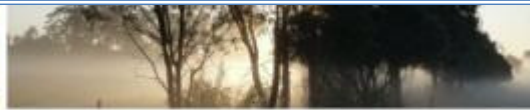


Saving the Cradle of Australian Agriculture



SHEAP Final Submission to the NSW
Government Hurlstone Inquiry
August 2009

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PREAMBLE- SAVING THE CRADLE OF AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURE

Hurlstone Agricultural High School is a cradle of agriculture in so many ways.

Hurlstone was Australia's first specialist agricultural secondary school with 102 years experience in education best practice and is continuing to nurture young men and women to pursue careers of excellence.

Its strong and respected culture and reputation for performance has its origins firmly rooted in its land.

Hurlstone's farm provides one of the last remaining opportunities for young city children to learn about where their food comes from—an important life skill –whether or not they ever qualify for Hurlstone itself.

In recognition of its role and community value, Hurlstone's farm was preserved for special use as part of the green space in the ground breaking plan for the satellite cities Campbelltown, Camden and Appin. Preservation of that green space is a clear local community demand.

Just as important, it is one of the last remaining pockets of historic farm land proximate to the Cowpastures—the grazing lands of the First Fleet's lost herd. The farm was parcelled from one of Australia's earliest rural holdings and sits adjacent to historic Macquarie House. Virtually all but the house and Hurlstone's continuously farmed land has now been lost from Australia's rural history. Hurlstone and its land have very high heritage value that should be preserved.

Hurlstone, as an agricultural high school, is more relevant today, in the face of climate change and a global food crisis, than when it was established in 1907. Encouraging young people to enter the rural sciences and agricultural production is harder than ever and the agriculture sector is facing a demographic crisis of skills shortage and an ageing rural population.

Hurlstone and the other residential agriculture schools with their working farms are important tools in meeting those challenges in New South Wales. Hurlstone is uniquely placed as a bridge between city and country and a gateway for the growing urban demographics into agriculture.

Neither is this land needed for residential development. There are already 10,000 lots available for release locally.

However, what is needed is better education, a better understanding of the importance of agriculture and more people into agriculture.

As one well credentialed participant said:
"Hurlstone is one of our 'lighthouse schools' for Australian Agricultural education. If we diminish the facilities in any way we are damaging that. Then it will have a profound effect on Agricultural education in the school and that will lessen the exposure of good quality Agricultural education to the community."

This public education, 'cradle of Australian agriculture' must be protected for the future of agriculture education in NSW. Once it's gone, it's gone forever

Committee, Save Hurlstone's Educational Agricultural Property (SHEAP Inc), August 2009

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Figure 1. Hurlstone's Camden Show Team. Country and City students 'bridging the divide' and learning with each other and from each other.

The vibrant Rural Youth and their success at country and the Sydney Royal shows would not be possible without the farm experience

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

METHODOLOGY

This submission was based on a consultation and study that undertook the following over a 2 month period:

- Face to Face and telephone semi-structured interviews with around 50 agriculture sector, teacher, student, parent, community and civic stakeholders and subject matter experts in NSW and in some cases Queensland and WA.
- A survey of 70 NSW Agriculture teachers
- A survey of 145 graduate and post graduate level tertiary students in related disciplines.
- Literature Reviews of Reports regarding Agriculture Skills and Career Demands.
- Media Review
- Review of Government documents discovered pursuant to a Legislative Council Standing Order 52 demand.
- Examination of relevant comments of over 500 petitioners and email senders.
- Consideration of the submissions and letters of support of around 20 keystoneholder groups and experts.

This report represents the combined input of a number of Committee members of Save Hurlstone's Educational Agricultural Property (SHEAP Inc) and we collectively thank the many thousands of supporters for their input. In particular we thank those expert and other stakeholders who formally participated in our interviews and surveys.

WHAT WE FOUND

There is a more comprehensive list of findings and recommendations, cross referenced to the Inquiry Terms of Reference, in the following pages.

However, our study found an overwhelming opposition to proposed land sales at Hurlstone.

This opposition was based on a convergence of two key concerns:

- A need for active practical experience in agricultural enterprises as the foundation for a good agriculture education, and
- A strong local community demand to preserve local green space and the local planning features that zoned Hurlstone land as 'special use' and a critical part of the Central Hills or 'Scenic Hills' open space vista.

This study found that the proposed land sale, in the wake of the NSW November 2008 mini budget was based on a flawed understanding of the land use at Hurlstone. Indeed, the various and often contradictory statements of both Government and Departmental officials demonstrated a lack of understanding of the nature and occupants of the land – leading to erroneous conclusions about how much land was available amongst other things.

The Minister suggested that the objective of considerations around Hurlstone's land were intended to provide for "Agriculture Education in a Modern Setting". There is overwhelming evidence that, notwithstanding the false economy of selling an educational asset, this comment misstates the real objective of the Government which was to maximize revenue predominantly for other

government recurrent costs. It did this with little understanding or regard for the impact on agriculture education or community impacts.

This is best demonstrated in the need for Government in quick succession to make provision for the retention of the historic Memorial Forest, the retention of the three Top Schools and then to establish an inquiry in response to community outrage at the sale proposal.

The Government continues to talk in terms of up to 140 hectares being sold, despite these other apparently contradictory assurances to preserve land that, along with the 20 hectares fixed infrastructure of Hurlstone itself, would account for another 35 hectares.

In the wake of some 10,000 petitioners, many thousands of letters and emails of protest to Government and opposing advice of dozens of expert and other key stakeholders, even the local MPs, who once favoured an Inquiry, have now come to the conclusion that the sale proposal is not in the best interests of the community or education.

ON THE FARM USE

We found that the 115 hectare property was fully used by the seven educational enterprises on the farm, including a 109 head pure bred Ayrshire dairy herd which only just maintains sufficient scale to support its commercial milk contract to Dairy Farmers.

According to Advisory bodies, if anything, the Hurlstone Farm was slightly overstocked,

sustainable only due to expensive supplementary feeding that costs \$80,000 per year.

At its current rate of use and in the current post drought environment just 15 hectares of land have not been grazed out, leaving little to see out the dry months and none to provide for hay and silage production.

By comparison with like agricultural schools, Hurlstone's farm is below average in size at 115 hectares compared to the average 235 hectares of the three residential agriculture schools, despite the Hurlstone school population being significantly bigger than the other two residential schools.

Reducing the land at Hurlstone is likely to lead to the need for more expensive supplementary feeding and would undermine the scale of the enterprises on it – putting the viability of its Dairy contract at risk, and diminishing the livestock numbers below that needed to support the practical activities of 730 agriculture students.

ON AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

The best agriculture education outcomes arise from teaching agriculture in an enterprise setting with those enterprises at sufficient scale to demonstrate commercial considerations (even if the enterprises are not commercially competitive in their own right) and to provide each student good practical experience in a range of skills as an individual or in small groups.

There is a strong synergy between the understanding of skills and the retention of

students in agriculture pathways and strong enterprise and experiential learning.

As a result, Hurlstone, Farrer and Yanco all get good results in encouraging students to pursue agriculture careers, noting that Hurlstone is more likely to send students on tertiary education pathways while Farrer and Yanco are more likely to send students directly to production or vocational pathways. Farrer and Yanco are slightly more successful in the proportion of Year 12 students who pursue agriculture, while Hurlstone provides significantly more into University in related disciplines. The fourth agricultural (non resident) school, James Ruse Agricultural High School sends virtually no students into agriculture pathways and its school community, while respecting agriculture, has little will to do so in the future.

Having said that, the skills gap in agriculture and the impact of an ageing agriculture workforce suggests that increased demands need to be made on the three residential agriculture schools and, given its urban catchment, on Hurlstone in particular. It is almost unique in its opportunity to help reverse the rural 'brain-drain' by taking in country and city kids and encouraging them in pathways to agriculture. While Farrer and Yanco can act as plugs to a demographic 'leaky drain', Hurlstone can be a tap to help top up the labour market.

The emphasis on strong enterprise-based practical components in agricultural education in NSW, WA, SA and Queensland (with some other initiatives) was well supported by relatively recent trends in the United States to get agriculture students back to the farm. The recent efforts to improve the partnerships between school, industry and Supervised Agricultural Experience

(SAEs) in the United States and strong coordination in such programs as FFA (formerly Farmers For America) has a strong lesson for Australia and NSW in particular.

It is important that we take care not to reduce the experiential component of education – well founded in 102 years of experience at Hurlstone and other schools – just as other nations are discovering how important that experience is.

The value of this experience was well supported by teachers and students from other schools who felt that they had insufficient land or, resources that were only sufficient if they had access to resources like Hurlstone with its current enterprises.

Hurlstone's active Rural Youth club has submitted separately, but there are grave concerns that the high standards achieved in shows and other agricultural pursuits could not be maintained if the scale of the farm enterprises are reduced.

NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT AND BETTER USE

There is overwhelming evidence that points to the need for Hurlstone to retain its land holdings. This does not mean that the agricultural schools – and Hurlstone in particular – do not have room for improvement.

Overall, secondary schools are not producing sufficient agriculture students to fill the necessary places at University and the agricultural labour shortage and skills gap is increasing.

It is clear that Hurlstone can play three major roles to contribute to the skills demands of the future.

- Hurlstone can and should improve the retention rate of students into agriculture by resolving the tension between ‘selectivity’ and its role as an ‘agricultural high school’. It can better define its role as a school seeking academic excellence in agriculture and a specific mandate to develop students for tertiary agriculture education. Initiatives include more context based learning of agriculture in other academic disciplines and the requirement to undertake an agriculture related study in years 11-12 as well as the current years 7-10.
- Improve access for country students whose uptake of places in the boarding school has lagged in recent years as a result of several issues. This increased country representation is good not just for rural families, but contributes strongly to the experiential culture at Hurlstone that encourages many of its city based students to consider agriculture pathways.
- Expand access to facilities for non Hurlstone students so they can supplement their theory and basic practical experience in agriculture camps and similar activities in Hurlstone’s enterprise setting.

It should be noted that Hurlstone’s farm already is used by a range of other users, attracted by its location and its land. This includes Ayrshire Association events, other primary and secondary school visits, some agriculture camps and a pending international “4H” meet, just to name a few. While there is room for more improved multi-use, there are a range of users who can already attest to its value and potential.

COMMUNITY IMPACTS AND LAND PLANNING

Our study showed that any attempt to sell Hurlstone’s land would contravene the extant Planning Strategy and the existing Development Control Plan for the area.

Hurlstone’s land was preserved as ‘special use’ in the groundbreaking structure plan of 1973 that set the scene for the development of the three cities of Campbelltown, Camden and Appin. The principles of that scheme have been largely maintained since. Where there has been variation – for example with further mass social housing estates – it has carried significant local social impacts that the current government is trying to unwind.

The green space corridor and buffer that Hurlstone contributes to is supported strongly in the local community. That green space represents a key lifestyle attraction for local residents.

Notably, the current City of Cities Metropolitan Strategy preserves the Hurlstone locale as ‘special use’ open-space, with residential growth intended to be contained in the designated South West and North West Growth Centres.

As recently as 22 July 2009, the Planning Minister confirmed that the South West Growth Centre would cater for anticipated residential demand for the next 25 years.

There is no good planning purpose to come from developing Hurlstone’s land, but rather it would undermine local green space and visual amenity and further stretch local infrastructure that has not been developed for such ad hoc land releases.

The Campbelltown City Council opposes any proposed land sale at Hurlstone on planning, green space and local heritage grounds.

CANNIBALISING EDUCATIONAL ASSETS

There was an almost universal opposition to the notion that public education assets should be sold, even to fund other educational assets – noting that in this case the overwhelming majority of proceeds would go to recurrent non educational expenses.

The concept that any school should have to sacrifice educational capital in order to fund its own or other school maintenance needs is immoral, uneconomical and unsustainable. SHEAP strongly opposes the notion that a Government should under invest in its own education infrastructure and then sell off an important part of its capital base to try to compensate for its negligence.

While some schools have, in the past, been offered the opportunity to liquidate land in return for a significant share of the proceeds, Hurlstone has never sought to do so as its farm is a vital part of its educational offering. The Government has made it clear that schools who do sell land in the future might get little if any of the proceeds.

Other schools are not compelled, for instance, to sell one classroom in order to build or repaint another. Indeed, DET has just participated in a purchase of around 350 ha of land for Farrer over and above its 190ha main campus.

The suggestion in the terms of reference that Hurlstone can only have improvements if it agrees

to sell all or part of its land is offensive and morally bankrupt and reinforces concern that the Inquiry is more about justifying a revenue grab than about improving education – especially since most proceeds would go to consolidated revenue.

The clear view of most stakeholders was that the Government has an obligation to invest in good public education and to maintain its infrastructure. It was particularly galling at a time when the Federal Government's BER funding, as part of the stimulus packages, has come under increased public scrutiny for waste and duplication, a small portion of which would cover Hurlstone's necessary upgrades and maintenance.

The suggestion that Hurlstone needs to sell land in return for any support is a net divestment in public education and is not supported by this study.

Indeed, to insist on this would only give credence to those views that any sale demonstrates a lack of regard for agriculture education and is part of a predisposition of government to undermine Hurlstone in the long run as an agricultural boarding school.

LACK OF RELIABLE LONGITUDINAL EDUCATION DATA

While there is significant evidence of the need for practical agricultural education, at scale, for good education and retention outcomes, the DET did not have any reliable data on destinations of secondary graduates. Indeed, rather than reduce contact with land, other nations appear to be trying to reconnect their agriculture education programs with real farming.

The paucity of reliable data upon which to justify the proposed sale does not reflect well on the DET in terms of meeting its principal objective – good educational outcomes. Indeed, basic information such as how many people even graduate to agriculture were not known by the Department and our survey shows that teachers were not privy to this important measure of their work. It is clear that in this case the educational needs of students attending Australia's largest secondary agricultural school and the implications for the agriculture sector were very much a subordinate consideration to the desire to facilitate a land sale without regard for the impact.

There is a pressing need to study, over time, the impact of variations in teaching methodologies and resources in order to simply validate the current processes and outcomes. It is certainly essential well before seeking to overturn the experience and understanding of experts and practitioners in secondary education in this field.

CONCLUSIONS

Our study found that on virtually every basis, a proposed sale of land was found to be flawed. It undermined preservation of heritage land; it offended proper green space and planning considerations and undermined best practice agricultural education at Hurlstone Agricultural High School. The consequential impact is to lose one of the few remaining proactive tools to address the rural brain drain.

The farm is already smaller than average for like-schools and is only just at critical scale to support those enterprises necessary to sustain operations and provide experiential content for the 730 Hurlstone agriculture students and other users.

The sale proposal was a short term revenue raising proposal that represents a net divestment in education while providing limited short term relief to the budget.

Indeed, selling the farm assets for recurrent consumption in other expenditure areas is not only bad for agriculture education, it is poor economic policy.

If the Government is listening to the community it serves it will abandon this proposal in response to overwhelming community support for this valuable, historical and successful public resource, while supporting recommendations for improved shared use and agricultural education promotion.



Figure 2. More than a school – a community learning resource. Local Primary School children routinely visit the school farm to learn where their food and clothing comes from and are introduced to agriculture.

Photo Courtesy Campbelltown Macarthur Advertiser

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This table extracts findings from the body of the discussion along with subsequent recommendations. They are listed in the order they arose in the discussion rather than Terms of Reference (ToR) order. Relevant ToR are cross-referenced in column 3. Matters regarding ToR 8 (Inquiry Process) are not discussed in the body, as that is not this reports purpose. SHEAP comments are listed in the table.

