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture at Yanco has been taken without due care and consideration of the current needs and circumstances of farming communities in NSW.

We believe the Minister has been ill advised. Currently there are many students attending the College with the express view of working in family businesses in the Western part of the State. For Minister McDonald, or his advisors, to suggest that these students transfer to the Hunter Valley is evidence they do not understand the curriculum or farming practices west of the mountains. Typical broad acre or dry land farming is not practiced as a rule in the Hunter Valley, their rainfall and soils precluding the growing of cereals.

The only other colleges to offer courses suitable for our trainee farmers and stock producers are in Dalby and Longreach. These colleges are 900 and 1200 kilometres respectively from Condobolin. Some of our students have attended these colleges, but only after successfully completing their HSC within NSW as it is not prudent for young children to be so far from home during their early teenage years, they go interstate when older.

Recently, due to a number of circumstances, not least of which is the general rural downturn, exacerbated by this prolonged drought, many students are now completing their HSC alongside their Certificate in Agriculture at Murrumbidgee. We believe it makes more sense for a government interested in families, rural development and job creation, to enable students to complete their qualifications in a shorter space of time and at an institute which allows parents to visit and participate in the child's education.

For the Minister to justify the decision based on enrolment figures taken during the worst drought in 100 years is evidence, again, that he perhaps does not understand REAL farming. During a prolonged drought, it is necessary to cart water and feed to stock – this requires many hands on deck. Kids who would normally have headed to college are taking time off to save the family farm to which they would expect to return, on completion of relevant studies designed for and completed within their own region.

The Condobolin Progress Association would welcome the opportunity to demonstrate to Mr McDonald that tailored training pays off. We have a number of excellent farmers who graduated from Yanco.

Please let us know what we can do to help reverse this most unfortunate decision, the ramifications of which will be far reaching and long lasting.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Dalton  
Secretary

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