

I support the saving of Muresk and the essentiality of rural based university campus education.

Reasons for agrieducational facility decline

Narrow View from the Universities

Universities thinking more of themselves as a business rather than as a service provider

The Location

Attracting quality students and staff to the campus

On asking a fellow student about saving Muresk, they said it would be good if they had better lecturers whom one could understand what they were saying. Perhaps they were referring to the many ultra high calibre lecturers that unfortunately still had strong accents.

An advantage of research students studying at Muresk is that they can live on the site of their paddock research trials, therefore attend to them everyday at crucial times of the year, without increasing greenhouse gas emissions to get there.

I have heard that some farming families in the Great Southern send their children to Eastern States rural campuses (such as Orange) in order to get them away from the influence of their peers that they have grown up with. As Eastern Staters have more rural campus choice they are unlikely to encourage their offspring to come to WA when other states are much closer.

Internal Matters

The following is my interpretation of my memory of searching 'Muresk' under a legal database some time ago:

In about 1996 or 1997, _____ applied under the freedom of information act to find out why he was retrenched from Curtin University when it was rumoured he was going to be made director of Muresk. For some reason he was not given this information on the grounds that it would not be in the public interest.

In my opinion, the Senate committee should look into these reasons as they may be related to the decline of tertiary agricultural facilities in WA.

Labour Shortage Impacts

Labour shortage affects all levels of the agribusiness chain. For instance, an agricultural merchandiser told me that they have been employing people fresh out of working in the mining industry whereby they have had extremely good working conditions for ages. This has resulted in some ex mining employees in agribusiness only doing the minimal amount to get by in their new jobs.

Solutions

- Legislate that universities teaching in the field of food security actually think wholistically as to their decisions regarding agricultural education. For instance it may make economic sense to shift courses to the big smoke, but that is definitely not going to help in keeping agribusiness surviving in the long term.
- Legislate that universities can work together and have an exemption from acts such as those of the ACCC etc. Perhaps this would have encouraged UWA to revitalise Muresk instead of UWA purchasing a "Future Farm" at Beverly.
- Legislate that all universities operating in Western Australia must use rural campuses such as Muresk as part of their course delivery. For instance, UWA and Curtin could use it for Agriculture, Murdoch for Veterinary studies, Edith Cowan for part of Biological Sciences etc.
- Amend the Tertiary Institutions Act or whatever the equivalent is, to make Muresk able to be a stand alone service provider of University courses.
- Perhaps money from the carbon tax could be used to convert Muresk into a university level eco agriculture carbon sequestration teaching institution.
- With regard to animal welfare, courses such as Low Stress Stock Handling taught on a rural university campus would be very helpful.
- In some European countries it is compulsory for the next generation of farmers to have worked overseas for several months before they can manage or own a farm. Maybe a similar system could be put in place here, but with compulsory tertiary education instead. However, not all people are cut out to do tertiary education, so maybe something more workable could be done.
- Maps of metropolitan universities are included in UBD and Streetsmart map books. Perhaps rural campus maps could be included in publications such as the Travellers Atlas etc.
- A policy decentralisation of population is a brilliant strategy
- Better utilisation of Youtube to promote the excitement and energy of agribusiness and agriculture.
- Introduce legislation to change anything that is holding ministers back from helping the cause
- Better education of the general population as to the absolute essentiality of products from agriculture in their daily lives.