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|--|--|-----------------------------|
| Findings based on study of Government public commitments | | |
| <p>Hurlstone Agricultural High School must be retained at Glenfield, in its current location if public statements are to be honoured.</p> <p>The Memorial Forest is to be retained within the curtilage of Hurlstone Agricultural High School.</p> <p>Suggestions that Hurlstone Agricultural High School be moved to other sites are not consistent with the Terms of Reference or Government statements that Hurlstone is to be retained as a selective, agricultural school with boarding facilities <u>and</u> be contiguous with the Memorial Forest.</p> <p>The Ajuga, Glenfield and Campbell House Schools must be retained in their current location if public statements are to be honoured</p> <p>That the suggestion that up to 140 hectares could be considered for sale conflict with</p> | That Hurlstone Agricultural High School and its farm be retained at Glenfield. | All |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Government policy statements, with some 35 hectares accounted for by fixed infrastructure, 4 schools and DET district Offices | | |
| Finding Related to Contradictions in the scope of the Inquiry | | |
| <p>That Inquiry Terms of Reference 4 and 5 are contradicted by comments by the Minister suggesting that only Hurlstone is being considered for land sales, where Terms 4 and 5, read in conjunction with the Minister's release of 24 February 2009, would reasonably affect resourcing at all agricultural high schools.</p> <p>This contradiction undermines claims that the outcome is motivated by a desire to seek best practice agricultural education – rather than a Government desire to sell otherwise profitable land regardless of the educational impacts. Any land sale is a divestment in agriculture education assets, at Hurlstone in particular, rather than a net investment.</p> | That any recommendations on the future of agriculture education equally apply to all NSW agricultural high schools. To that end, no changes should apply to Hurlstone until their consequent impact of other schools be considered. In considering this recommendation the Inquiry should note evidence in this study showing the importance of enterprise and practical education and the fact that agriculture educators in other schools oppose the sale of land at Hurlstone. | 1,2,3,4,5,7 |
| Findings related to land use and needs at Hurlstone's Farm | | |
| In order to maintain the minimum scale necessary to meet contract demands on its Dairy, the farm is only just providing sufficient pasture and even then, requires routine supplementary feed. The farm will have difficulty maintaining its contract with Dairy | That the Inquiry not reduce land or stock holdings below the minimum scale necessary to maintain its commercial contract for milk supply. | 1,2,4,5,7 |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| <p>Farmers if its farm size and output is reduced.</p> <p>That any loss in pasture will increase the costs of supplementary feeding which are currently \$80,000 pa.</p> <p>While 'dry land' management needs to be a part of any modern education in sustainable agriculture, there is scope to increase irrigation in order to sustain the viability of the current enterprises that are already under pressure.</p> <p>Hurlstone's Farm exceeds stocking levels recommended by the relevant Board and, as such, is fully utilised and might possibly require additional land or resources to sustain the necessary scale of enterprises into the future.</p> | <p>That DET provide resources to increase irrigation in order to sustain the current operations, which are already at minimum sustainable mass, while maintaining some 'dry land' operations at scale as an integral part of a modern education in 'sustainable farming'. This investment has potential to be offset, over time, by reduced dependence on supplementary feeding.</p> <p>That the Inquiry investigate options to increase the holding of land or identify other additional resources at Hurlstone in order to better sustain its stockholding through drought.</p> | |
| Findings related to the 'financial viability' of educational enterprises | | |
| <p>There are no robust financial and outcome performance standards against which to assess the performance of specialist enterprises or educational investment. This includes agricultural schools, sports high schools, performing arts high schools and VET facilities.</p> <p>DET has failed to provide proper investment and maintenance at Hurlstone to ensure its commerciality as a 'business enterprise', rather than as a 'school enterprise'. It needs to be recognised that secondary school teaching also incorporates other curricula, and even</p> | <p>That the DET develop financial and performance standards – relevant to educational settings - against which to assess the value of its investment in specialist schools, before making any land sale decisions. Those standards should also identify appropriate levels of DET maintenance and investment to underpin the operating performance of</p> | 2,3,7 |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| <p>within agriculture a broader general experience of different enterprises intended to provide an educational rather than economic outcome.</p> <p>It is not appropriate to assess schools like Hurlstone (indeed any school) on a purely business 'bottom line' basis.</p> <p>With \$200,000 farm turnover and revenues at around 75% of operating costs, Hurlstone's Farm operates consistently with other good performing school enterprises</p> <p>Any reduction in Hurlstone's land will undermine operating revenue while increasing operating costs for such things as supplementary feeding. Investment in additional irrigation might ameliorate existing pressures and offset some feed costs in the Dairy, but would not offset any loss in land resource which is already overstocked</p> <p>20 ha loss of grazing land will necessitate a reduction in the Dairy Herd by 10 milking cows and 10 replacement heifers with a direct consequence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of hands-on practical education experience for 730 students particularly 160 year 10 students given current resources are stretched already. • Difficulty in meeting the milk contract, putting the entire enterprise at risk. • Undermining the breeding program • Inability to meet the demands of the Ayreshire calf day <p>That Hurlstone Agricultural High School is a teaching and learning enterprise, not a commercial farm enterprise with its attendant economies and financial bottom line</p> | <p>those school enterprises.</p> <p>Importantly, those standards should recognize that Hurlstone, Farrer and Yanco are secondary schools with teaching enterprises requiring a broad experiential base, not commercial scale farming, nor VET institutions with a single focus that might allow economies of scale by specialising in one product line or enterprise</p> <p>That any model of enterprises proposed for the farm by the Inquiry accommodate the fact that it is a teaching farm with a diversity of experiences at reasonable scale being a more important factor than the economies of scale of a commercial enterprise</p> | |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| focus. Hurlstone should not be assessed strictly in terms of financial return. | | |
| Findings related to comparisons between resources needed in different schools | | |
| <p>At 115 hectares, Hurlstone Agricultural High School Farm is well below the average size of comparable agricultural school farms (Averaging 235 hectares in NSW) despite having substantially more students than comparable schools.</p> <p>It is inconsistent to suggest that Hurlstone with 730 agriculture students might be reduced in land size without agricultural education impacts, while contemporaneously maintaining (500) and Yanco (300) at their existing scale as exemplars of good agriculture education. Notably, DET has since approved a purchase of 350 ha to replace formerly leased land at Farrer over and above its 190ha main campus, reinforcing the necessary scale of land holdings for agricultural high schools.</p> <p>While Hurlstone, Yanco and Farrer might well demonstrate good practice agriculture education in an enterprise setting, as best-practice suggests is appropriate, there are a range of examples in other States that offer additional opportunities to combine the agriculture specialization of NSW agricultural high schools with related commercial enterprise and training opportunities. These examples should be examined in the context of proposed improvements/co-located enterprises for Hurlstone and other agriculture schools in NSW.</p> | <p>When considering the average land holdings and land needs, that the Inquiry benchmark Hurlstone's land needs against comparable NSW Agricultural High Schools, notably Farrer and Yanco, rather than other Public schools. And further, that the Inquiry acknowledge the substantial difference in student populations undertaking agriculture within those schools.</p> | 2,3,7 |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Findings in relation to agriculture careers supply, demand and pathways | | |
| <p>Any decision to divest resources at Hurlstone would be made for short-term revenue needs rather than improve future career development trajectories in agriculture which, according to research, would ameliorate the growing rural labour shortage.</p> <p>That secondary educational pathways are supported by the research as one of the most important contributors to agricultural skills supply.</p> <p>That efforts to address skills shortages and negative perceptions of rural life need to be targeted (but not exclusively) in the larger metropolitan labour markets. While country agriculture schools do an excellent job and must be supported; in the long-run, a larger contribution to total labour supply and tertiary skills pathways is more likely to come from city based areas supported by schools, like Hurlstone, that help overcome negative perceptions of agricultural careers.</p> <p>Hurlstone Agricultural High School continues to demonstrate success in sending young people into agriculture career pathways commensurate with other agriculture schools and better than other public schools. This is despite its city catchment being more likely to suffer from negative perceptions of agriculture careers. Hurlstone sends more students to tertiary agriculture pathways than other agricultural schools.</p> <p>Reduction in practical agriculture experience and exposure on the school farm is likely to</p> | <p>That the Inquiry NOT make any recommendation that increases barriers and risks to retention in agriculture study at Hurlstone. This includes any outcome that reduces the experiential component of agriculture education – such as sale of farm land</p> <p>That Hurlstone and the DET consider methods to improve agriculture exposure of both its student catchment and its school population. This might include increased agriculture context in other curricula, and making senior level agriculture or related study compulsory (beyond Year 10) and improved community access and profile.</p> | 1,2,3,4,5,7 |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| undermine retention in agricultural careers at Hurlstone. The attendant risk of further diminution of resources is that Hurlstone will become more like James Ruse Agricultural High School, a selective, academic school with virtually no graduations to agriculture. | | |
| Findings in relation to improving perceptions of and access to agricultural education (including access to boarding facilities) | | |
| <p>Erosion of the boarding school population at Hurlstone will reduce interaction between city and country students. Reduced places and increased barriers to country children reduce their opportunity to participate in Hurlstone's pathways. Because the interaction between country and city students, along with the agriculture emphasis is considered influential in Hurlstone's success, there is a consequential risk that the diminution of the country student population within the school will undermine retention of city children in agriculture study and pathways. However, further work needs to be done to uncover the reasons for reduced boarder numbers with a view to increasing those numbers. Suffice to say, DET policy decisions to limit the size of the boarding school, Government underinvestment in facilities, parental cost pressures and the impact of the selective schools test threshold are all factors</p> <p>There is a strong perception that the government does not value agriculture education and this feeds negative perceptions about agriculture in the community</p> <p>The education effort in NSW in specialist schools appears to be disproportionately</p> | <p>That further study be undertaken to improve access to Hurlstone and its boarding facilities to more country children. Strategies might include: providing a discount on the Selective Schools Examination result to allow more country based entry, further investment in facilities and recruitment by the government, better acknowledgement of the value of agricultural careers, and active efforts to address the entrenched perception that the DET does not value Hurlstone Agricultural High School.</p> <p>That consideration be given to expanding the uses and role of the Hurlstone facility that promotes agriculture and seeks to address negative perceptions about rural careers. Complementary uses are discussed separately; However, a Centre of Excellence for Sustainable and Urban Agriculture</p> | 1,2,3, |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| <p>weighted toward sectors that do not offer the same career and economic opportunities that agriculture does. This suggests room for more net investment in agricultural education by Government.</p> <p>Further divestment of public assets in agriculture education is likely to reinforce the already entrenched view that the government is predisposed against agriculture as a discipline.</p> <p>The categorisation of Agriculture as a technical program has undermined efforts to promote Agriculture.</p> | <p>/ Education is one idea that combines improved access for other agriculture students, improved agriculture teacher skills development, more actively promoted experiential opportunities for city children and increased research and demonstration of sustainable and urban agriculture best practice.</p> <p>That the Inquiry recommend that Agriculture be re-categorised as a Science program in NSW secondary schools</p> | |
| Findings in relation to the proceeds of sales and net 'divestment of assets' | | |
| <p>The proposed asset sales arising from the NSW mini budget seeks to return proceeds to consolidated revenue (50%) and other schools with only 'some' of the proposed proceeds. 'if any' to be re-invested in Hurlstone. Any sale, therefore, represents a net divestment, not improvement to agriculture education.</p> | <p>That the Inquiry recommends increased net investment (over and above asset value) in agricultural high schools as part of the policy mix toward providing improved resources for agriculture education commensurate with the skills need and the contribution to the economy by primary industries. Such investment would address the strong sense that government is undervaluing agriculture</p> | 7 |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| | and agriculture education. | |
| Findings related to best practice agriculture education outcomes and retention in agriculture pathways | | |
| <p>Agriculture Education in enterprise settings, with a strong hands-on practical component is most likely to positively influence students to follow agriculture career choices. This is particularly important for people with little farming background. Conversely, Agricultural schools must be mindful to try to overcome the impact of negative community perceptions of agriculture careers if more students are to follow agriculture career pathways.</p> <p>Any reduction in stock or land resources at schools like Hurlstone has an attendant risk of undermining practical education outcomes and student retention in agriculture.</p> <p>Unlike tertiary faculties and vocational institutions, secondary schools need to provide for a range of agricultural and non agricultural educational experiences. This requires diverse enterprises experiences and negates significant opportunities for the economies of commercial enterprises of 'single subject' tertiary bodies. Seeking to specialise too narrowly within agriculture at secondary level could be counterproductive for students who are still developing an understanding of their aptitudes and career preferences.</p> <p>Given the importance of practical experience in enterprise based agriculture, Hurlstone</p> | <p>That the Inquiry recognises that best practice agriculture education combines the features of significant practical opportunities and teaching in an enterprise setting. These are, by definition, stock and land intensive. However, any reduction in stock and land resources on the one hand and any increase in classroom, audio visual or IT based instruction on the other is likely to undermine agriculture education outcomes</p> <p>That the Inquiry recommend the retention of the current farm land at Hurlstone as an essential element of its agriculture education role and consider further opportunities for industry and DPI interaction.</p> <p>That the Inquiry recommend that Hurlstone be retained and appropriately resourced to support practical experience for non Hurlstone agriculture students.</p> | 1,2,3,4,5,7 |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| <p>has the potential to support improved retention and outcomes for other non agriculture school students as well as providing exposure to the general community that might help improve community perceptions of agriculture and agriculture careers</p> <p>SHEAP is firm in its belief, supported by the evidence of best-practice, that reducing the farm holding would only undermine attempts to re-assert the important role of agriculture at Hurlstone now and into the future.</p> <p>Initiatives such as including context based agriculture across other curricula and requiring agriculture related study from year 7-12 (currently compulsory from year 7-10), would help clarify Hurlstone's role as a selective <i>Agricultural</i> school, without diminishing academic performance</p> <p>That more effort is required to improve country student attendance at Hurlstone with benefits for both catchments and retention of students within agriculture streams.</p> <p>That DET currently lacks sufficient data and longitudinal research on the inputs, outputs and outcomes of agricultural education to properly make curriculum and resource decisions. Any changes to well held and supported understanding by teachers in the need for practical, enterprise based instruction – at scale – should be avoided in the absence of such research.</p> <p>In the case of Hurlstone Agricultural High School, the overwhelming weight of practitioner, student and academic opinion is that the current holdings are the minimum necessary to sustain appropriate teaching enterprises and that any reduction carried the</p> | <p>That the Inquiry recommends that community educational access to Hurlstone be resourced and formalised as part of a necessary community education program to address negative perceptions in agriculture. Consideration should be given to collaborative opportunities with industry for an “Urban or Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence”, which combines research, marketing, community education and farm exposure and applies some of the best-practice characteristics identified by the Promoting Agriculture to Schools Network.</p> <p>That the Inquiry recommend that, as NSW largest and best known agricultural high school, Agriculture or related subjects be compulsory at Hurlstone from Year 7-12 . Further, that the school consider how to provide more agriculture context based learning in its other curricula.</p> <p>That Hurlstone's primary role be clarified to foster and encourage <i>academic excellence in agriculture</i> and particularly prepare students for tertiary agriculture and related study and professional development.</p> <p>That the Inquiry recommends a change to entry selection processes to improve attendance by country based</p> | |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| risk of reduced educational outcomes | <p>children</p> <p>That the Inquiry recommend a robust longitudinal study of agricultural education inputs, outputs and outcomes as a proper foundation for future curriculum development</p> <p>That the Inquiry acknowledges the weight of academic, secondary teacher and student opinion that Hurlstone's farm not be reduced in size and recommends against the sale of land at Hurlstone on the basis that it is likely to undermine best practice agricultural education. However, the Inquiry should propose further investigation into improved, shared use of the existing land holding for complementary activities.</p> | |
| Finding about improved complementary use of Hurlstone's farm | | |
| There is a strong view from interviews and survey responses that while the land is at the critical minimum mass for Hurlstone's purpose, the land usage could be improved to accommodate shared, complementary activities – such as camps for external students, agriculture teacher in service training or collaborative "Centres of Sustainable Agriculture Excellence". | That the Inquiry recommend further study and development of multi-user complementary uses for the Hurlstone site, that are consistent with Hurlstone's primary role as a secondary agricultural school. These uses would preferably have potential to provide some income streams to help offset farm operational costs. Examples include a | 1,2,3,4,5,7 |

