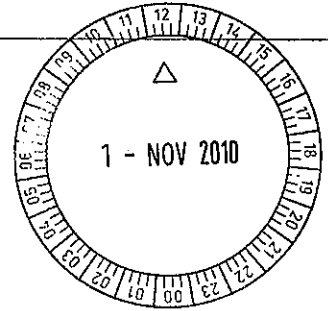


# PUBLIC



## Minister for Education; Tourism



Our Ref: 28-21207/1:MH:HE0047:2010/16978

Hon Brian Ellis MLC  
Chairman  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Mr Ellis *Brian*

### PETITION No 84 – CLOSURE OF THE MURESK CAMPUS NEAR NORTHAM

I refer to your correspondence regarding this matter.

In January of this year, Hon Hendy Cowan was commissioned to conduct a review of higher education in agriculture in Western Australia. The review was prompted by the decision of Curtin University of Technology to withdraw from the Muresk campus by 2012.

The review considered options for Muresk and also addressed broader issues, namely:

- the demand for graduates in agriculture
- areas of demand not being fully catered for
- future needs of universities in this area
- pathways from schools, and
- opportunities for rationalisation and cooperation between institutions.

The report presented evidence of the demand of the agriculture industry in Western Australia for graduates in order to respond to the opportunities and challenges facing agriculture.

The report also addressed issues such as the need to make agriculture more attractive to potential employees and to provide career paths and training; and suggested a watching brief on the inadequacy of Commonwealth Government financial support for regional higher education and the low level of income support to rural and remote students.

On pathways from school, the review focused on the success of the Education Department's agricultural colleges and suggested a Year 13 program as a pathway to further studies in agriculture.

Given the need to improve skill levels in agriculture, the review proposed that Muresk become a multi-use facility to develop skills at various levels of post school agricultural education.

The report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2010. Whilst long term arrangements need to be developed by the Government, it is important to emphasise, contrary to the petitioners' concerns about closure of the campus, that the future of Muresk as an agricultural education institution is secure.

Curtin students will remain at Muresk in 2011 and 2012 but with no new intakes. In addition, CY O'Connor Institute, which is headquartered in Northam, will share the Muresk campus with Curtin from the beginning of 2011. The Institute will commence certificate level courses in agriculture and related studies at the Muresk campus from the beginning of 2011. The Institute plans to commence an Associate Degree in Agribusiness in mid 2011 as a pathway to further agriculture related studies at the University of Western Australia, Curtin and Murdoch. It is seeking accreditation of the Associate Degree, and registration as a non self-accrediting higher education institution. The details of the courses that will be offered are yet to be finalised.

Responsibility for the management of the Muresk facility will remain with Curtin University in 2011.

With regard to information about undergraduate and post graduate courses in agricultural studies, the most up-to-date information would best be obtained directly from Murdoch and Curtin Universities and the University of Western Australia.

I trust that the information I have provided will assist your Committee's deliberations on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA  
**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION; TOURISM**

**PUBLIC**

29 OCT 2010