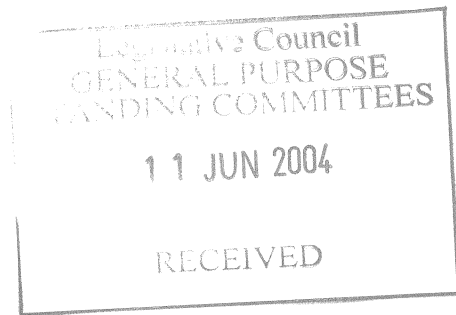
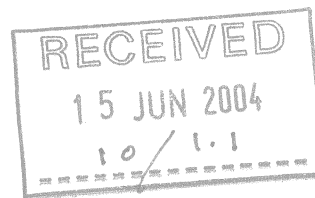


"Braemar"
WEETHALLE NSW 2669

27 May 2004



The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No 5
Legislative Council, Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Louise Butler and I am a parent of Claire Butler, a former first-year student of Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture (MCA). We were promised Claire could complete Certificate III and IV in Agriculture and gain entry into Charles Sturt University, where she would complete a degree in Agricultural Science as she wants to be an agronomist.

My husband, John Butler, and I were devastated when news of full-time residential courses would cease at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, we immediately began thinking what will Claire do in 2004.

At the recent Certificate Day held on 2 April, at the College, Mr Archer, newly appointed Principal of the College, spoke of putting all the happenings with the College behind us and that the students should be optimistic about the future. What future? Former staff and students of MCA have either no jobs or limited options for the future. The community of Leeton and Yanco have also suffered from the loss of the College.

Mr Ian Macdonald has not only jeopardized my daughter's future and other first-year students of MCA, but also young aspiring agricultural enthusiasts for generations to come. Where are they to go now, certainly not Tocal as they do not even know the meaning of broad-acre cropping.

Mr Macdonald was appointed Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries by us and he turns around and makes a dense decision like this, and the Carr Government let him

do it. Do they not realise how rich in Agriculture the Murrumbidgee Irrigation area is. There was nothing students had to go very far to learn about.

My daughter would have to travel more than ten hours if she wanted to come home. At least when she was at Yanco we could didn't have to make a day trip to pick her up. Mr Ian Macdonald's scholarships he was offering to first-year students to relocate to Tocal would not have covered the costs needed to send my daughter there.

When I did enquire into Claire transferring to Tocal we were told that there was no accommodation available at the campus itself, but there was a Caravan Park nearby my daughter could stay at. No way in the world would I allow my daughter live in a caravan while trying to gain an education. As my husband and I are facing another year of below average rainfall, we knew we could not afford to send Claire to Tocal.

My daughter now has to travel two hours a day, four days a week to complete a Certificate in Business Administration at TAFE in West Wyalong, which will hopefully boost her into the agri-business further. She is also completing her Certificate in Woolclassing, which she attends one night a week.

Young people are already forced to travel away to gain tertiary qualifications or on the job experience and it is decisions like this one that is pushing them away from the rural towns, and there is little or no chance of them returning to there home towns.

I do not believe the Government completely thought this decision through and weighed up the impact the closure of the College would have on the surrounding communities. What I would like to know 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.

You cannot put a price on my daughter's education and the Carr Government should not be given the right to decide this either. I am sure if they were to come down to the Riverina they will see the impact their decision has had on the community, instead of making these decisions from their offices in Canberra.

I would like you to enquire into wether it really is worth while the College staying a short courses institute or wether it was more profitable as a full-time residential course provider.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Butler', written in a cursive style.

Louise Butler

lb