Saving the Cradle of Australian Agriculture

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| The preferred complementary uses for Hurlstone's farm included: Residential Agriculture Camps for other students, Teacher In Service training for agriculture teachers, A Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Agriculture / Showcase / Innovation, shared facility with Tertiary Institutions and Excursions / Life Experience for non agriculture students. | "Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Agriculture", a Residential training facility for agriculture teachers and non Hurlstone Students and Joint facilities/Joint Ventures with Tertiary Institutions. | |
| Findings in relation to the development planning scheme and green space | | |
| <p>Hurlstone's Farm is part of the Central Hills / "scenic hills" vista and was intended to be preserved as part of the open space strategy for the local region.</p> <p>That Hurlstone's land is not necessary to accommodate residential land demand, with the appropriate Minister confirming that there is adequate supply for the next 25 years in the designated growth centres, at which time proposed areas in Macarthur South will be considered.</p> <p>The Inquiry has the express ability and, in our view, the obligation, to recommend against land sale and note that any attempt to sell such land for residential or industrial development is outside the planning guidelines.</p> | <p>That the Inquiry oppose any land sales at Hurlstone as they offend the planning strategies for the region and conflict with strong community demand for preservation of green space.</p> <p>That any proposed future development for the school be consistent with the current zoning and its agricultural education purpose. Any future building, consistent with Hurlstone's purpose, should be designed to respect the 'green space' elements of the regional plans</p> | 1,6,7 |
| Findings in relation to urban agriculture and agriculture in the Sydney basin | | |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| <p>The co-location of an Urban Agriculture facility with Hurlstone Agricultural High School's 'mainstream' enterprises would provide an opportunity to both create awareness of the importance of 'urban agriculture' issues while increasing the opportunity for community awareness of more traditional agricultural pursuits.</p> <p>This study found that vision and ambition to promote agriculture and agriculture education was a far more pressing need than short-term attempts to divest agricultural assets at Hurlstone. This Inquiry represents a real opportunity to turn the 'desires' of any number of forums, reports and studies, into real action to promote the sector.</p> <p>The Inquiry should insist that the Government honour its commitment to preserve rural, resource and special use land. It is in the position to give some effect to the Minister for Agriculture's concerns about loss of agriculture in the Sydney basin by recommending against the sale of such land at Hurlstone.</p> | <p>That the Inquiry recommends further investigation into the feasibility of integrating an urban agriculture/ showcase facility with Hurlstone's farm. This could be part of a proposed "Centre of Excellence for Urban and Sustainable Agriculture" or other collaborative research and education institute.</p> <p>We recommend the Inquiry think big, forward, and strategically rather than support short-term revenue raising with long term down sides.</p> <p>That the Inquiry gives effect to any number of reports about the need to preserve and promote agriculture in the Sydney basin by recommending against the sale of educational farm land at Hurlstone</p> | 1,4,5,7 |
| Finding in relation to impacts on women's career pathways | . | |
| Degradation of agriculture learning at Hurlstone, as NSW only urban based, day and boarding coeducational agricultural school, undermines the unique position of Hurlstone as a pathway into agriculture by both country <u>and</u> city based young women. | | 1,2,3,4,5,7 |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Finding in relation to impacts on heritage values | | |
| That the land around Hurlstone has significant local and, in parts, State heritage significance as supported by a number of independent studies and expert opinions. This land is amongst the last remnants of continuously farmed land dating back to early colonial history. Sale of the land represents a significant risk to heritage values and, given the land is currently publicly owned, it would be an abrogation of the Government's responsibility to conserve these values for future generations. | That the Inquiry note the range of reports and submissions showing the heritage and local community significance of the land at Hurlstone and recommend against any sale proposal. | 1,6,7 |
| Finding in relation to impacts on adjacent schools | | |
| Sale of land puts the work of Glenfield Park, Ajuga and Campbell House schools at risk directly by threatening their existence and indirectly by removing the therapeutic value of adjacent land and activities. | That the Inquiry recommend that no sale of land occur that undermines the work of Ajuga, Glenfield Park and Campbell House | 1,2,7 |
| Findings in relation to improved facilities | | |
| That DET, and DPI, for the period the Vet Station was in operation, have not provided sufficient investment to properly maintain existing farm buildings and infrastructure. Maintenance and upgrade of public facilities is an obligation of Government. Current | | |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|--|--|-----------------------------|
| <p>assets should be properly maintained and upgraded without having to sell other assets to do so.</p> <p>Older boarding school assets have been neglected by the DET and should be brought to appropriate standard. This underinvestment reflects, in part, a funding model that has flaws that the School Council has brought to DET's attention with little success. Maintaining living facilities at an appropriate standard is an obligation of the DET and should not be premised on the requirement to sell other assets, particularly the farm, which is a key attractant for country parents and students.</p> <p>Further investment in irrigation of more (but not all) paddocks is warranted to improve the sustainability of the farm to support the current level of stocking (rather than to reduce the farm size). Costs might be offset in the future through reduced feed costs.</p> <p>The study suggests further consideration of a collaborative "Centre of Excellence in Urban and Sustainable Agriculture." This provides some opportunity to develop income streams to support the farm as well as industry and community linkages.</p> | | |
| Findings in relation to the conduct of the Inquiry | | |
| As at 1 August the Inquiry is in breach of Terms of Reference 8. No submission had been published as required meaning that any public debate on submissions is limited and that | <p>That the Inquiry note that it has been in breach of ToR 8</p> <p>That the Inquiry publish any findings or recommendations</p> | 8 |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| <p>responses by most stakeholders to submissions they disagree with is precluded.</p> <p>We thank the Chairman for permitting some stakeholders, including SHEAP to lodge later submissions. Notwithstanding, this interim submission reflects SHEAP's effort to facilitate timely consideration of issues.</p> <p>Comments by the Chairman and by Consultants employed by the Inquiry have aroused concerns that some decisions had been taken before the closure of submissions and without public discussion. Noting suspicion of the role of the DET and comments by Government, this undermines perceptions of the Inquiry. This could have been overcome by adopting best practice Inquiry processes and community engagement, such as discussion papers, staged consultation, publishing submissions as they were lodged and better advertising and stakeholder contact.</p> <p>Early administrative processes had the effect of deterring submissions from stakeholders many of whom would not have the level of technical support required on line lodgement of signed submissions. Subsequent to representations from SHEAP, who believes these issues were inadvertent, these issues were addressed and we thank the Chairman for his quick response. However, this will not overcome the fact that for a month some stakeholders might have been deterred from submitting.</p> <p>Public advertising of stakeholder meetings was poor and did not properly reflect the purpose of the Inquiry. Many community members did not associate the advertisement with the Government's proposal to sell land at Hurlstone – a matter more likely to have</p> | <p>it might make, in draft form, as a public discussion paper before presentation of its report to Government (in draft or otherwise).</p> <p>That the Inquiry note the lead SHEAP took in publishing all submissions it received copies of, but that this does not offset the need for them to have been published on the official site in a timely manner.</p> | |

| Findings | Recommendations | Relevant Terms of Reference |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| <p>prompted interest in the forums.</p> <p>The ToRs reinforce the perception that the Government is not open to alternative findings not to sell land. This is reflected in several submissions SHEAP has seen, Despite assurances from the Chairman the Government continues to make public and private statements that suggest the process is not open.</p> <p>Using the Department of Education and Training as secretariat of this Inquiry, precludes independence – however determined the Chairman might seek to be in his considerations.</p> | | |

QUOTABLE QUOTES AND FACTS

- Agriculture has the oldest average age working population of any sector in Australia and an estimated 1400-1900 undersupply of tertiary qualified applicants for graduate vacancies each year.
- Agriculture contributes 2.6% of Australia's GDP (\$26.5 billion). Sport and Performing Arts contribute 0.32% of GDP (\$2.6 billion). In NSW agriculture contributes 2.7% of GSP (\$5 billion). Sport and Performing Arts contribute too little to be recorded in national accounts.
- Agriculture contributes 10:1 times more than Sport and Performing Arts to the State and national economies, yet there are only 3 residential ag schools to 13 Sports and Performing Arts schools in NSW (1:4).
- At 115ha, Hurlstone's farm is already smaller than the average 235 ha of NSW public agricultural highschools. However, Hurlstone has 900 students of whom 730 undertake agriculture, some 40-100% larger student populations than other similar schools.
- Hurlstone's farm has seven agricultural education enterprises (compared to 8 at Farrer) with specific practical learning outcomes and whose proceeds help subsidise its operations by around 75% of costs.
- Annual farm proceeds include: Milksales \$100,000, Beef cattle \$15,000, sale of porkers \$13,000, eggs \$2,000 and sheep and goats \$2,400.
- According to guidelines provided by the relevant local advisory board, the farm land is not spare, but slightly overstocked and sustained through supplementary feeding.
- 94% of responding agriculture teachers across NSW opposed the proposed sale of land at Hurlstone, with 82% strongly opposed. 75% of responding tertiary agriculture students opposed the sale of land at Hurlstone (81% of those with experience of secondary agriculture education were opposed)
- 76% of responding students and 82% of responding agriculture teachers said land sales at Hurlstone were likely to diminish or highly likely to diminish agriculture education.
- Hurlstone is on "special use" land designated as part of the open space in the 1973 structure plan for Campbelltown. It remains so in the recent 2006-2031 Sydney Metropolitan planning strategy.
- The local area does not need more residential land with around 100,000 developable blocks for in the nearby South West Growth Centre. On 22 July 2009 the State Planning Minister said this is sufficient for the next 25 years.
- Hurlstone's land has high local heritage significance and some State significance according to several independent studies.
- Hurlstone, in collaboration with the then nearby Glenfield Veterinary Research Station, produced the first calf born by Artificial Insemination in Australia – one of Hurlstone's purebred Ayrshires.
- Hurlstone planted NSW first scientifically planted woodlot on May 24 1947.

THEY SAID IT!

"I have a strong view that we need to maintain a strong agricultural base within the Sydney Basin and green space around the city". **Hon Ian Macdonald, NSW Minister for Primary Industries**

"I think there's bigger issues here than politics, for me having grown up in the area . . . protecting that green space is really important." **NSW Minister Graham West (Macarthur Advertiser)**

"There are almost 300,000 people in south-west Sydney with almost no support for the sale... We will say this sale should not go ahead." **Dr Andrew McDonald MP (Macarthur Advertiser)**

The NSW Minister for Planning says additional residential land is not needed in that area. *"We are already planning sufficient land supplies in the South West Growth Centre to meet housing needs in the area for the next 25 years"* **Hon Kristina Kenneally, Minister for Planning**

"Hurlstone is one of our 'lighthouse schools' for Agricultural Education. If we diminish the facilities in any way we are damaging that. Then it will have a profound effect on Agricultural education in the school and that will lessen the exposure of good quality Agricultural education to the community." **Agriculture Teacher**

"There is growing uncertainty re the nature of food security in the face of climate change in Australia, and world- wide there are growing food shortages. Hurlstone Agricultural High School continues to play a vital role encouraging students to study agriculture, biochemistry and veterinary sciences essential for sustainable agriculture and food security." **Lynne Saville Sydney Food Fairness Alliance**

"Hurlstone is much valued and is one of only two coeducational, state, selective, day and boarding agricultural schools in NSW. Its location makes it ideal to bridge the city - country divide," **David Cameron, President Isolated Children's Parents Association**

"Hurlstone continues to act as a major source of our agricultural practitioners including farmers, scientists and extension workers, a role the school has filled for 100 years. To destroy the integrity of this priceless educational resource in our state would be sheer folly" **Professor Peter Wynn, Charles Sturt University**

"The Government's proposal regarding Hurlstone impacts on future skill development in agriculture, and is a contradiction to the Association's work in trying to increase the awareness and understanding of agriculture and sustainable farming in NSW schools," **Jock Laurie President NSW Farmers Association**

"We are concerned to hear of the planned sale of land attached to Hurlstone Agricultural High School because this compounds the challenges facing agricultural education in NSW... The land proposed for sale is an essential part of their practical education in agriculture, and provides an opportunity to learn aspects of agriculture that are not amenable to classroom teaching." **Professor David Guest Professor of Plant Pathology Associate Dean (Development) University of Sydney**

A modern setting means better investment in the land... land is [not] optional to practical agriculture education.. modern agriculture is a [not] a theoretical pursuit. Hurlstone is not merely a selective school, it is a 100-year-old day and boarding selective, agricultural school. It is a success story, not a failure... Sustainable agriculture education needs resources like Hurlstone and its farm now, more than ever, as Australia confronts the hard truths of global food shortages, scarce land and water resources and climate change. **Students of Hurlstone Letter to Minister signed by 500 students Dec 2008**

THE CONTEXT – WHAT DOES THE GOVERNMENT REALLY MEAN AND INTEND?

This chapter seeks to provide context to various and at times contradictory Government announcements regarding the site and seeks to define what, if any, land is subject to the considerations of the Hurlstone Inquiry.

GOVERNMENT POLICY STATEMENTS.

As part of the November 2008 NSW mini budget, the NSW government proposed to sell up to 140 of the 160 site of Hurlstone Agricultural High School.

In the ensuing months, and after considerable public outcry, the Government made several announcements, including the establishment of the Hurlstone Inquiry to consider, amongst other things, what land – if any – it should sell.

Notably, while Hurlstone sits on a 160 hectare site and up to 140 hectares was proposed for sale, less than 115 hectares comprises the farm.

The Government has since attempted to clarify and then at times contradicted its position on essential elements of the proposed land sale and the Inquiry itself:

- In December 2008, in response to public outcry, the Government announced that the Memorial Forest site would be exempted from the sale consideration and that it would

remain contiguous to the School and farm.¹

While the Government attempted to suggest this was always their intent, comments by the Director-General of DET confirmed to the Parliament that it was a subsequent announcement, in the wake of the announced sale and public response;

- In December 2008, in response to further media inquiries, the Government told media that Ajuga, Glenfield Park and Campbell House would also be retained.² (although that is contradicted by the ambiguous Terms of Reference which appear to reflect DET's recommendation that these sites might be sold, rather than the Government public statements that these schools would be retained. See the chapter on Other Stakeholders);
- On 24 February 2009 Ms Firth said that "The Inquiry will also look at the types of resources an agricultural high school needs to develop the skills required in the industry today ..."³ This inferred that the intent of a proposed Inquiry was to consider issues that would properly affect all NSW agricultural high schools;
- In relation to concerns that any sale proposal was a precursor to altering Hurlstone's role as an Agricultural, Boarding and Selective School, the Inquiry Terms of Reference dictates that Hurlstone will remain as a selective, day and boarding, Agricultural School⁴;
- Various ministerial statements reiterate that sufficient land would be retained to enable best practice, practical agriculture education

¹ Premier to Alan Jones, 2GB, 19 December 2008

² Ms Firth, "Hurlstone Not only School hit by land sale", Campbelltown Macarthur Advertiser, 3 December 2008.

³ Ms Firth, Ministerial Media Release 24 Feb 2009

⁴ Hurlstone Inquiry, Terms of Reference,

befitting a school in the 21st century⁵, although the meaning of that statement is unclear;

- Various Ministerial statements suggest that only unused, vacant land, is subject to consideration, although the Minister admitted that the sale of some or all of Hurlstone's Farm is still being considered;
- Correspondence from the Minister's office, shortly after the announcement of a proposed sale, suggests that her office had concluded that DET had erred by suggesting that up to 140 hectares was available, noting that on the basis of map checks alone they thought "more like 50". This email predates the guarantees of the retention of the Memorial Forest and the Top Schools, but contradicts later Media Releases reiterating that up to 140 or, in some releases, 160 hectares, was subject to review⁶;
- The initial Inquiry Terms of Reference did not indicate a portion of land subject to sale but asked the Chairman to consider which parts should be sold. This statement further reinforced the view that the Government was set in its view regardless of the facts of the farm usage and local greenspace demands. These Terms were amended as a result of public protest to include the words "if any" in TOR 7(b);
- On July 17, in response to media exposure of a DET list of larger school sites (over 6 ha) subject to land sale consideration, the Minister suggested that 'only' Hurlstone is still being considered for land sales⁷. While the Terms of Reference suggested the Inquiry was meant to consider the resources necessary for

teaching agriculture in a modern setting, it appears the Inquiry is overshadowed by the Government desire to sell land at Hurlstone with no broader application to like-schools.

- The Inquiry Chairman has publicly indicated that he is open to a recommendation of no-sale, further indicating his interest is best-practice agriculture education.⁸ However, consultants attending the school, on his behalf, reinforced a predisposition to land sales asking staff to identify land that might be sold.
- Notwithstanding any comments suggesting otherwise, the articulated policy setting is that proceeds of any sale would overwhelmingly go to consolidated revenue with some to go to other schools and only some – if any – be available for improvements in the residual property at Hurlstone. That is, attempts to bribe other schools and, indeed some parents at Hurlstone on the promise of substantial investment from the proceeds of any sale have little validity. The intent is that most proceeds go to non educational purposes (see discussion below).

