

## **AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION SUBMISSION TO:**

### **Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee Enquiry**

#### **“Higher education and skills training to support future demand in agriculture and agribusiness in Australia.”**

##### **Submission on behalf of:**

**Mr Gregory Medway:** Farmer at Leigh Wood, Bevandale NSW, Previously in the Meat Industry, Enthusiastic entrepreneur, undertakes business training programs for Corporate Businesses.

**Dr John Troughton:** Strategy Advisor. Previous Carnegie Institute of Washington Fellow at Stanford University; Previous Member of Australian National University Council; Previous Eisenhower Fellow to the USA; Previous Energy and Environment advisor to UN; Previous NZ Horticultural Export Development Council NZ; Previous National Research Advisory Council NZ. M.Ag.Sc; PhD, DSC; FRSNZ. Sydney, NSW.

##### **An International College for Agricultural Entrepreneurs (ICAE)**

**BRIEF:** This submission registers the intent to extend the range of agricultural and agribusiness higher educational opportunities available to Australians from multi-disciplinary backgrounds by establishing a College (ICAE) to develop entrepreneurial agricultural business leaders. The College is to be established in the heart of agricultural country and on a landmark manufacturing complex site to ensure the students are exposed to farmers who are leaders in their specialist fields and to the issues confronting practical agriculture. This will be backed up with economic, business and science expertise to acquaint students with recent advances that will shape the opportunities in agriculture, from the fields to the factory to the plate. Activities will be supported to capitalise on the creative and entrepreneurial capacity of individuals so that they initiate new business endeavours that are constantly tracked and supported. To meet the demands of a globalised economy, it is proposed to include international students with their diverse cultural perspectives and firsthand knowledge of international food issues.

##### **SUMMARY COMMENTS:**

- *The adequacy of funding and priority given by governments at the federal, state and territory level to agriculture and agribusiness higher education and vocational education and training;* comment on the overall level of funding is difficult but the allocation of the funds to practical agriculture and entrepreneurial training in agribusiness is lacking so it may be how it is distributed now that universities concentrate on research. It is not enough to be trained in business or agriculture, the need is for a unique blend of both aspects in a practical (real world) environment.
- *The reasons and impacts of the decline in agricultural and related educational facilities;* Without entrepreneurial leaders creating profitable ventures spun off from agriculture there is no means to attract capital into agribusinesses and hence it goes to non-agricultural ventures and where the capital goes, so go the people, the educational and training facilities and the research investment.
- ***Solutions to address the widening gap between skilled agricultural labour supply and demand;*** create “creative commons” and “educational” and commercial agricultural precincts in both the urban and rural areas. These environments are where the community can see and understand practical agriculture and its link with food, jobs, income and wealth and support them with entrepreneurial business training where the entrepreneurs will create businesses and jobs. **See below.**

- *The impacts of any shortage on agricultural research;* to use an agricultural expression “which comes first the chicken or the egg”. Scientists can create opportunities for business but entrepreneurs push boundaries, identify unanswered questions that need science, and create wealth that can then be ploughed back into research to answer the questions. Research costs money, where does it come from?
- *The economic impacts of labour shortages on Australia's export oriented agricultural industries;* there are serious labour shortages in all Australian agricultural industries. This is because the pay does not attract them i.e. it is not competitive with alternatives, and that’s because the application of modern business practices lags the real value of the enterprise, especially where entrepreneurs can create price makers not price takers. This is how the economy works. It may not be right or the only way.
- *The incorporation of animal welfare principles in agriculture education;* they must be included in areas where animals are central to the activity and only broadly in the bulk of agriculture to do with grains, oil crops, fruits, vegetables and other plant products.

**Solutions to address the widening gap between skilled agricultural labour supply and demand; Our Solutions:**

1. Create a College environment that attracts talented students because of its performance in producing competitive career opportunities for all in agriculture.
2. Surround the students with an agricultural environment and access to leaders in the production of grains, oils, fruit, proteins and vegetables and with practical exposure to farms and the processing of its products.
3. Create leaders that can turn ideas into reality, into businesses, into jobs, and into profit through cohesive and concentrated focussed programs and mentoring.
4. Focus on food because it is fundamental to life and health, a universal resource, becoming limited, becoming more expensive and with endless facets to explore and exploit both professionally and commercially to the benefit of the community.
5. Consider food as an integrated agribusiness, from the ecosystem, production, transport, processing, preparing, presenting and promoting or marketing.
6. Engage students in all facets of the food agribusiness, (with economics, science and business expertise) so that they can open up their opportunities all along the chain.
7. Experience the issues of business; making decisions, networking, taking risks, learning, managing cash flow, raising capital, planning, setting targets, using the social media, gathering data, reviewing results and managing people.
8. Encourage students from all backgrounds, skills, cultures, countries and involve them in the local community to try ideas and understand the behaviour of communities, how they work and what works.
9. Integrate the student experience with exposure to educating the public and in exploring new ideas in the preparation, presentation, processing or promoting food.
10. Maintain governance in relation to all actions of the enterprise such that taking risks on actions is encouraged along with the management of the consequences of all actions at all levels and in relation to the environment, financial and social actions.
11. Explore practical models (including differential equations) of the economy to explore how agriculture impacts the economy directly (production, exports, jobs, wealth, happiness etc) and indirectly through the impacts of producing, preserving and promoting healthy food on the productivity and performance of individuals and the rural community and reducing the national health budget.