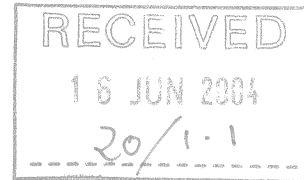


William and Susannah Gill Memorial Scholarship
PO Box 574, TORONTO 2283

Mr. Ian Cohen, MLC
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, SYDNEY 2000



Dear Mr. Cohen,

Re: Inquiry into Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture

My attention has been drawn to item 1(d) of the Terms of Reference of this inquiry, relating to the question of transfer of the C.B. Alexander College, Tocal to the Department of Education and Training.

Some ten years ago, a similar proposal arose and it was determined that the interests of all parties, and especially students and others associated with the Tocal College were best served by its continued operation under the Minister for Agriculture. This determination was reached with the support of all political parties then represented in the Parliament. My family and others associated with the **William and Susannah Gill Memorial Scholarship** at the Tocal College object strongly to any suggestion that Tocal's management and operation will be improved by any change to the current arrangements.

In November 1988, some 2,000 descendants of William and Susannah Gill gathered at Morpeth to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of these forebears in Australia. We determined to establish a permanent memorial to this family based on their commitment to agriculture, their commitment to community service, and their associations with Woodville, Dunmore and nearby localities. Our objectives were fully met by the Tocal College, and accordingly a Memorial Scholarship was established.

Having particular regard to the original purposes of the bequest on which the Tocal College was established, we deemed it appropriate to focus this memorial scholarship on a student with an assessed degree of disadvantage, rather than mere academic potential. We have been delighted to see other scholarship donors follow this lead over succeeding years, such that (with the exception of a Newcastle University funded scholarship) 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, or can sustain the variety of programmes which have been developed at Tocal with the support of local rural communities, and other individuals and community groups committed to the principles on which the College was founded. We ask that this letter be forwarded to all members of your Committee for consideration, and (should any change be recommended) for full details of the evidence in support of such recommendation, such that we can consider transfer of this Scholarship elsewhere.

Yours sincerely,


(D.H. LIGHTFOOT, B.A.; B. SOC. STUDS (HONS))

11/6/2004