SHEAP believes that the Inquiry has to make greater efforts to demonstrate the suggested independence of the process to overcome Government and bureaucratic predisposition to sale – contrary to the needs of agriculture education and local planning.

⁵ Ms Firth, Campbelltown Chronicle 17 July 2009

⁶ Email Minister's Media Adviser to DET

⁷ Ms Firth, Campbelltown Chronicle 17 July 2009

⁸ Hurlstone Parents' Forum, 1 July

IS A NEW LOCATION AN OPTION?

The Inquiry and others continue to canvass options for alternative sites.

Discovery, under a Standing Order 52 process in the Legislative Council, uncovered suggestions within DET that provision for part or all of any proceeds of sale might go toward the re-establishment of Hurlstone at an alternative site. This discovery uncovered a range of other documents relating to Department considerations of school land sales and process to manage or limit public advocacy against the sale.

Like much of the planning and public announcements around the considerations, the documents speculating on the option of relocation are subject to contradiction. At the very least, there was a level of planning within the DET that was not shared publicly, nor subjected to other consultation which only increases public cynicism about the process.

Whether it has been superseded by internal consideration, by a desire to maximise the net revenue from any proposed sale or simply by Government reaction to public outcry since the announcement of an Inquiry, it appears that the Government is no longer considering options to move Hurlstone. Should such options need to be considered at some stage in the future, it would require a level of planning and consideration of catchment demographics, transport support and resourcing that has not been available to this Inquiry.

Estimates for acquisition, relocation and construction on an alternative site, at sufficient scale to meet the needs of Enterprise based

teaching, are likely to exceed \$50 million⁹ and would undermine the economic benefits of any proposed sale.

Notably, if spare land is identified as a proposed alternative, it would suggest that land rather than Hurlstone's historic and operational school farm should be sold.

WHAT IS THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED SALE?

It is clear that some 50% of any proceeds of a proposed sale are intended to be taken into the consolidated revenue of Government for recurrent expenses.

The Government publicly confirmed that the objective of the sale was to fund frontline recurrent expenditures including Police and Nurses.¹⁰

This further brings into question whether the motivation for the Government and the Inquiry is best practice agriculture education, or the sale of a public asset to fund recurrent costs, the latter of which was confirmed by Mr Coutts-Trotter in the following evidence to Parliament

CHAIR: What if the community said they did not want to sell it, they want to keep it? Your consultation with the community almost presumes that you are going to sell it anyway.

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: Consultation with the

⁹ Estimate based on previous new school constructions plus estimates for additional farm infrastructure

¹⁰ Director-General Education and Training, Media Release "Sale of surplus school and TAFE land and property", 11 November 2008.

community starts from the starting point that we would like to sell some of the site because it is simply so enormous. It now sits on very valuable land.

CHAIR: It is really about the value of the land?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: In part, of course. It is about the value of the land to generate money that can be reinvested in other schools in western and south-western Sydney and other parts of the State.¹¹

Mr Coutts-Trotter went on to suggest that of the over \$200 million expected to be realized from asset sales in the mini budget, Hurlstone was expected to be the largest component.

It is difficult to conclude anything other than the Government was proposing to sell most of the site with revenue, rather than education or re-investment, being the primary motivation.

The Government has since been forced to an Inquiry and has suggested that sale options be considered in the context of proceeds being used to fund improvements to those schools on the site exclusively. The policy setting remains, however, that only some, if any, proceeds would be returned to schools on the Hurlstone site. As the Director-General articulated in a media release, *"the proceeds we retain will be invested in other public schools according to need. The school with the surplus property is likely to get some of the sale proceeds reinvested, but that's no longer guaranteed."*¹²

¹¹ Director-General Coutts-Trotter GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 2
Wednesday 19 November 2008

¹² Director-General Education and Training, Media Release "Sale of surplus school and TAFE land and property", 11 November 2008.

Terms of Reference 7 does not alter this policy setting in any way, but rather seeks to tie any recommended improvements to the school to prerequisite sales.

Revenue raising remains the undercurrent reason for the initial sale proposal and any suggestion within the Inquiry context that education is a motivator, is clearly an afterthought. Any sale appears to be a predisposition and would be a net divestment of assets, rather than a net investment in Hurlstone.

SHEAP believes that Government cannot and should not seek to limit or constrain its responsibility to properly invest in public education. The suggestion that proper maintenance or investment can only occur in the case of compensating assets sales on the same property are not only morally bankrupt, but given that most of any proceeds of this proposed sale is earmarked for other expenditures, represents a net decrease in investment in public education and at Hurlstone in particular.

OTHER USES SHOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH EDUCATIONAL USE

This submission additionally contends that there is an implied direction implicit in the public comments seeking "agriculture education in a modern setting". Seeking to retain the purposes of the three Top Schools, The implication is that any proposed use for adjacent land should not interfere or undermine the stipulated objectives that Hurlstone provide an excellent agricultural, selective, boarding schooling. Additionally, that

the operations of the Top Schools should continue unencumbered.

This would reasonably preclude residential development near the boarding school and the Top Schools or in any area where public interaction with the impacts of a rural enterprise might lead to future demands to further curtail agricultural operations at Hurlstone.

Several reports on agriculture in the Sydney Basin clearly point to the risks of allowing residential development adjacent to farm enterprises with consequent complaints about noise, smell and run off.

DISCUSSION OF THE INQUIRY CONTEXT

These respective statements, in context, allow some reasonable deductions that address speculation of various options within the Inquiry and in the media and provide context to the rest of this submission.

Firstly, Hurlstone has to remain in its current location (because the Memorial Forest is part of its curtilage) if public commitments by the Government are to be met.

Secondly, that the fixed infrastructure and immediate surrounds of the schools' main campus and the area around Ajuga, Glenfield Park and Campbell House are to be retained and that other uses should not interfere with those primary uses.

Thirdly, the Inquiry Terms of Reference implies that the school must be supported by the necessary land to provide for best practice as a

specialist agricultural school with a 'nosale' now being a proper option.

Finally, there is nothing in a Terms of Reference that the Government can or should do to avoid or constrain its responsibility to invest in public education and to properly maintain and invest in its schools.

Finding. Hurlstone Agricultural High School must be retained at Glenfield, in its current location if public statements are to be honoured.

Finding. The Memorial Forest is to be retained within the curtilage of Hurlstone Agricultural High School.

Finding. Suggestions that Hurlstone Agricultural High School be moved to other sites are not consistent with the Terms of Reference or Government statements that Hurlstone is to be retained as a selective, agricultural school with boarding facilities and be contiguous with the Memorial Forest.

Finding. The Ajuga, Glenfield and Campbell House Schools must be retained in their current location if public statements are to be honoured.

Recommendation. That Hurlstone Agricultural High School and its farm be retained at Glenfield.

Finding. That the suggestion that up to 140 hectares could be considered for sale conflict with Government policy statements, with some 35 hectares accounted for by fixed infrastructure, 4 schools and DET district Offices.

Importantly, while the Minister persists in using the 140 or 160 hectare figure, it is now a matter of fact that some 35 hectares of the site include the main school fixed infrastructure, the three 'Top Schools' Ajuga, Campbell House and Glenfield Park School, laneways and roads and Government Departmental Offices.

This leaves only 115 hectares of farm, which this submission contends is fully utilised, rather than the suggested maximum of 140 hectares.



Figure 3 Memorial Forest to be retained and contiguous with Hurlstone. These others uses only leave 115 ha of farm.

IF IT IS REALLY ABOUT AGRICULTURE EDUCATION, WHY ONLY HURLSTONE?

There is a glaring contradiction between the Minister's suggestion that only Hurlstone is being considered for land sales¹³, while suggesting the Inquiry is considering Agriculture Education in a way that should otherwise impact on all NSW Agricultural High Schools. Until the NSW Government removes this contradiction, it would seem that the purpose of the Inquiry is to justify predetermined land sales at Hurlstone, regardless

of educational best practice that should reasonably apply to all agricultural schools.

Finding. That Inquiry Terms of Reference 4 and 5 are contradicted by comments by the Minister suggesting that only Hurlstone is being considered for land sales, where Terms 4 and 5, read in conjunction with the Minister's release of 24 February 2009, would reasonably affect resourcing at all agricultural high schools. This contradiction undermines claims that the outcome is motivated by a desire to seek best practice agricultural education – rather than a Government desire to sell otherwise profitable land regardless of the educational impacts. Any land sale is a divestment in agriculture education assets, at Hurlstone in particular, rather than a net investment.

Recommendation. That any recommendations on the future of agriculture education equally apply to all NSW agricultural high schools. To that end, no changes should apply to Hurlstone until their consequent impact on other schools be considered. (In considering this recommendation the Inquiry should note evidence in this study showing the importance of enterprise and practical education and the fact that those agriculture educators in other schools oppose the sale of land at Hurlstone).

This submission seeks to deal with education and other community issues in good faith – even if the State Government is not doing so.

¹³ Ms Firth, Campbelltown Chronicle 17 July 2009

If the Inquiry is genuinely seeking to determine best practice educational use of the land, rather than justify selling it, a critical question for the Inquiry, is what is the minimum scale of an agricultural education facility that teaches in an enterprise setting? The scale of like schools is an important comparator for the Inquiry.

Further, at its current rate of stocking and use is any of that land currently 'unused' or 'vacant' (as the DET suggests the criteria for sale is)?

It is important that the Inquiry not be bullied into a pro-sale position or compromise by the DET or the Government, rather than consider the needs of agriculture education and other community impacts on their merits.

Further, that while the Terms of Reference seek to constrain any proposed improvements at Hurlstone - on condition of a land sale - that the Inquiry be open to recommending 'net investment' in agriculture education rather than facilitating a revenue grab by Government at the expense of Hurlstone and good agricultural education.

Other chapters discuss the Hurlstone Farm and agricultural careers and education in more detail.



Figure 4 Packed meetings, 10,000 petitioners and thousands of letters and emails protest proposed sale



Dr Luke Ingenhoff (Hurlstone 1996 -2001)

As a day student, I had never been exposed to agriculture. I became interested in agriculture and enjoyed the practical experience that I received during lessons on the school farm. I became an active member of Hurlstone Rural Youth and Hurlstone Dairy Group. Training and exhibiting Hurlstone's Ayrshire cows over 6 years provided sound cattle handling skills and interest in an agricultural career. These experiences led me to study Veterinary Science and to pursue a career in food animal practice.

I work at The Barn Veterinary Services in Muswellbrook, one of the last practices in the Hunter Valley still focussed predominantly on servicing dairy and beef cattle producers throughout the Hunter. I am APAV accredited, Johnes Disease Market Assurance Program accredited, NCPD (National Cattle Pregnancy Diagnosis) accredited and a Countdown Mastitis Advisor. I provide diagnostic relief when the local LHPA District Veterinarian is away. This was the case on 20th-21st December 2007 when I diagnosed the Rouchel anthrax outbreak near Scone.

Had I not attended Hurlstone, I do not believe that I would be a veterinarian today.

HURLSTONE FARM USAGE - THE FACTS

This chapter outlines the Hurlstone Farm, its uses and discusses comparative information about Hurlstone Agricultural High School farm and other similar institutions.

IS THE LAND FULLY USED CURRENTLY?

While the needs of modern 'best-practice' agricultural education are covered in more detail in later chapters, this chapter works on the well-founded input of educators that an enterprise of sufficient scale is the foundation for excellent agriculture education.

This submission contends that Hurlstone is already at the minimum scale necessary, is smaller than comparable specialist agricultural high schools, and its usage is consistent with the needs of the enterprises that exist currently. Each of those enterprises is directly linked to educational outcomes.



Figure 5 Approximate boundaries. There is a rail easement to the south in Lot 4 which is no longer Hurlstone and an electricity transmission line easement along the northern boundary. 35 hectares is taken by four school's infrastructure, Memorial Forest and DET regional offices.

That is, the land is not unused or 'vacant'.

The Farm Manager uses advice from DPI and the Moss Vale Rural Lands Protection Board (now Cumberland Livestock Health and Pest Authority) to assess stocking levels. In the latter case, a property of 160 hectares is suggested to sustain 127 cattle or 1279 sheep.

Noting that the farm has been confirmed at 115 hectares rather than 160 hectares, the school farm runs over 120 cattle, over 100 sheep/goats/alpacas and some 60 pigs and 250 fowl.

Before considering any cropping to support other agriculture educational needs (grasses and pastures, horticulture, plant science and other outcomes) the farm already exceeds the recommended stocking level to

sustain the enterprise and agricultural objectives necessary to support around 730

agriculture students. This overstocking is sustainable only with supplementary feeding.

Finding . Hurlstone Farm exceeds stocking levels recommended by the relevant Board and, as such, is fully utilised and might possibly require additional land or resources to sustain its enterprises into the future.

Recommendation . That the Inquiry investigate options to increase the holding of land or identify other additional resources at Hurlstone in order to better sustain its stockholding through drought.

IMPROVING SUSTAINABILITY

In December 2008, the farm was still recovering from sustained drought. As such, its stock levels were less than optimal to achieve educational objectives and even those minimum levels required substantial supplementary feeding. Currently, the scale of land to stocking requires

supplementary feeding at a cost of \$80,000 pa.

Even following welcome rain over the past season, the Farm Manager estimates that, going into the dry months of winter, the farm has only 15 hectares of pasture that was not grazed out. That is, some 80% of the farm was already experiencing stress.

One of the considerations that has not been considered by the Inquiry, is that reduction in land mass will not only impact negatively on scale, to the extent that the viability of the Dairy enterprise will be at risk, but that any loss in pasture from the already strained holding, will need to be offset by additional, costly, supplementary feeding.

That is, the operating costs of the farm, to sustain the minimum level of resource for educational outcomes in an enterprise setting, will increase rather than decrease, if the land mass goes below

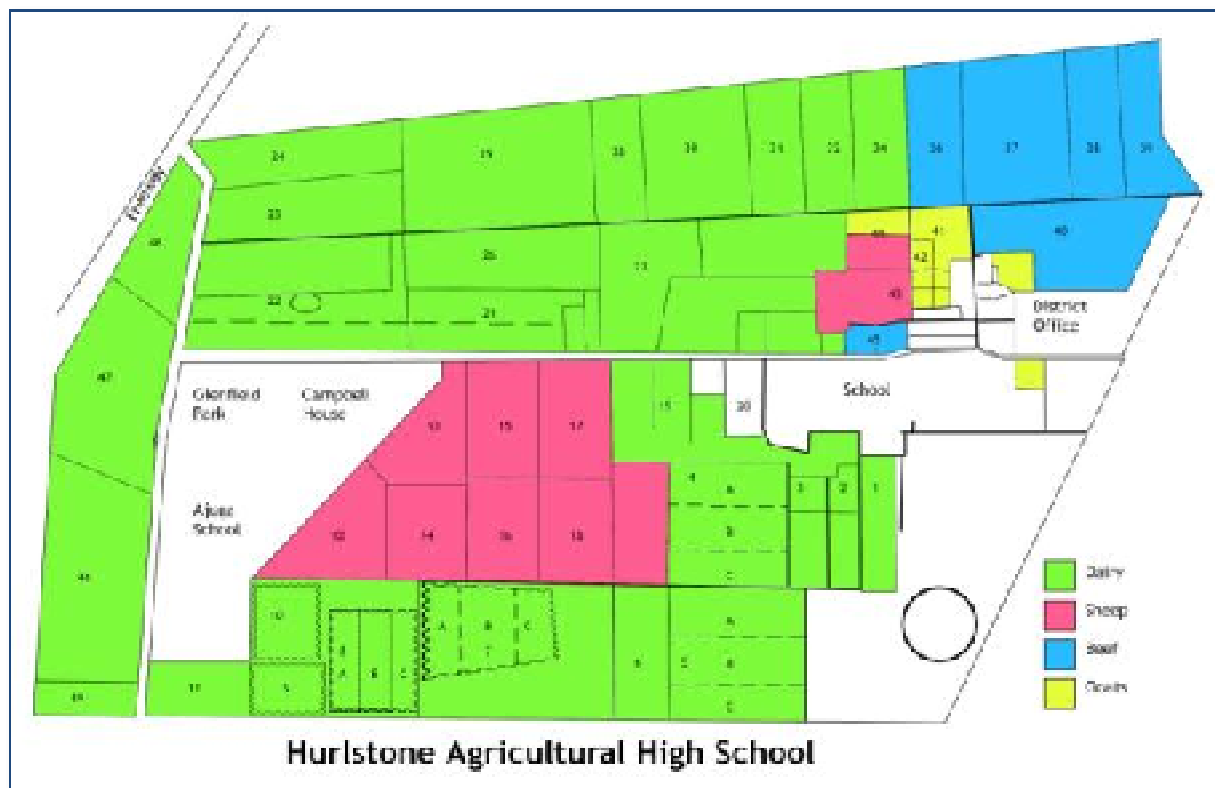


Figure 6. Plan view showing the enterprise usage of Hurlstone's 115 hectare farm. Each enterprise delivers specific practical outcomes and experience. The white non-farm areas account for 35 hectares of the site. Split between 5 institutions.

a critical sustainable scale.

