

31st May, 2005

Mr Alby Schultz,
Chair,
Committee for Inquiry into Rural Skills Training and Research,
House of Representatives,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA 2600

Dear Mr Schultz,

Re: Rural Skills Training and Research in Gippsland

The South Gippsland Shire Council, Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) and McMillan Advisory Committee called a Public Meeting on Monday 23rd May, 2005 at Leongatha. At this meeting, the Gippsland community expressed its requirements for rural and related education and training.

Around 180 people attended the meeting. They were addressed by the Hon. Peter Ryan, Leader of the National Party, Hon Phillip Davis, Shadow Agriculture and rural communities Spokesperson, Cr Diane Casbolt, Mayor of South Gippsland Shire Council, Carolyn Kibbell, Executive Officer of South Gippsland Bass Coast Local Learning and Employment Network and Meg Parkinson, Vice-President of the Victorian Farmers Federation.

The meeting was chaired by Bill Pyle, who chaired the committee which set up McMillan College, around 30 years ago, to Gippsland its first agriculture delivery.

The meeting passed two resolutions, unanimously:

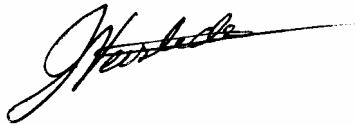
1. This meeting calls on the State Government to ensure that a University is appointed to provide vocational orientated agricultural education and training from Certificate 2 level up to and including degree level, at McMillan campuses at Leongatha and Warragul.
2. This meeting adopts the Manifesto presented to this meeting by the VFF, McMillan Advisory Committee and South Gippsland Shire Council.

The Manifesto referred to in resolution two, is attached, as is a brief background to the delivery of rural skills training by the McMillan campus (in close cooperation with the Ellinbank Dairy Research Centre) and a summary of the importance of agriculture to the local economy.

The McMillan Gippsland Advisory Committee also requests an opportunity to appear before your committee at its public consultation in this region.

I am happy to expand on these documents. My phone number is 0407 343 111.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Verstedden', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Verstedden
Chairperson
McMillan Gippsland Advisory Committee

Attachments: Manifesto, McMillan Current Delivery

Background on McMillan

After the last re-structure of ILFR, when the School of Vocational Education and Training was created, McMillan campus has focussed on the dairy, production horticulture and harness racing industries for its programs.

A review of the training market at the time, identified several types of customers. West and South Gippsland has all of these customer types and, consequently, training is delivered to cohorts at both Warragul and Leongatha in all sections of the training market to allow access to quality industry based education. See attachment for listing of these training markets and the programs delivered from McMillan funding. It should be noted that Gippsland (and McMillan campus) supports several other programs delivered by SVET.

- Diplomas in Agriculture, beef sheep and production horticulture (Leongatha and Warragul - Glenormiston)
- Diploma in Conservation and Land Management (Leongatha - Longerenong)
- Certificate IV in Horse Management (Cranbourne--Glenormiston), various Certificate Programs in Food Technology(Gilbert Chandler) and Forestry (Creswick)

In 2004, McMillan's student contact hours (SCHs) were 130,000 in profile (P Funding), 35,000 in Traineeships(L funding), 5000 Youth Pathways funding (YPP) and a fee for service profit of \$315,000. The Government funded delivery was achieved and around \$275,000 of fee for service.

For 2005, the targets are 140,000 P, 35,000 L, 5000 YPP and \$350,000 profit on fee for service.

Manifesto of our requirements for vocational rural training

The local community in South and West Gippsland founded the college in Leongatha and Warragul to provide agricultural training and has strongly supported it ever since.

Over the years, extensive work has been undertaken to develop a local career path in agriculture and horticulture to arrest the "brain drain" out of the area, build local community capacity, progress the local industries with jobs and to allow access and equity to people who are employed/live locally

The community in this area strongly supports the need for vocational education training and requires the following as a minimum.

We require providers of vocational training to:

- **maintain the current mode of delivery (the majority of training is a balance of face to face teaching with peer interaction, in a non-workplace environment, and workplace training). This mode of training gives a breadth of training, education and social interaction, required by industry as it grows its next generation and wish to remain competitive and viable.**

