

CURTIN UNIVERSITY — MURESK INSTITUTE — ASSOCIATE DEGREE IN AGRIBUSINESS

**423. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the Minister for Education and Training:**

I refer to the announcement that Curtin University will start delivering the lesser qualification of an associate degree in agribusiness at Muresk Institute from 2019.

- (1) Will there be any ongoing funding for the Charles Sturt University Bachelor of Agribusiness Management course beyond the current year?
- (2) If so, when will funding finish?
- (3) Will the minister confirm today that she intends to cut the bachelor degree from Muresk Institute and replace it with a lesser qualification?
- (4) What, if any, government funding will be provided to Curtin University for the associate degree in agribusiness?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

- (1) Any ongoing funding for Charles Sturt University for delivery of the course is only for the remainder of the course for students who are enrolled to date.
- (2) The second part of the question was when will the funding cease. Effectively, the subsidy will cease when the final cohort of students doing the course through Charles Sturt University complete their course.
- (3) The third part was about whether I will confirm I have cut the degree course. No; I will not, because I have made a prudent financial decision about how we subsidise, or not, Charles Sturt University's delivery of the course through Muresk Institute. If Charles Sturt University wants to continue to provide its course through Muresk Institute, it is entitled to do so and I would encourage it to. The decision I have made is a prudent one about financial support to a course that an independent inquiry found was flawed from the outset. The original business case was identified as having high financial risk. A review one year into the course again identified that continuing with the subsidy had high financial risk. The final independent report, which the previous government received in September 2016, confirmed that it was a high financial risk to continue that subsidy. The course ran at a deficit in 2015–16. It is anticipated to run a deficit in 2017. It was poor financial decision-making in the first place. The modelling was incorrect and I made a prudent decision, I think.
- (4) No. The government will provide no funding. Curtin University wanted to get back into Muresk Institute and continue a range of courses it could offer in a regional setting and I am really pleased it is doing that.