These pressures can be ameliorated in part by additional investment in irrigation. However, it is important, in terms of sustainable agriculture, that experience in best practice 'dry land' agriculture still be a part of the Hurlstone educational experience. Further, irrigation does not allow for reduction in land holding and increased intensity but is necessary to reduce the land stress of operations at minimum scale.

As the recent drought showed, there is insufficient water on the farm to be dependent on for future sustainability alone.

That is, improved irrigation should be used to improve the viability of the farm enterprises and reduce dependence on supplementary feeding, rather than justify reduced land holdings in an enterprise that is already at minimum critical mass.

It is not surprising that there are many people who think that reducing Hurlstone below a sustainable mass is part of a longer term plan to close the boarding school and turn Hurlstone into an academic rather than agricultural school – notwithstanding less than effusive comments to the contrary by the Government and DET. The apparent different standard applied to the 350 ha land acquisition at Farrer adds to that concern.

Finding. In order to maintain the minimum scale necessary to meet contract demands on its Dairy, the farm is only just providing sufficient pasture and even then, requires routine supplementary feed. The farm will have difficulty maintaining its contract with Dairy Farmers if its farm size and output is reduced.

Finding. That any loss in pasture will increase the costs of supplementary feeding which are currently \$80,000pa.

Finding. While 'dry land' management needs to be a part of any modern education in sustainable agriculture, there is scope to increase irrigation in order to sustain the viability of the current enterprises that already is under pressure.

Recommendation . That the Inquiry not reduce land or stock holdings below the minimum scale necessary to maintain its commercial contract for milk supply.

Recommendation . DET provide resources to increase irrigation in order to sustain the current operations, which are already at minimum sustainable mass, while maintaining some 'dry land' operations at scale as an integral part of a modern education in 'sustainable farming'. This investment has potential to be offset, over time, by reduced dependence on supplementary feeding.

SHOULD A SCHOOL RESOURCE BE ASSESSED ON FINANCIAL VIABILITY?

There has been much debate about the financial viability of the Hurlstone Farm.

This submission contends that it is a nonsensical proposition to suggest that a school resource is only worthwhile if it meets a commercial standard

of financial viability. On that basis, no school in NSW is viable.

For example, how many VET workshops are commercially independent and viable as operations beyond their educational importance?

Further, it is clear that DET has not provided even the minimum level of investment and maintenance in order to ensure that school farm properties are able to operate as fully commercial enterprises. For that reason alone, the financials need to be assessed through the prism of 'school enterprises' not commercial going concerns.

This submission recommends that a set of performance benchmarks be developed for all specialist schools – not just agricultural schools – in order to define appropriate financial and education outcomes against which to judge performance.

These benchmarks should be developed well before any decisions to sell part of the Hurlstone Farm asset.

Finding. There are no robust financial and outcome performance standards against which to assess the performance of specialist enterprises or educational investment. This includes agricultural schools, sports high schools, performing arts high schools and VET facilities.

Finding. DET has failed to provide proper investment and maintenance at Hurlstone to ensure its commerciality as a 'business enterprise', rather than as a 'school enterprise'. It needs to be recognised that secondary school teaching also incorporates other curricula, and even within agriculture a broader general experience of different enterprises intended to provide an educational rather than economic outcome.

It is not appropriate to assess schools like Hurlstone (indeed any school) on a purely business 'bottom line' basis.

Recommendation . That the DET develop financial and performance standards – relevant to educational settings - against which to assess the value of its investment in specialist schools, before making any land sale decisions. Those standards should also identify appropriate levels of DET maintenance and investment to underpin the operating performance of those school enterprises.

Importantly, those standards should recognize that Hurlstone, Farrer and Yanco are secondary schools with teaching enterprises requiring a broad experiential base, not commercial scale farming, nor VET institutions with a single focus that might allow economies of scale by specialising in one product line or enterprise.

FARM FINANCIALS

Notwithstanding the need to consider financials through the prism of secondary school outcomes rather than purely business outcomes, the school farm operates with a turnover of around \$200,000 with revenue equivalent to around 75% of its operating costs.

This is in the wake of one of the worst droughts in NSW history that affected Hurlstone also.

This submission contends that this is an exemplary financial performance for a school farm suffering chronic Departmental under-

investment. Further, that this performance is comparable to a range of other similar institutions such as Yanco, Farrer and indeed, interstate schools such as Stanthorpe State High School with its 100 hectare stone fruit, wine and wine tourism enterprises. In the latter case, it turns over \$100,000 and receives around \$20,000 subsidy annually.

Except in very good years, the current pasture capacity means that the farm has limited ability to produce significant hay and silage. As indicated in earlier, this capacity would be further undermined by loss of land, which, in turn would increase dependence on supplementary feeding – even for lower stockholdings.

As discussed, there is scope for improved capacity on the current land through increased irrigation which might allow for more hay and silage production. This would improve the capacity of the existing overstocked land, rather than justify reduced land holdings with the attendant risk of loss of scale. There is scope to improve the viability of the farm by improved early investment in irrigation, that might help offset supplementary feeding costs and improve output within the current holding, but reducing the land scale is



Figure 7. The piggery. Diversity in educational understanding and returns \$14,000 to help run the farm

likely to negatively impact on the economies of scale in the farm enterprises and increase supplementary feeding needs.

Most importantly, the Inquiry needs to recognize that diversity of agriculture educational experience rather than ‘commercial economies’ is an important factor in finding the balance between enterprise and educational outcomes.

Finding. With \$200,000 farm turnover and revenues at around 75% of operating costs, Hurlstone’s Farm operates consistently with other good performing school enterprises.

Finding. Any reduction in Hurlstone’s land will undermine operating revenue while increasing operating costs for such things as supplementary feeding. Investment in additional irrigation might ameliorate existing pressures and offset some feed costs in the Dairy, but would not offset any loss in land resource which is already overstocked.

Finding. That Hurlstone Agricultural High School is a teaching and learning enterprise, not a commercial farm enterprise with its attendant economies and financial bottom line focus. Hurlstone should not be assessed strictly in terms of financial return.

Recommendation . That any model of enterprises proposed for the farm by the Inquiry accommodate the fact that it is a teaching farm with a diversity of experiences at reasonable scale being a more important factor than the economies of scale of a commercial enterprise

ANIMAL ETHICS

Hurlstone's Agriculture Department and Farm Staff rigorously apply best practice standards in animal handling and ethics.

This best practice dictates that, beyond the necessary levels for a minimum enterprise scale, minimum number of livestock is held so that no single animal is over-handled beyond appropriate ethical standards.

Not surprisingly, there is considerable scope for animals used in practical education, with relatively inexperienced students, to become stressed. Noting that Hurlstone caters for some 730 agriculture students – around twice the size of comparable schools – the demands on stock are relatively high.

Hurlstone conforms to "Animals in Schools: Animal welfare guidelines for teachers". For example, some 160 Year 10 students who deal with Bovine reproduction will be required as individuals, or in small practical groups, to undertake theory and practical work in mating, calving, pregnancy testing, artificial insemination and embryo transfer.

Logically, it is difficult, in a herd of 109 Dairy cows, taking out heifers and others not suitable for joining, to have sufficient pregnant cows in any given year to provide one on one practical experience. The guidelines and good practice limit the number of iterations of practical pregnancy tests any given cow can undergo in a season.

Further, pregnancy testing in the first 3 months of gestation carries attendant risks of miscarriage, which not only precludes ethical practical

activities by students, but would, by increasing the risk of loss of productive milking herd, further undermine the commercial viability of an already small dairy.

As it stands, the current herd is stretched to meet the current demands of around 36-40 cows undergoing practical pregnancy testing by 6 Year 10 classes in a safe testing period limited to 8 to 12 weeks each year.

The issue is replicated in other practical activities in other enterprises – such as sheep drenching, lamb marking (vaccination, ear tagging, tail docking and castration of males) and goat foot paring. For example, 158 Year 9 students who do their wool production/sheep topic carry out a catch/throw/hold/and footparing activity that is an essential husbandry practice and a skill related to theory work. Sheep numbers are needed to minimize animal stress from the number of students that are working with them.

Finding. The minimum critical mass of livestock - and consequently of land - is a function of necessary scale of enterprise, number of students, number of practical activity iterations for that class size and ethical animal handling practices. In Hurlstone's case both enterprise scale and student population size suggests that the farm is at the absolute minimum size.

Finding. Best practice in animal ethics requires a critical mass of stock in each enterprise to ensure that optimal practical experience by each of Hurlstone's 700 agriculture students can be undertaken safely and humanely.

In the case of the Dairy herd, the current 109 head, less heifers and others not ready for mating, is already stretched to support the 36-40

head needed to provide pregnancy testing experience annually never mind other practical education and husbandry activities such as Artificial Insemination. That is, the current milking herd size is already at the minimum mass to meet the guidelines for ethical practice on animals in an educational facility.

Finding. Any reduction in land or stock handling would, by necessity, reduce the iterations of any practical activity by individual students, contrary to best practice practical agriculture education.

The quantum of the impact of resource variations is currently immeasurable due to the lack of longitudinal studies that consider changed educational outcomes arising from resource changes. However, experience suggests that reduced practical experience will reduce both learning outcomes and retention of students in agriculture.

Recommendation . In view of appropriate guidelines for ethical animal handling, any reduced land and stockholding be assessed for the consequential reduction in practical education experience and outcomes. Given the paucity of longitudinal studies relating to outcome impacts of reduced resources, it is appropriate to benchmark the current operations and model proposed changes over time – before any irreversible land sale occurs

WHY IS 6 HECTARES A BENCHMARK SCHOOL SIZE ANYWAY?

Much has been made of the relative size of Hurlstone compared to other public schools. Both the Minister and Premier made public comparisons of Hurlstone's 160 hectares (noting that the farm is only 115 ha), compared to an average of 3 hectares for Primary Schools and 6 hectares for Secondary Schools. The Premier also made the comparison with the size of the Olympic stadium – although the purpose of that comparison, beyond political posturing, remains unclear.

The Government has since denied any knowledge of plans to assess public school land sales across NSW. However, it is indisputable that these 3 and 6 ha benchmarks arose out of Departmental plans that have since been exposed as a result of a Legislative Council Standing Order 52 direction.

The Director-General DET also referred to the *average* school size as 6 hectares when giving evidence to a Parliamentary Committee. The following exchange demonstrates a clear intent to identify school sites for sale in the context of that size:

CHAIR: Could you provide a list of properties that are earmarked for sale over the next four years?

Mr COUTTS-TROTTER: We have not yet compiled that list... The other, of course, is that we are going to have a look at the site of Hurlstone Agricultural High School. It sits on about 160 hectares of land. The standard site for a high school is six hectares. Obviously, not every school has the standard six hectares; some have a little

less and some, in the case of Hurlstone, have a whole lot more

SHEAP believes it is not coincidental that there is a similarity between the public comments of Ministers and these Departmental plans. It is difficult to accept the public assurances that the Government was not aware of these plans when the DET's most senior official openly discussed these considerations in a Committee hearing, and a Standing Order 52 direction uncovered a list that the Director-General's comments suggested were in progress.

At the very least, these benchmarks for proposed school land sales appear to have formed the basis of Departmental briefings that, in turn, informed early media responses on the Hurlstone land sale proposal.

The significance of this 'coincidence' is that the proposal to sell up to 140 ha of Hurlstone is not based on a proper comparison of 'like' schools nor proper consideration of land usage, but rather an arbitrary benchmark invented in the DET based on the average size of incomparable schools. This results in the unsupportable and illogical conclusion that any secondary school land over 6 hectares is surplus.

The 6 hectare figure has no merit with regard to education nor usage, never mind agricultural education.

HOW DOES HURLSTONE'S LAND HOLDINGS COMPARE WITH SIMILAR SCHOOLS?

Proper comparisons debunk both the 6 hectare benchmark and the suggestion that Hurlstone's

holding are 'surplus' or comparatively large when compared with other agricultural high schools.

Our investigations found:

- If James Ruse Agricultural High School is included, notwithstanding the fact that it no longer produces agriculturalists, Hurlstone's 115 hectare landholding is still below the average 235 hectare holdings in each of NSW four agricultural high schools.
- Hurlstone's 115 hectare farm property is far smaller than the more comparable Yanco (200 ha) and Farrer Agricultural High (two properties of 170ha and 450ha) Schools, in NSW, despite having nearly double Yanco's student populations and 50% larger than Farrer's.
- That the average land holding of schools of respondents to a survey of agriculture teachers was 30 hectares¹⁴. However, 72% of respondents said that the land holding they currently had at schools at which they taught, was inadequate for good agriculture outcomes OR it was only adequate if they had access to supplementary practical experience elsewhere. Many respondents suggested that facilities such as Hurlstone were ideal to provide that supplementary experience.
- Notably, most respondents to the survey had fewer than 100 agriculture students at their schools, compared to Hurlstone's 730 agriculture students (out of 900 students total)
- A report on the holdings of comparable schools in other States found that land holdings of agricultural schools varied from 46 hectares at Urrbrae in South Australia, to

¹⁴ Some care with this average is required as it is the average land for 'respondents' rather than schools.

between 560 and 3242 Hectares in the five agriculture schools in Western Australia.¹⁵ The model in WA has more similarity to the models at Yanco, Farrer and Hurlstone than does the model at Urrbrae.

- While Queensland does not have specialist agricultural high schools it has several 'gateway schools' to agriculture and agribusiness that assume similar characteristics, such as Stanthorpe State High School (Stone Fruit and Wine/Wine Tourism) and Nambour State High School (Dairy). Stanthorpe has 650 students of which 300 study agriculture. It has a 100 hectare property and a co-located College of Wine Tourism which is a collaborative RTO/industry school offering Certificate 2 and 3 training in trades associated with Wine Tourism and marketing.

Finding . At 115 hectares, Hurlstone Agricultural High School Farm is well below the average size of comparable agricultural school farms (Averaging 235 hectares in NSW) despite having substantially more students than comparable schools.

Finding . It is inconsistent to suggest that Hurlstone with 730 agriculture students might be reduced in land size without agricultural education impacts, while contemporaneously maintaining Farrer (500) and Yanco (300) at their existing scale as exemplars of good agriculture education.

Finding . While Hurlstone, Yanco and Farrer might well demonstrate good practice

¹⁵ "Agricultural education and Selective Schools", Parliament of Australia Parliamentary Library Memorandum, 9 July 2009



Dr Alan Trounson (Hurlstone 1958-1962)

I had the privilege of an extraordinary education when as an 11 year old boy who wanted to spend his life with farm animals, I won acceptance to Hurlstone as a boarding student. To have had the experience of working closely with care of the poultry, dairy, piggery and vegetable gardens while receiving instruction on the more conventional high school syllabus was for me the ultimate in a balanced education... The school is the land and without it, the experience would be totally different. We loved that land and the affection was transferred to country we owned, leased and worked on. The experience cannot be replicated and is different to being a visitor on someone's farm or the child of an owner of a farm. ...All my experiences in research, government and the land, reinforces the benefits of the education and attachment to the land that occurs when young people are given the opportunity to be educated at Hurlstone with the farm amenities and land attached. Indeed Australia counts on this to continue to train the caretakers of a beautiful but fragile environment. I hope we all can appreciate this wonderful high school resource.

