



In reply quote: 175:MN:TR

16 September 2003

Mr. Ian Cohen, MLC
Committee Chair
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
Closure of the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture

Dear Mr. Cohen

The Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, the Hon. Ian MacDonald MP, announced that as from the end of the 2003 college year in December the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture (MCA) in Yanco will be restructured to allow it to focus on its nationally recognised continuing adult education efforts. The full-time residential courses offered at Yanco will be transferred to Alexander College in Tocol.

Griffith City Council is most concerned at that decision being made.

The Minister's decision to transfer courses from MCA to Alexander College will have a number of major effects. Those include:

- The partial closure of an award winning rural educational facility located in the Riverina.
- The transfer of intellectual capital from the Riverina region of NSW.
- The loss of 44 full and part-time jobs from the Leeton community.
- The financial effects of those job losses to the Riverina community.
- The loss of educational opportunities in the Riverina.

This Council expresses concern that undertakings were given by Premier Carr in 1998 that consultation and socio-economic impact studies would be carried out where State services were to be relocated from regional areas of NSW. This has not occurred. Further, the decision seems to be totally contrary to the Government's Five Point Plan for the Riverina.

Griffith City Council asks that the State Government delay the implementation of the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries decision to transfer full-time residential programs from Yanco to Alexander College until:

- The MCA Advisory Council has had time to consider how the College's resources can best be used to provide a wider range of services to address the emerging agricultural issues that are facing 'broad acre' Australian farmers.
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has released appropriate and public transparent accounting information to justify its decision.
- A socio-economic impact study of the decision has been completed and released to Riverina communities.

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- There has been meaningful and open consultation with Riverina communities.
- The decision of the Minister has been reviewed against Premier Carr's Five Point Plan for the Riverina.

Griffith City Council requests that the Government continue to provide the full range of courses being offered at MCA until the above investigations have been completed.

Yours faithfully

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

Andrew Crakanthorp
ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER (CORPORATE)