- **maintain the ability of students to move forward in their training without having to redo previous learning (articulation pathway) from Certificate 2 through Advanced Diploma as this enables students to continuously improve their knowledge and skills base over time**
- **be delivered in the local geographic area**
- **maintain training, in all competency levels, of the national training package**
- **ensure that enough production competency hours are offered to keep the college an economically viable entity**
- **ensure that deliverer has an ongoing commitment to regularly review and deliver courses which reflect the changing needs of the agricultural industry**
- **ensure that industry participants continue to be able to access long term learning**
- **maintain delivery of short courses as, when and where required eg farm chemical courses**
- **ensure that all rural courses, regardless of provider, should attract the rural and regional funding base**
- **deliver nationally recognised training,**
- **continue to provide access to all participants in agriculture and horticulture locally**
- **give an undertaking acceptable to the local community to maintain and increase training services to the local geographical area, in accordance with the conditions above, over a 10 year plus time frame**
- **ensure that the facilities remain available for the local agricultural and horticultural community under current conditions to continue to encourage community interaction.**
- **prepare to engage with local group educational initiatives eg Leongatha Education Precinct, Work in Schools Program, Schools to Industry Program etc**
- **engage with R&D companies to facilitate industry training and extension and development projects, thus maintaining the delivery of on-farm industry current best practice**
- **maintain current suite of courses offered by McMillan at all levels eg VET in schools, New Apprentices, traineeships, Farmbis courses**
- **maintain campus advisory committees which reflect the current commercial agriculture and horticulture industry best practice**

APPENDIX A

Market Segment	Programs	Delivery Methodology	McMillan "Funded" Programs (does not include other SVET courses conducted in Gippsland)
Secondary school students	VET-in-Schools School based New Apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part-time (local) Flexible delivery (state-wide) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificate 2 in Agriculture and Horticulture (Warragul & Leongatha) & (Various Melbourne, Eastern Metropolitan and Gippsland schools) Certificate 2 in Equine Studies (State wide), Full VCE ENTER subject Certificate 2 in Harness (Warragul)
Career establishers	Advanced Diploma/Diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full / part-time campus based, (with industry placement included) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diploma/Advanced Diploma of Agriculture (Warragul) Diploma of Production Horticulture/Advanced Diploma of Rural Business Management (Warragul)
Labour market entrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traineeships Disadvantaged youth program, Youth Pathways Program Skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplace-based + programmed off-the-job training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificate 3 & 4 in Agriculture (Warragul & Leongatha) Certificate 2 in Horticulture (Warragul) Certificates 3 & 4 for the harness racing industry--various qualifications
Career improvers	Diplomas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible delivery, including programmed workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diploma of Agriculture Dairy—Currently Maffra, Leongatha, Yarram, Trafalgar Beef--Leongatha
Skill improvers	Single units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At various levels, mainly Diploma (Throughout Gippsland, on demand) Examples: MgMilkcare, Farm Chemicals, Farm Safety, Target 10, Cowtime, In Calf, Pruning,etc with various funding sources, ie. FarmBis, Profile and fee for service commercial work.

Maintain and expand McMillan Campus!

The University of Melbourne's Food and Land Resource McMillan campus should not only be maintained, but be expanded to capitalise on the intensive agricultural and horticultural activity and infrastructure within the immediate vicinity.

To realise the full potential of the region we need to maintain and expand an agricultural education complex here that can provide training from basic short courses for farmers, through to a broad range of degree courses for students who could tap career opportunities in the local agribusiness sector upon graduation. The potential to attract overseas students also exists.

We have a dynamic agribusiness economy that has earned industry respect both nationally and internationally for premium product.

What case do we have?

- South Gippsland has the greatest potential in the state for growth in dairying, horticulture, food processing, and product manufacture - agribusiness industries that would provide practical experience opportunities for students.
- We have the necessary ingredients for a dynamic food processing precinct /cluster in Leongatha (raw product, land, saline outfall and treatment facility, steam power, transport/close proximity to Melbourne), with flow on to our regional towns.
- South Gippsland is the largest milk production shire in Gippsland, producing 34% of its total milk output. Leongatha also has the largest concentration of dairy farms (700), milk processing and agricultural businesses within its 100 km radius, in comparison with other University of Melbourne campuses.
- The local horticultural (snow peas, fresh herbs, seed potato and bush foods), beef and sheep industry sectors would both support, and benefit from an expanded curriculum.

What is the food industry and associated industries worth to the Shire?

Using Latrobe University's Regional Economic Modelling Programme (REMPLAN), the direct worth to the Shire of these industries and their effects on other industries within the Shire are:

Dairy		\$218,805,000
Manufacturing	(mainly dairy)	\$412,682,000
Other Agriculture	(mainly horticulture)	\$20,479,000

The dairy industry contributes to other industries also, adding over \$5,000,000 annually to the transport industry alone, and a further \$5,000,000 to other agricultural industries annually.

The Gippsland Region Information Service (GRIS) have calculated that for every dollar earned by a South Gippsland dairy farmer, it has a flow on effect of \$2.64 to the local community. This flow on effect is reflected in all the services farmers use, and the people employed by those services.

Let's use this meeting to not only maintain the 'status quo', but to positively influence the strategic changes being considered by the University of Melbourne that will affect the future development of our area.