Extract from submission by Professor Alan Trounson former Animal Scientist and now world renowned IVF and stem cell research pioneer now heading the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine

agriculture education in an enterprise setting, as best-practice suggests is appropriate, there are a range of examples in other States that offer additional opportunities to combine the agriculture specialization of NSW agricultural high schools with related commercial enterprise and training opportunities. These examples should be examined in the context of proposed improvements/co-located enterprises for Hurlstone and other agriculture schools in NSW.



Figure 8 Hurlstone is the only school showing dairy at the Royal Sydney Show

Recommendation. When considering the average land holdings and land needs, that the Inquiry benchmark Hurlstone's land needs against comparable NSW Agricultural High Schools, notably Farrer and Yanco, rather than other Public schools. And further, that the Inquiry acknowledge the substantial difference in student populations undertaking agriculture within those schools.

Figure 9 Hurlstone has significantly more agriculture students and less land than similar schools

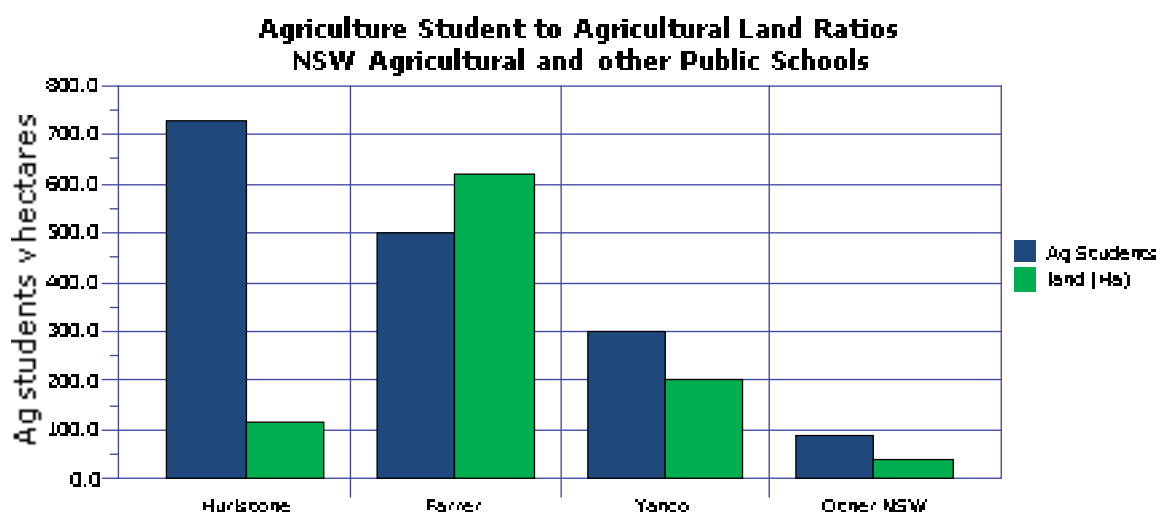


Table 1 Paddock and Enterprise Usage (Including brief Summary of tied educational outcomes)

| Enterprise | Infrastructure | Land Area ha | Paddock no | Pasture type | Stored/ grazed | Paddock management | Enterprise yield | Practical Education Objective |
|----------------|---|-----------------|----------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Piggery | 12 pens 2 x 2m farrowing crates 2 weaner cages 1.5 x 2.5 m | 0.1 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 2008 - 153 weaners 2 sows CFA | Yr 9: Handling, breeds, breeding, piglets - iron injection, teeth trimming |
| Poultry | Layer shed Purebred breeding pens | 0.025 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 2008 – 55,000 eggs 50 broilers | Yr 7: Handling skills, breed identification Yr 8: Breeds, gender differences, behaviour, handling, egg production. Yr 11: Broiler nutrition trial |
| Sheep | 3 handling yards 2 stand shearing shed | 17.8 | 12 13 14 | Kikuyu Kikuyu Kikuyu | Grazed Grazed Grazed | Rotational grazing through each of these paddocks Paddock 14 identified for pasture | 2008 - 28 lambs 29 ewes 3 bales | Yr 7: Handling, behaviour, breeds Yr 9: Handling, wool, drenching, foot paring, mouthng, vaccinating, drafting, use of cradle. Yr 10: Prime Lambs - Breeds, handling, selective breeding, Ewe and ram |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|-----|-----|--------|--------|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| | | | 15 | Kikuyu | Grazed | improvement in 09 | medium wool | husbandry, lamb marking, weighing, monitoring growth, animal conformation and judging. |
| | | | 16 | Kikuyu | Grazed | to promote better | | |
| | | | 17 | Kikuyu | Grazed | growth in weaned | | |
| | | | 18 | Kikuyu | Grazed | lambs | | |
| | | | 19C | Kikuyu | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 19D | Kikuyu | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 19E | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 19F | | Grazed | | | |
| Goats | 1 brick shed 1 breeze way shed with handling yards | 3.3 | 41 | Kikuyu | Grazed | Rotational grazing through each sub section of paddock | 2008 - 13 kids 5 CFA does | Yr 7: Handling, behaviour, breeds Yr 8: Breeds, handling, weighing, mousing Yr 10: Breeds, selective breeding, handling, management, husbandry - mousing, foot paring, vaccinating, drenching, weighing, marking kids, vaccination, ear tagging, ear tattooing, |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|----|----------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | tail docking, castration, marketing. |
| Alpacas | 2 stand Shearing shed (run with sheep) | | | | | | 2008 – ½ bale fleece | Emerging/Alternative enterprises and outcomes related to sheep husbandry. |
| Beef | Beefyards | 11 | 36 37 39 40 | Native grasses – Rhodes grass Bermuda grass Setaria Phalaris Paspalum Cocksfoot | Grazed Grazed Grazed Grazed | Rotational grazing through each paddock. Paddock 36 has been identified for pasture improvement in 2009 to improve weight gain in weaner calves | 2008 – 8 mature cows, calves and steers (for showing) | Yr 10: Breeds, handling, breeding, artificial insemination, cross-breeding, animal selection and selective breeding, animal assessment and evaluation (judging quality), husbandry - drenching, vaccinating, dipping, ear tagging, ear tattooing, castration), marketing. Yr 10: Farm budgets including the Gross Margin. Yr 11: Growth rates; all husbandry practices. Rural Youth: students work after school to prepare steers for shows, eg. Camden, The |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|----|-------------|--|--------|--|---|--|
| | | | | | | | | Royal Easter Show, UWS Hawkesbury & Central coast steer show and Dubbo show. |
| Dairy | Dairy – milking bails 2 sets of handling yards | 82 | 1 | | Grazed | | 2008 – 200,000 litres of milk 26 bull calves 28 CFA mature cows 150 bales of hay 70 bales of silage | Yr 7: Handling e.g. calf leading, behaviour, hand milking Yr 10: Breeds, hand milking, machine milking, dairy product making. Mating, calving, pregnancy testing, artificial insemination, embryo transfer, calving assistance. Yrs 11 & 12: Reproduction (Artificial Insemination and embryo transfer), growth and development (heifer calf-heifer-cow), pest and disease control(antibiotic treatment, vaccination, dipping, drenching), digestion and nutrition (pasture/fodder crop/feed supplements evaluation), machine milking, butter/cheese/modified milks making. |
| | | | 2/3a Kikuyu | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 2/3b Kikuyu | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 2/3c Kikuyu | | Grazed | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|----------------------------|--|--|--|
| | | | 2d Kikuyu | | Grazed | | | Yrs 11 & 12: Farm management - Analysis of farm performance and management records, regional comparison, and feedback information on HAH dairy farm e.g. Dairy Express herd recording, Dairy Farmers monthly statements. Yr 8: On the Farm program – year 8 students work in the dairy periods 5 & 6, on a rostered basis. Rural Youth: students work after school to prepare dairy cattle for shows, eg. Camden and The Royal Easter Show and the Ayrshire calf day. |
| | | | 4a Kikuyu undersown with ryegrass (u.r.) | | Irrigated and strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 4b Kikuyu u.r. | | Irrigated and strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 4c Kikuyu u.r. | | Irrigated and strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 5a Kikuyu u.r. | | Irrigated and strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 5b Sorghum u.r. | | Irrigated and strip | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| | | | | | grazed | | | |
| | | | 5c Cowpeas u.r. | | Irrigated and strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 6 Lucerne | | Irrigated and strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 7a Maize/ corn | | Irrigated and strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 7bNative u.r. | | Irrigated and strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 7c Millet undersown with oats | | Irrigated and strip grazed | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| | | | 8a Sorghum u.r. | | Irrigated and strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 8b Native u.r. | | Irrigated and strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 8c Native u.r. | | Irrigated and strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 9 Native | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 10 Native | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 11 Native | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 19a Kikuyu | | Grazed | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|-----------------------|--|--------------|--|--|--|
| | | | 19b Kikuyu | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 21a Native | | Strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 21b Native | | Strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 22a Kikuyu/ native | | Strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 22b Kikuyu/ native | | Strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 22c Kikuyu/ native | | Strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 23 Paspalum | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 24 Kikuyu | | Cut for | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|----------------------|--|-----------------|--|--|--|
| | | | | | hay | | | |
| | | | 25 Kikuyu | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 26 Kikuyu/ native | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 27Native | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 28 Kikuyu/ native | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 30 Kikuyu/ native | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 31 Sorghum | | Strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 32Native | | Strip grazed | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|--|--|----------------------|--|--------------|--|--|--|
| | | | 34 Sorghum | | Strip grazed | | | |
| | | | 46 Kikuyu/ native | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 47 Kikuyu/ native | | Grazed | | | |
| | | | 48 Kikuyu/ native | | Grazed | | | |
| Whole Farm | | | | | | | | <p>Year 9: Trees on farms</p> <p>Tree planting plan, tree planting, seed collection, improving sustainable farms.</p> <p>Year 9: Cropping & machinery</p> <p>Oat cropping, soil preparation, seed sowing, tractor driving, hay making, silage making, soil degradation, sustainable farming practices.</p> |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | <p>Years 11 & 12:</p> <p>Soil Science - HAH clay loam and analysis of texture, structure, fertility, OM content, acidity, soil profile.</p> <p>Plant Science - Pasture and crop establishment, use, maintenance, improvement.</p> <p>Sustainable farming - Sustainable vs. non-sustainable practices on HAH farm eg. soil preparation, pasture mulching, soil aeration, minimum till, fodder conservation.</p> <p>Irrigated and dry land pastures and crops.</p> |
| Potato cropping. | | 2 ha | Paddock 20 – which allows a two strip rotation | | | | | Yr 10: Variety selection, soil preparation, sowing seed potatoes, husbandry, harvesting, marketing, disease and pest control. |
| Horticulture | 2 glass houses; | .2 ha | | | | | | Yr 8: Plant propagation, bonsai, |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| area. | hydroponics beds; 1 green house; orchid house | | | | | | | hydroponics Yr 11& 12: Plant propagation methods. |
| Vegetable growing | Yr 7: 12 raised beds Yr 12: crop trial area. | .2 ha .2 ha | | | | | | Yr 7: Raise seedlings from seeds; transplant seedlings; care and husbandry of seedlings and crop; harvest. Yr 12: Plant density trial – soil preparation; raised beds; transplanting; IPM; fertilizers; irrigation; harvesting; assessment of quality; marketing. |
| Orchard enterprise | Citrus orchard and stone fruit orchard | 1 ha | Paddock 20 plus an area adjacent to year 7 raised beds. | | | | | Yr 8 & Yr 10: Care and management of the orchards. Yr 12: Plant management elective. |

BEST PRACTICE AGRICULTURE EDUCATION AND HURLSTONE

This chapter outlines the principles of best practice secondary agriculture education, discusses the results of surveys of agriculture teachers and students as well as the respective contributions of Hurlstone and other Agriculture Schools to agriculture career pathways.

To provide proper context for this discussion, this chapter also provides an outline of sectoral labour and skills demand issues.

The context of global agricultural production is also discussed briefly.

Summaries of the survey results are attached at Annexure A.

AGRICULTURE EDUCATION SUPPLY AND DEMAND. FACING UP TO THE INESCAPABLE DEMOGRAPHIC TRUTHS

The agriculture sector and rural communities more generally are facing a well documented labour and skills shortage with the trend being a widening of the supply and demand gap.

A recent study commissioned by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, considered the geographical and sectoral aspects of skilled labour shortages in rural Australia.

In particular it found that:

“skilled labour shortages tended to be caused by a general shortage of labour rather than a lack of adequately skilled workers. Overall labour shortages reflected the nationwide tightness in the labour market. However, it found that many rural businesses were feeling the impact of this tightness more severely than metropolitan counterparts due to the relatively small size of rural labour markets and the underlying difficulty in attracting and retaining labour”¹⁶

This study, like several others before it, sought to address barriers to attraction and retention that revolved around negative perceptions of rural lifestyle. It reinforces that metropolitan regions of Australia have long proved a key source of labour for rural industries.¹⁷

A range of reports seek to address micro issues of labour supply and demand and incentives within rural labour markets. However, the inescapable truth is that labour supply in rural markets is relatively small and diminishing and that the metropolitan markets are not only much larger



Figure 10 The inescapable truth is that rural labour markets are not meeting workforce demands

¹⁶ A Davies, et al, Australia's Rural Workforce – an Analysis of labour shortages in Rural Australia, RIRDC Publication 09/008, April 2009, pXIV

¹⁷ Ibid

sources of supply – in an otherwise competitive Australian market – but have been major contributors to rural labour needs.

Davies et al, provided a range of suggestions, but of relevance to this Inquiry, one recommendation was *“That Education and training programs are tailored locally, regionally, statewide and nationally to recognise the nature of rural labour shortages, skill needs and future development trajectories.”*¹⁸

Finding. Any decision to divest resources at Hurlstone would be made for short-term revenue needs rather than improve future career development trajectories in agriculture which, according to research, would ameliorate the growing rural labour shortage.

Anecdotally, as agriculture footprints in metropolitan markets diminish, the negative perceptions of rural life and agricultural career paths increase – mainly through lack of familiarity and contact with primary production.

The so-called city-country gap appears to be widening.

While this submission suggests that the social dynamic of this gap is quite real, albeit difficult to prove in the absence of any substantial academic work, the consequential economic and labour markets gaps have been well documented.

Geoffrey Lawrence in 1987 pointed out that off-farm effects were often ignored by agricultural economists and *“as the agricultural economy proceeds through its booms and busts farmers are forced from the land. Small towns begin to*

*disappear, rural facilities decline, rural employment opportunities erode and those with jobs remain in a decaying economic and social environment. Some farm and rural town dwellers are forced, often reluctantly to move to the cities. Others, with restricted mobility, remain trapped in semi poverty”*¹⁹

These patterns are not uniform and there are some growth areas – often at the expense of other country areas. For example, in NSW, Parkes, Cabonne and Narromine shires are bigger than they were in 1976²⁰. Nonetheless, even where there is growth, it is not likely to meet the demands of the skills and labour shortages overall.

A national Inquiry into rural skills shortages, training and research in 2006 found:

*“One of the critical issues facing Australian agriculture and forestry is convincing people that there are worthwhile careers to be had in those industries. The prolonged image of decline in the rural sector has generated a widely held perception that careers in agriculture are limited...”*²¹

It is beyond the scope of this submission to try to document the various reports and findings of a number of important works in this field. Suffice to note, the rural labour and skills shortage and

¹⁸ Ibid, p xvi

¹⁹ Lawrence.G, *Capitalism and the Countryside: The Rural Crisis in Australia*. Leichhardt P:Pluto Press, 1987

²⁰ Salt. B, 'Oasis towns' vital to rural growth, The Australian, July 23 2009

²¹ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Skills: Rural Australia's Need: Inquiry into Rural Skills Training and Research*, Canberra, 2007, p 13

demographic outflows from many rural communities are well documented.

However, it is germane to the Hurlstone Inquiry to recognise that the urban catchment and educational pathways are, together, critical to addressing rural labour and skills demand in what is, with a brief hiatus due to the current economic climate, an increasingly competitive national labour market.

While there has been some debate in the course of this Inquiry about the relevance of Hurlstone in its metropolitan location, any sensible reading of the demographic trends and the research shows that, if anything, the urban catchment has become more important to the sector not less important – and will be even more important in the future. It is this gap between perceptions of agriculture and the importance of urban catchments that have inspired various educational and marketing campaigns – such as the AgForce “Every family needs a farmer” campaign in Queensland.

