



Industry ignored in closure of Ag colleges

5 December 2018

Queensland broadacre agriculture's peak body, AgForce Queensland Farmers, is furious it has been ignored by the State Government around the closure of two iconic agricultural colleges.

AgForce General President Georgie Somerset said she was staggered that the broadacre sector was not asked for input into the termination of the Longreach Pastoral College and Emerald Agricultural College announced today by the State Government.

"These two institutions have historically provided a vital contribution to the success of modern broadacre agriculture," Mrs Somerset said.

"However, they have struggled in the face of changing demographics and a challenging business environment.

"It is shameful that our industry has been roundly ignored by the Government and by Prof Peter Coaldrake on this issue, when we have historically been so involved in and connected to the Colleges.

"Minister Furner claims to have consulted more than 70 organisations, so it is perplexing that AgForce was not one of them, especially given our memorandum of understanding with Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges (QATC).

"Our industry needs innovative, best-practice, accessible education to ensure we can continue to grow and deliver economic and employment benefits to Queensland.

"Broadacre agriculture in Queensland is worth \$7.25 billion at the farm gate, plus \$2.5 billion in first stage processing. More than 330,000 Queenslanders are employed across the whole food supply chain, including critically important jobs in our regional and rural communities.

"Ensuring access to quality education and skills development provides important career paths for young people in the bush at a time we are trying to encourage them to stay on the land."

Mrs Somerset said it was imperative the State Government closely involve broadacre agriculture in planning to "modernise and reinvigorate vocational education, training and skilling in the state's central west" announced in the media release.

"The media release issued by Minister Furner is very short on detail when it comes to what this plan involves, and how they are going to improve educational opportunities available to young people in the bush," she said.

Mrs Somerset described the closure of these iconic colleges as "the end of an era" that many people would see as proof that the State Government has a tin ear when it comes to listening to rural Queenslanders.

Ends.

Media Contact: David Vogler 0418 733 102
Hannah Piper 0407 813 470