

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
4 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Sir,

I write on behalf of the Combined Agricultural Advisory Committee (CAAC) in regard to PETITION NO 058 - AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION FARM PROVISION TRUST.

The government Agricultural Education system for Years 10 to 12 through the five Colleges and Esperance Farm School along with other Schools providing practical agricultural experiences is held in very high regard by industry both within this State and across the Nation.

THERE ARE THREE MAJOR FACTORS WHICH HAVE CREATED THIS SUCCESSFUL MODEL

1. Students receive practical, hands on, experience as they operate a number of enterprises that are economically viable and existing within the framework of large scale commercial farms. This practical on farm experience makes them 'work ready' on graduation. Should they choose to enter an agricultural career after further studies, they are better suited to many jobs because of their wider practical experience than their peers.
2. The system enjoys a special and unique link to the industries that it provides education for through the Farm Advisory Committees at each College and School. These committees provide long term direction and guidance of best district practice. They give continuity of direction to a site, regardless of changes in staff. (In the last eighteen months one site has had four changes of Principal and three of Farm Manager).
3. The Farm Provisions Trust allows individual sites experiencing difficulties from seasonal or market forces to be supported by sites experiencing better times. This maintains an equal educational opportunity for a student regardless of the site they attend.

EACH OF THESE THREE FACTORS WHICH HAVE CREATED THE SUCCESSFUL MODEL ARE AT RISK IF THE GOVERNMENT TAKES 20% OF THE INCOME TO THE FARM PROVISIONS TRUST FUND.

The CAAC administers the Trust Fund. Approximately 40% of funds are spent on 'fixed cost' items including, but not limited to, state fleet lease, licences, vehicle repairs and maintenance, insurance, machinery lease and contingencies. These expenses are paid on behalf of the Colleges and Schools. They vary a little year to year but are fixed costs to the Trust.

The remaining funds are then distributed to Colleges and Schools according to identified needs. In a sense these are 'Discretionary Funds' as distinct from 'fixed costs' because CAAC does have discretion as to where they are spent.