Notwithstanding the excellent work of country based schools like Yanco and Farrer, rural communities are unlikely, in the long run, to be able to meet their own labour market demands with migration patterns demonstrating an outflow of population rather than growth – the “rural brain drain”. Notably, the flexibility to compete for more labour and skills within those markets is also diminished by the fact that labour force participation in many rural areas is already higher than in metropolitan regions.

Additionally, the farming sector is the most likely to be affected by the intergenerational issues of an ageing population with Agriculture having the

highest proportion of workforce aged over 45.²² For this sector, more than others, dealing with increased numbers of entrants as well as encouraging them into the sector at a younger age are pressing issues.

There is a pressing need to identify and encourage schools that can not only attract and retain country children, but that can promote agriculture and rural understanding in city children.

Davies et al, reinforce other work that shows that the time that young people spend in school/education is a key transition period for career choices and economic participation, along with post child women and older workers transitioning to retirement.

Our surveys of agriculture teachers and students supported anecdotal evidence that negative community perceptions of agriculture and, to a lesser extent negative parental views about the future of agriculture, were major negative drivers in agriculture career choice by students.

The school transitional period and some negative perceptions of rural parents might actually be driving an outflow of rural children to the city (as they leave to study and some are discouraged from rural careers by parents). Hurlstone has, on the other hand, demonstrated some success in encouraging children from both rural backgrounds and city backgrounds, to pursue agricultural career pathways in the other direction.

The implications of these trends are that just as we are recognising the importance of targeting urban catchments for skills and labour, the Government is considering changes at Hurlstone that carry a considerable risk of undermining that effort.

²² DEWR Job Outlook, 2004.

CONCLUSION – AGRICULTURE NEEDS TO TARGET SCHOOLS AND URBAN CATCHMENTS TO MEET FUTURE LABOUR DEMAND

The best future strategy for meeting skills demand and improved perception of agricultural career pathways is to be found mainly in schools where the first careers transitions occur. Schools in urban catchments, with their larger populations, have an important role.

Conversely, any strategy that concentrates efforts on rural skills development within country catchments might positively assist retention in the short term, but inevitably will suffer from the overall labour market and population declines in rural Australia if not supported by an urban recruitment strategy.

This might seem counter-intuitive to traditionalists who tend to think the best option is to recruit and retain young people from country areas on the basis they are 'more likely to return to country areas'. While stemming the outflow and retaining skills in country areas continue to be important strategies, only the larger numbers in the urban catchments are ever likely to be able to fill the skills gaps into the future. It is, ultimately, about the numbers in the city and how best to compete for them.

Notably, Hurlstone is one of the few institutions that combines scale, rural and urban catchments and emphasises agriculture as a worthy discipline. Unlike one of the country agricultural schools, Farrer, Hurlstone also offers pathways for women whose work profile offers one of the better opportunities to improve workforce participation overall. (See the Chapter Women in Agriculture).

A vibrant, active and effective emphasis on agriculture at Hurlstone is an essential part of the secondary agriculture education mix as part of the overall strategy to meeting rural skills demand.



Figure 11 Hurlstone is one of the few institutions that combine enterprise scale, rural and urban catchments and encourages agricultural pathways. Photo courtesy Macarthur Advertiser.

TERTIARY PLACES NOT BEING FILLED

While the labour market gaps are increasing and the rural based supply diminishing, Australia's 12 Universities offering agriculture-related courses are struggling to fill places. There is a trend of a prolonged, severe shortage of graduates entering the agriculture workforce.

A recent report suggested there are 2200 graduate jobs available annually in the agriculture sector with an average of around 850 graduates (excluding Vet Science) graduating each year since 2001. A record low 320 students graduated with a Bachelor of Agriculture in 2008, compared to 500

in 2001.²³ Notably, traditional agriculture Universities like Hawkesbury Agricultural College (now UWS) have suffered that decline worst, while Sydney University and Charles Sturt University appear to be handling the downturn somewhat better.

Not surprisingly, the Secretary of the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture, Professor Jim Pratley said that numbers of graduates needed to double to meet demand. He said:

“Everybody has taken their eyes off the ball... Agriculture needs to be promoted as a career. Companies involved in agriculture should be doing this. Agriculture’s image has to change from old-world to high-tech, and not seen as a dead end”²⁴

While SHEAP does not agree that farm production or vocational pathways are ‘old-world’, and Hurlstone has long respected students returning to production and vocational pursuits, it does agree that there is a significant need to attract more students into tertiary pathways - as well as supporting vocational pathways - if the skills gap is to be addressed.

There is an intersection between demographic trends, showing increased market supply needs to be attracted from metropolitan communities, and the important role of schools in influencing transitional career considerations. This suggests that Hurlstone, and urban based agriculture schools like Hurlstone, are now, if anything, more critical to addressing rural skills pathways than when Hurlstone was established at the then rural township of Glenfield in 1927.

Hurlstone’s success in sending young people into agriculture, albeit just a proportion of the school population and mainly to tertiary pathways rather than vocational pathways, should be studied with a view to reinforcement of success and overcoming barriers to retention of students in agriculture. The Government should avoid any risk to that pathway by making agriculture and animal husbandry experiences a lesser part of the offering at Hurlstone (see the discussion on teaching methods that support retention).

It is not surprising that The Council of Deans of Agriculture and a number of Universities specialising in agriculture disciplines oppose any proposal to sell land at Hurlstone and further diminish the flow of students from secondary to tertiary Agriculture study.

The Terms of Reference suggested comparisons be made between Hurlstone and other agriculture schools. Immediately following the proposed sale, arising out of the NSW mini budget, the DET and Premier were quick to compare the academic results of James Ruse Agricultural High School (JRAH) with its 8 hectares and Hurlstone with its 115 hectares as part of their media handling strategy to justify the sale of Hurlstone’s Farm. We believe those comparisons were misleading.

While respecting the exceptional academic record of JRAH students overall, SHEAP welcomes the opportunity to point out that the comparison in terms of *contribution to agricultural careers* between James Ruse and Hurlstone is quite stark. The model at Hurlstone produced 20 graduates to agriculture fields – predominantly tertiary – last year. The model at James Ruse produced none.

Further, SHEAP understands that the Inquiry has been told by the Principal of JRAH that it would be unlikely to achieve Hurlstone’s practical

²³ Paul Myers, *Farming’s Brain Drain*, The Land Feb 19 2009.

²⁴ Ibid

agriculture outcomes with its current land resources and nor is it inclined to. In discussions with stakeholders, including the P and C at JRAH, there is mutual recognition that both schools are fine schools, but they are very different and now have different emphases.

The facts are, that while there is considerable scope to improve the return at Hurlstone, Hurlstone in the past several years has averaged around 30% of its HSC agriculture program proceeding to agriculture careers/study with estimates at JRAH varying between 0 and 8% and even then, those proceeding from JRAH tended toward the environmental sciences rather than agriculture. JRAH is now unashamedly regarded as high performing, academic “Doctor Factory”, not an agriculture school.

In relation to other schools, the graduating results, in terms of proportion of students progressing to agriculture careers, are slightly better overall at Yanco and Farrer, although this is more likely to be directly back to production or vocational pursuits rather than tertiary study. Yanco, for example, estimates that about two thirds of its Year 12 class last year went on to employment in country areas (all sectors) and only about 10-15 of its year 12 class went on to University in total (All disciplines, with agriculture a lower proportion again). This total number is fewer than the number Hurlstone sent to directly agriculture related study alone.

Hurlstone is, of course, larger than Yanco²⁵ and Farrer, but the point that the schools differ in the post secondary directions their students take is valid nonetheless.

²⁵ These figures were estimates provided by Yanco and are subject to further consideration.

Hurlstone should be seen as an agricultural school competing in an urban catchment whose role, as a selective school, is more likely to be preparing students for tertiary agricultural pathways, rather than the more vocational emphasis at the other two schools. In none of the schools’ cases, however, should their primary focus be exclusive. The country schools do send some students to university and Hurlstone does offer a strong vocational course – indeed its students routinely perform well in the more vocational Primary Industries course at HSC and many students do both HSC Primary Industries and Agriculture courses.

CONCERNS DET CREATES DISINCENTIVES TO AGRICULTURE AT HURLSTONE

The interaction of boarders from country areas and city based day students has traditionally been regarded as a key part of promoting understanding of rural communities amongst day students at Hurlstone. Hurlstone not only provides a much needed pathway for country children seeking to board, including isolated children, but, through this interaction between city and country students, helps overcome barriers to agriculture career pathways amongst day students from the urban catchment.

In interviews, several participants in our study suggested that Departmental interventions had capped boarder numbers at Hurlstone and reinforced negative perceptions about the school.

There is a strong view that the DET is determined to close or substantially alter the purpose of the school. These perceptions serve to further reduce

incentives to attend. Indeed, the arbitrarily low boarding school cap limits the numbers in an absolute sense. Several respondents believe this is a deliberate strategy on behalf of DET to ensure Hurlstone ‘withers on the vine’ – with the outcome said to be removing the agriculture and boarding component while freeing the Government’s ability to sell the land for profit.

Some non Hurlstone respondents to our teacher survey reinforced the suggestion that the sale reflected the DET’s lack of regard for agriculture as a discipline.

The evidence suggests, in the long run, that investment and support for agriculture education in an urban catchment is more likely to assist rural skills shortages than in country areas. A proposed sale of land and reduction of its agriculture enterprise experience would undermine that opportunity.

Government attempts to sell land at Hurlstone and ongoing commentary about the relevance of Hurlstone as an agriculture school - by comparison with its land value for development - feed negative perceptions about agriculture and rural communities. It is regrettable, then, that the Director-General of the DET confirmed that the land value was a primary consideration in the proposed sale of land – as a source of funds for other needs – rather than recognising the value of agricultural education.²⁶

SHEAP believes his focus should be on educational outcomes rather than real estate speculation.

Finding. That secondary educational pathways are supported by the research as one

²⁶ Director-General Coutts-Trotter GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 2 Wednesday 19 November 2008

of the most important contributors to agricultural skills supply.

Finding. That efforts to address skills shortages and negative perceptions of rural life need to be targeted (but not exclusively) in the larger metropolitan labour markets. While country agriculture schools do an excellent job and must be supported; in the long-run, a larger contribution to total labour supply and tertiary skills pathways is more likely to come from city based areas supported by schools, like Hurlstone, that help overcome negative perceptions of agricultural careers.

Finding. Hurlstone Agricultural High School continues to demonstrate success in sending young people into agriculture career pathways commensurate with other agriculture schools and better than other public schools. This is despite its city catchment being more likely to suffer from negative perceptions of agriculture careers. Hurlstone sends more students to tertiary agriculture pathways than other agricultural schools.

Finding. Reduction in practical agriculture experience and exposure on the school farm is likely to undermine retention in agricultural careers at Hurlstone. The attendant risk of further diminution of resources is that Hurlstone will become more like James Ruse, a selective, academic school with virtually no graduations to agriculture.

Finding. Erosion of the boarding school population at Hurlstone will reduce interaction between city and country students. Reduced places and increased barriers to country children reduce their opportunity to participate in Hurlstone’s pathways. Because the interaction between country and city students, along with

the agriculture emphasis is considered influential in Hurlstone's success, there is a consequential risk that the diminution of the country student population within the school will undermine retention of city children in agriculture study and pathways. However, further work needs to be done to uncover the reasons for reduced boarder numbers with a view to increasing those numbers. Suffice to say, DET policy decisions to limit the size of the boarding school, Government underinvestment in facilities, parental cost pressures and the impact of the selective schools test threshold are all factors.

Recommendation. That further study be undertaken to improve access to Hurlstone and its boarding facilities to more country children. Strategies might include: providing a discount on the Selective Schools Examination result to allow more country based entry, further investment in facilities and recruitment by the government, better acknowledgement of the value of agricultural careers, and active efforts to address the entrenched perception that the DET does not value Hurlstone Agricultural High School.

Recommendation. That the Inquiry NOT make any recommendation that increases barriers and risks to retention in agriculture study at Hurlstone. This includes any outcome that reduces the experiential component of agriculture education – such as sale of farm land.

Recommendation. That Hurlstone and the DET consider methods to improve agriculture exposure of both its student catchment and its school population. This might include increased agriculture context in other curricula, and making senior level agriculture or related study compulsory (beyond Year 10).

Recommendation. That consideration be given to expanding the uses and role of the Hurlstone facility that promotes agriculture and seeks to address negative perceptions about rural careers. Complementary uses are discussed separately; However, a Centre of Excellence for Sustainable and Urban Agriculture / Education is one idea that combines improved access for other agriculture students, improved agriculture teacher skills development, more actively promoted experiential opportunities for city children and increased research and demonstration of sustainable and urban agriculture best practice.

DISPROPORTIONATE EFFORT BY GOVERNMENT IN OTHER SELECTIVE SPECIALISATIONS

In the course of our study, there was repeated and entrenched concern that the DET and the government undervalued agriculture as a discipline and career choice. This, in turn, was felt to feed into general negative perceptions within the community that represented the biggest barrier to people considering agriculture careers.

The proposed sale of land at Hurlstone was widely seen to be demonstrative of a lack of regard for agriculture and agriculture education.

Despite Agriculture contributing 2.7% of Gross State Product in NSW (2.6% GDP nationally), there are just 4 Agricultural High Schools in NSW (one of which, James Ruse, is increasingly an academic selective school with few if any graduates to agriculture). By comparison, there are 7 Sports High Schools and 6 Performing Arts Schools, where those sectors contribute around 0.32 per cent of GDP nationally and insufficient to be recorded in terms of GSP in NSW²⁷.



Figure 12. Agriculture contributes 2.6% of Australia's GDP compared to 0.32% for Sport and Performing Arts. Despite this there are 13 Sports and Performing Arts schools in the NSW public system compared to just 3 residential agriculture schools

This is not to suggest there should not be investment in sport or performing arts. However, the relative lack of emphasis and investment in agriculture education is out of proportion to the sector's importance to the economy and the comparatively good career opportunities and pathways it offers compared to other school specialisations in NSW.

As one respondent said in an interview, *"only agriculture stood between Australia and a technical recession late last year, and yet these guys are looking for excuses to sell off assets in agriculture education, not increase investment."*

Overwhelmingly, agriculture teachers who responded to our survey saw Hurlstone in terms of what one respondent suggested was a 'lighthouse school', with the relative health of Hurlstone and schools like it, being demonstrative of the general state of agriculture education.

While respondents to our survey were generally positive about agriculture

careers, they felt that the community was overwhelmingly negative about agriculture. 49% of agriculture teachers felt that agriculture was poorly regarded and only, 26% seeing it as well regarded with 22% being neutral. This is a net - 23% differential between those who felt the community saw agriculture in negative terms rather than positive terms.

²⁷ Sources: *Australian National Accounts: State Accounts, 2007–08*, ABS (5220.0); *Research and Experimental Development, All Sector Summary, Australia, 2006–07*, ABS (8112.0); *Performing Arts*

Australia, 2006–07, ABS (8697.0); *Sports and Physical Recreation Services Australia, 2004–05*, ABS, (8686.0).

The Government's perception of agriculture was seen in even more negative terms with 68% of responding agriculture teachers, believing the Government had a poor or very poor regard for agriculture and only 4% believing the government had a positive view of agriculture. A net differential of -63%.

Responses included comments such as *"We are not even on the Curriculum Support website for resource information..."; "The fact that Hurlstone is being considered [for sale] supports this [negative perception]"*. Even those who made neutral responses qualified it with comments like *"I do not know if the NSW Government has any real idea of agricultural education. Perhaps it should know a lot more and what a valuable area of education it is"*.

Of the respondents who were more positive, the following comment is instructive: *"I feel that in general the State Government does value agriculture education but does not always back this up with adequate finances and resources. It is seen as an expensive area of education and one they would divest of if they could."*

Even those who are relatively positive about the Government's position, believe agriculture education is under-invested in by a Government with a predisposition to divesting the discipline rather than supporting it.

Not surprisingly, the Government's comparative support for other careers specialisations reflects this disposition.

