



The Hon Mark Furner MP
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

Our ref: CTS 06177/19
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18 MAR 2019

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Services
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 28 February 2019 regarding the closure of the Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges' e-petition No. 3060-18.

Successive Queensland Governments have made considerable efforts to improve the relevance and performance of the Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges (QATC) and have invested considerable funding to keep them operating.

Despite this assistance, QATC's financial position has continued to deteriorate. In 2018, the colleges at Emerald and Longreach remained under-utilised. They have run at a substantial loss for the past decade and graduated only 17 students between the two campuses in 2018.

As a result of declining student numbers and successive deficits, Emeritus Professor Peter Coaldrake was engaged to provide recommendations on how to grow the vocational education, training and skills sector in central-western Queensland.

The purpose of the review was to optimise the Government's investment in vocational education and training in the region to ensure that employers have access to a skilled workforce and prospective students can access quality training and employment opportunities locally.

The Palaszczuk Government has considered Professor Coaldrake's recommendations and has decided to close the QATC at the end of 2019 and repurpose the colleges' facilities.

This effectively means the QATC business entity will cease to manage the significant assets currently owned by the QATC. However, the resources themselves will not be shut down or mothballed. The Palaszczuk Government will be guided by advice from local community members and organisations as to how best repurpose the use of the facilities to benefit the

whole training delivery scenario for all central-western Queensland industries, including agriculture.

I can assure you that this decision was not taken lightly and the Government is committed to engaging widely with local communities, businesses and education providers to determine the best way to repurpose the available training facilities and assets, to be used more effectively.

A designated Project Management Office (PMO) has been established to deliver the Palaszczuk Government's response to the Coaldrake Review. Mr Charles Burke has been appointed as the Executive Director leading the PMO. Mr Burke is well credentialled for the role given his involvement with rural and regional Queensland and agricultural sector experience. Ms Alison Mobbs has been appointed as Director for the PMO and will be based in Longreach.

A key function of the PMO will be to initiate the formation of local stakeholder advisory groups in Emerald and Longreach to provide advice and inform the development of an Economic Transition Strategy. PMO officers will spend significant time in the regions working with the QATC, local councils, and other stakeholder and community members to identify the best way forward.

This Strategy will include a plan for the future use of all the QATC educational and production assets and resources. During the 'teach-out' period of 2019, the college facilities will remain open and be fully maintained. Timing for the repurposing of these assets will depend on elements of the Strategy being finalised and agreed by key stakeholders.

If you require further information, I encourage you to contact my office on 07 3719 7420.

Yours sincerely



MARK FURNER MP

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