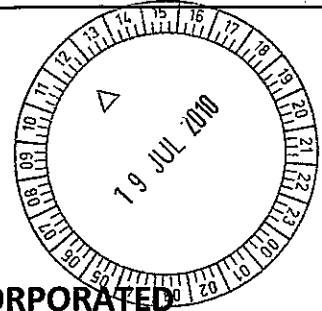


**PUBLIC**



**THE MURESK OLD COLLEGIANS' ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED**

The Hon. Kate Doust MLC  
Deputy Chair  
Legislative Council Standing Committee  
on Environment and Public Affairs  
Parliament House  
Perth WA 6000

Dear Ms Doust

Re: Petition No 84 – Closure of the Muresk Campus near Northam

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission. I start by stating that we have not taken our concern to the Ombudsman. I also strongly encourage the Committee to inquire into the matters raised in the petition and the following commentary.

I represent some 6000 alumni of Muresk, from the beginning of its time as an Agricultural College in 1926, when it was run by the state Department of Agriculture, continuing to the handing over of this responsibility to WAIT in 1969, which then became Curtin University of Technology in 1987. The petitioners include current students studying at Curtin's Muresk campus.

We do not look to Curtin to reverse its decision to abandon the campus and cease recruiting new students for 2011. Indeed we are greatly encouraged by the plans of the C Y O'Connor Institute to create new programs at Muresk that will largely supersede, and be a great improvement on, the programs currently being offered by Curtin. C Y O'Connor Institute plans to hold a consultation with rural and agribusiness industries next month and build the feedback obtained into its planned programs. This process of continual improvement was a hallmark of the previous programs run at Muresk, which was unfortunately abandoned by Curtin 10 years ago.

Curtin states there is no demand for the programs at Muresk, ignoring the fact the demand for such courses has always been cyclical and also forgetting that Curtin neglected to include the Muresk courses in the TISC list of available tertiary courses in 2009. The Association of Australian Agricultural Deans in on record as saying there are 3000 unfilled professional positions in agriculture and agribusiness throughout Australia. I urge the Committee to ask major employers, such as Rabobank, Westpac and the ANZ Bank, if they anticipate having difficulty recruiting staff from WA in the next 5-10 years. Or leading Farm Management Consultants like Farmanco, where the large majority of the professional staff are Muresk graduates.

I would like the Committee to also note that Muresk has always attracted students from regional areas of WA where the quality of secondary education is quite parlous, students who know they will initially struggle to succeed if they have to enrol on a Perth campus with 6000 other new students and take classes with over 600 other mainly urban educated students. And what they want and need is something that is not possible to create in Perth – the "Muresk Experience" of living and working together within an integrated curriculum plan crafted in past years by continuous consultation with farmers and agribusiness leaders.

I would like your Committee to know that Muresk was named Australia's premier agricultural education institution by Bulletin magazine in 1991, and it was "the Muresk Experience", that set its graduates apart from every other institution in Australia.

Muresk graduates are everywhere, in rural and regional centres, Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and even Darwin like Matt Darcey, Director Primary Industry Futures with the NT Government, Luke Bowen, Executive Director of the NT Cattleman's Association.

For example Justin Smirk, Chief Economist with St George Bank in Sydney is a Muresk graduate, as is former Sydney Swans footballer Mark Collins who now heads Leeuwin Finance in Perth. Owen Dare, chairman of the Blackwood River Catchment group and Dumbleyung Shire Councillor, Steve Rogers, Managing Director of Parmelia Productions, PGA Grains President Rick Wilson, CBH and past GRDC Director Mick McGinniss, Crawford Taylor WA State Manager Rabobank, David Timmel CEO of Landmark, Anthony Wilkes CEO of Ferngrove, vignerons and classmates Craig Scott and Justin Horgan, pioneer hay exporter Graham Harding and Livestock Exporter John Edwards from Al Jabri Australia Pty Ltd in Fremantle and Orthopaedic Surgeon Mick Tiller are all Muresk graduates. Many have become veterinarians like Bruce Moore, Rob Davies, Peter Adamson, Gibb MacDonald, Virginia Pullman and Brian Vale to name a few who studied at Muresk, including WA's recently retired Chief Veterinary Officer Peter Buckman and former Vice-Chancellor of Charles Darwin, UNE and Murdoch Universities Mal Nairn AM who now chairs the Australian Biosecurity CRC for Emerging Infectious Diseases.

Jenny Ethell, Principal of Perth College, Bernard Beattie and Andrew Castle who are Principals at Cunderdin and Narrogin Ag Colleges respectively, are Muresk graduates as are Ian Blayney MLA and Chris Tallentire MLA in the WA State Parliament, David Hitchins European Manager of Business Intelligence for DSM Pharmaceutical Products, based in Belgium, David Horlock, Vice President-Global Inspection and Auditing for Intertek in Hong Kong, Jonathon Worner, design director at ALLOY, Glen Thompson, Marketing Manager for Stanbroke Beef, Blair Bruce Project Manager Supply Chain Management for Meat and Livestock Australia, Justin Morrissey Export Livestock Manager for Wellards, Stuart Giglia, Director of Anagram Solutions in Melbourne, Anthony Fitzgerald, WA Accumulation manager ABB Grain Ltd, Peter Fray, Editor of the Sydney Morning Herald and other prominent national journalists like David "The Speculator" Haselhurst, Cathy Bolt and Melissa Sweet, Mark Paterson, CEO Currie Communications Melbourne, and Duncan Macintosh, Director of Development, International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines.

So are 20/25 professional consultants employed by leading rural management advisory firm Farmanco, and a large proportion of advisers with Planfarm, Rabobank, Westpac Agribusiness, and ANZ Agribusiness. The State Valuer-General Garry Fenner, is a Muresk graduate, so are Bryan Mickle (former CEO of Chestertons) and Jock Vincent, while at CBH there's 10 Muresk graduates in leadership roles including head of Global Marketing Matt Rutter and Avon Regional Manager Kelly Piper, there's niche grain exporter John Orr, owner of Premium Grain Handlers in Fremantle, Pfizer Animal Health State Manager Mike Danby, leading Perth stockbroker David Smythe, Icon Freight Services Marketing Director Mike Fairnie, not forgetting John Allen, former Group General Manager Nufarm Ltd, Dirk Hessels, former Asia General Manager for Smith Kline Animal Health, Brian Piesse, former Group General Manager Marketing & Agronomy Pivot Limited and General Manager Fertilisers CSBP Ltd, former AusAid Manager/regional Director Bruce Hutchinson who played a critical role in India's land care, sheep improvement and community development, and now transfers sustainable Australian Technologies to Vietnam, and Peter Lee former NFF Vice-President and President of WAFF.

***Most of these people are on record as saying they would or could not have gone to Perth to study at university; where would we all be without them?***

**Dr Ian Fairnie**

**PRESIDENT**

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