Finding. **There is a strong perception that the government does not value agriculture education and this feeds negative perceptions about agriculture in the community.**

Finding. **The education effort in NSW in specialist schools appears to be disproportionately weighted toward sectors that do not offer the same career and economic opportunities that agriculture does. This suggests room for more net investment in agricultural education by Government.**

Finding. **Further divestment of public assets in agriculture education is likely to reinforce the already entrenched view that the government is predisposed against agriculture as a discipline.**

Finding. **The proposed asset sales arising from the NSW mini budget seeks to return proceeds to consolidated revenue (50%) and other schools with only 'some' of the proposed proceeds to be re-invested in Hurlstone. Any sale, therefore, represents a net divestment, not improvement to agriculture education.**

Recommendation. **That the Inquiry recommends increased net investment (over and above asset value) in agricultural high schools as part of the policy mix toward providing improved resources for agriculture education. Such investment would address the strong sense that government is undervaluing agriculture and agriculture education.**

GLOBAL FOOD SHORTAGE

A number of participants in our study reflected on the need for governments and the sector to

better address the role of Australian agriculture in meeting the demands of a global food shortage.

Federal Agriculture Minister Tony Burke, told the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation:

Today, the three biggest challenges facing the world are also fundamental to agriculture: climate change, the global food crisis and the global financial crisis.

For agriculture, the long-term challenge is to produce more food while we deal with climate change and increasing water scarcity, and work through the investment and credit challenges of the financial crisis...

Investment by governments and international partnerships in research and development is another key part of the productivity equation.

Today, we have improved technology – better farming practices, plant breeding and food distribution systems.

But we are constrained by limited available agricultural land and shrinking water resources.

Governments must refocus on investment in agricultural research and development to boost

productivity within the constraints of land and resource availability.²⁸

The consensus view of participants in our study is that improved investment and conduct of agricultural education is needed, now more than ever, to confront the challenges of the global food crisis and climate change in particular.

Hurlstone is ideally placed to host a “Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Agriculture” and, indeed, should take a leading role in developing curricula that emphasises best practice in sustainability and environmental sciences that

work with good agriculture, not against it.

While we have, elsewhere, recommended that some capacity improvement occur through irrigation, this submission contends that the sale of land at Hurlstone and increased intensity of operations, rather than an emphasis on using the current holdings more sustainably, is not good practice and can entrench bad land management habits.

It is insufficient to seek to use less land with irrigation in the context of increased sectoral pressure on water and land resources.

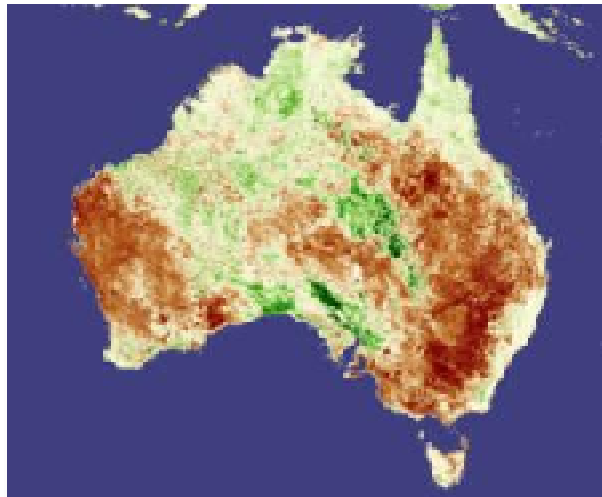


Figure 13. The world is confronted by the challenges of the global food shortage and climate change. Future agriculturists require better investment and education in sustainable agriculture.

²⁸ Hon. Tony Burke MP, Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, address to United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, 19 November 2008



DR RUSSELL BUSH BSCAGR PHD (HURLSTONE 1976-1981)

I grew up hearing stories about Hurlstone, especially the farm, as both my father and uncle attended in the early 1940's. My time at Hurlstone was integral in forging my career in agriculture. In addition to participating in practical agriculture classes, as part of formal lessons, I spent most of my spare time on the school farm. I participated in extra-curricular activities even though I came from a farming background. This involved regular 6am starts to prepare dairy cattle for shows and assisting in the development of an Angora Stud. I organised livestock displays for field and open days.

Hurlstone taught me that "the more you put into something the more you get out of it" and gave me the confidence and desire to make a real contribution to agriculture. Promoting agricultural educational opportunities continued after I left Hurlstone and returned to the family farm. I achieved this by developing beef cattle showing and judging competitions in my area to attract students from Hurlstone, schools from Sydney and throughout southern NSW. After 15 years I commenced an Agricultural Science degree at the University of Sydney whose mix of theory and practical is similar to what Hurlstone provided with its fully functional working farm. I then completed a PhD studying the on-farm impact of ovine Johnes disease, a disease decimating sheep production in southern NSW. I lecture final year animal science students and conduct research in applied livestock nutrition and production.

My current contribution to agriculture includes the provision of technological input for aid projects in Indonesia, China, Pakistan, Cambodia and Laos to improve beef and dairy production. My role as educator and trainer draws on all my academic and practical experience, especially the hands-on experience gained from the introduction to numerous commercial livestock enterprises at Hurlstone.

understanding of how best to sustain dry land operations at scale if they are to be equipped to meet the challenges of better natural resource management and climate change.

As discussed in a previous chapter, the farm is already being used to capacity.

While irrigation of some land might improve its economic sustainability, it should not obviate the need to learn how to manage the current dry-land holdings better - consistent with future land and water challenges.

As John Williams from the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists told the 2006 Charles Sturt University Graduation Ceremony:

"The issues facing our nation and our regional communities in Australia are many, but finding ways to produce our food and our fibre which look after the ecosystems that service the needs of

The school needs to also seek to improve student

*society as a whole is of foundational importance. ...It is a demanding journey to build an agriculture that works for the climate and soils of the great south land ... The future will also require a new vision for the role of agriculture in the landscape. The future form of sustainable agriculture can be discerned to require a mosaic of new and old agricultural enterprises that yield food and fibre coupled with native ecosystems that provide a suite of ecosystem services which are valued and paid for by stakeholders and beneficiaries*²⁹

The Government proposal to reduce the scale of operations at Hurlstone is not only contrary to good practical education, but is inconsistent with Federal Government efforts and community

research in agriculture to meet the looming global challenges.

WHAT TYPES OF EDUCATION ARE MORE LIKELY TO RETAIN STUDENTS IN AGRICULTURE PATHWAYS?

Regrettably, there is little longitudinal research to determine the impact changes to teaching methods might have on longer term retention of students in agriculture. However, there is significant evidence from professional experience in secondary agriculture education.

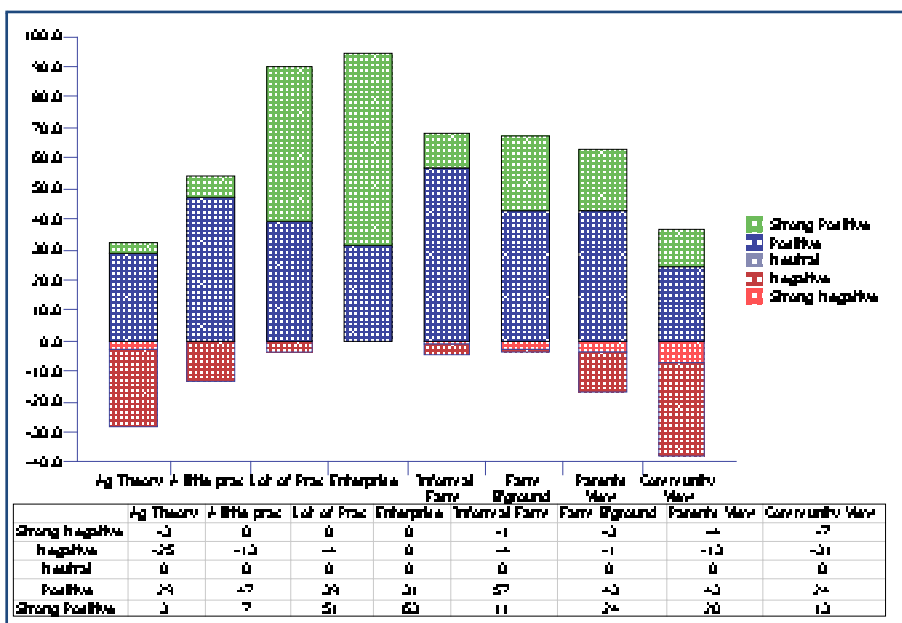
Our study interviewed some 20 practitioners and teachers face to face and by telephone, examined

the available literature about NSW, interstate and international experience and then administered a survey to a range of agriculture teachers. 70 responses were received, equivalent to around half of all members of the NSW Agriculture Teachers Association.

The outcome of that work was compared to responses provided by students undertaking tertiary agriculture. 145 responses were received from graduate

and post graduate levels students. Of interest, 40% of student respondents had not studied agriculture formally at high school.

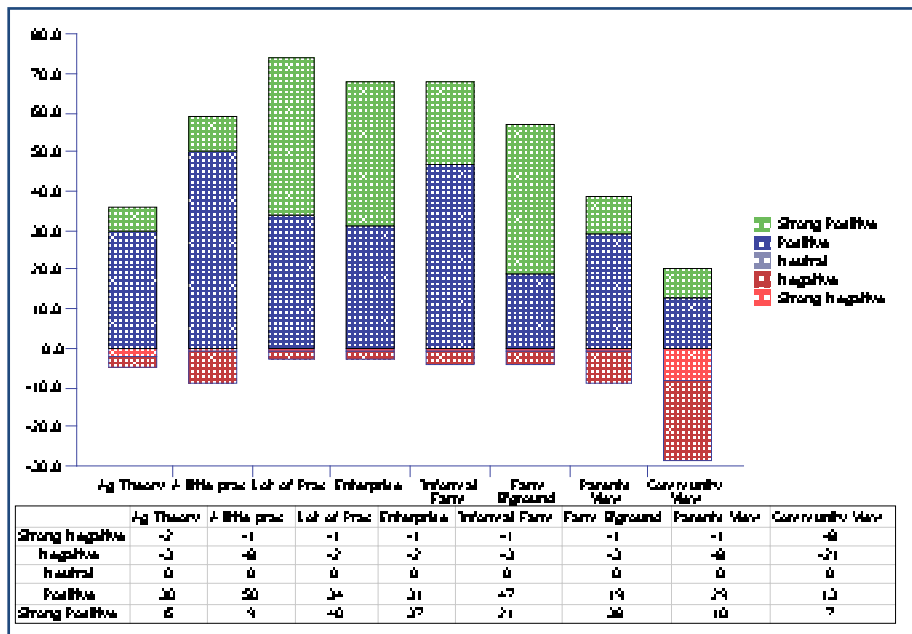
Our study, underpinned by extensive respondent experience in teaching, showed that teaching agriculture in an enterprise setting, with a strong hands-on practical component were the factors most likely to enable longer term retention



demand to improve investment in education and

²⁹ John Williams, Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, FARMING AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE FUTURE: Occasional address for Charles Sturt University Graduation Ceremony, Albury-Wodonga 28 April 2006.

Figure 15. Positive and negative influences on student agriculture career choice. % of Tertiary Students' responses (Neutral responses removed).



of learning as well as motivating students to follow agriculture career paths.

Our survey responses supported current teaching preferences that suggest 'enterprise education' and a lot of practical work is best practice. Where students had not experienced formal agriculture instruction, a farm background and, to a lesser extent, informal farm contact were influential.

In this sample 40% of respondents had no exposure to secondary agriculture education so other practical contact was influential. Notably, despite 40% not having had formal agriculture education, practical course components in an enterprise setting still rated strongest overall.

Furthermore, programs in the United States suggest that there is an increasing trend back to practical farm activities within agriculture education rather than classroom based theory.

The United States FFA program (formerly Farmers For America) emphasises a partnership between

industry, supervised agriculture experience and

the classroom. That program was developed in order to arrest the decline in agriculture education that reflected, in part, a previous move toward more theoretical content.

Proportionate to the United States population, Australia has traditionally had a greater emphasis on well resourced agriculture education. However, just as NSW appears to be canvassing an option to sell school farm

land and reduce the experiential component of agriculture education, other nations are rediscovering the importance of a strong practical and enterprise basis in their education programs.

The surveys show that both teachers and students regarded practical exposure to Farm Enterprises and undertaking hands on practical work was the experience most likely to positively influence to students following agriculture career paths..

The lower variations between students' views reflect the fact that this sample draws on a generally positive group that have already decided to follow agriculture pathways. As a result they are more likely to see various influences positively (from their own experience), while the teacher sample is more likely to have seen the impact of both negative and positive influences across students who did not choose agriculture as well as those who did.

Nonetheless, those influences with the strongest positive impacts on career choice according to both sample groups (shown in green and dark blue on the graphs) are courses with a strong practical component and exposure to agriculture in enterprise settings with informal exposure to farming providing a positive impact albeit not as “strongly positive” as the more organised educational opportunity from practical work in an enterprise setting.

Of interest is the more positive impact of a farm background amongst students. This reflects the fact that the sample incorporates a group who had little formal exposure to agriculture education but who were self-motivated to seek other experiences. A common factor was an interest in animals. While not as beneficial as formal practical learning, this further reinforces the positive influence of experiential learning on career choices.

Care needs to be taken when considering the student group in the absence of comparisons with secondary agriculture students who did not follow an agriculture career path. It was not possible, in the timeframe, to seek to survey agriculture students who had not pursued agriculture careers. This data shortfall points to the problem of a lack of a strong research and data based understanding of what makes the best agriculture education – reinforcing the need for proper longitudinal research. However, the teachers’ responses provide some insight into those influences with high theory content, negative parent views and negative community views considered to be influential in deterring agriculture career choices amongst students.

Even those students who had little formal agricultural education at school, still responded

strongly to the value of practical education educational opportunities.

Negative community perceptions are very influential in both samples. This is pertinent to assessing the performance of Hurlstone Agricultural High School that has maintained comparative success in producing agriculturists, despite being in an urban catchment that, anecdotally, is said to be more negative toward agriculture than country areas.

Finding. Agriculture Education in enterprise settings, with a strong hands-on practical component is most likely to positively influence students to follow agriculture career choices. This is particularly important for people with little farming background. Conversely, Agriculture schools must be mindful to try to overcome the impact of negative community perceptions of agriculture careers if more students are to follow agriculture career pathways.

WHAT IS BEST PRACTICE TO ENSURE LASTING AGRICULTURE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES?

Interviews and literature reviews suggest that any skills based training content is more likely to result in information retention if theory is followed immediately by hands on practical experience. This is particularly true of vocational skills, but the strong practical component of agriculture skills, even within academic and professional pursuits, suggests this rule is equally applicable to those studying agriculture with a view to tertiary study. Not surprisingly, animal

sciences and husbandry assume a number of features similar to vocational education.

In effect, school farms become the classroom and laboratory for agriculture related sciences.

The study surveyed both teachers and students to assess what practices were more likely to result in most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills by students. Respondents were asked to prioritise nine options for teaching/learning methods and the cumulative total of respondents' first three preferences was assessed for each option

Amongst Teachers the top three responses were "Individual Practical experience" (86% had it in their top 3); "small group practical" (81%) and experience in an "enterprise setting" (71%).

The same three preferences topped the list for students albeit in a different order. Students suggested most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills came from experience in an "enterprise setting" (77%); "individual practical experience" (59%); and "small group practical" (55%). Unlike teachers where the fourth and fifth preferences lagged well behind the top three, in student cases, organized visits to farm enterprises (48%) and Residential Agriculture Camps (38%), rated relatively well.

Given the Minister for Education's suggestion that there might be less land intensive options for education in a 'modern setting', it is notable that the lowest three preferences were "Interactive IT based instruction" (88% had it in their bottom three priorities; "Audio Visual presentation" (86%) and "teacher only demonstrations" (45%).

For students, the bottom three preferences were the same as for teachers with "teacher only

demonstrations" (79% least preferred), "Interactive IT based instruction" (77%) and Audio-visual presentation (75%) ranking close together.

The survey results support anecdote and experience that more lasting and positive educational outcomes are likely to accrue from practical experience as individuals or small groups, particularly within an enterprise setting/experience, while classroom based teaching and demonstrations are least likely to have a positive impact.

OTHER EVIDENCE

While there is a paucity of strong statistical research in this field, there is other anecdotal evidence to support the findings of our survey.

In 2005 Scarlett Consulting was commissioned to document a Scoping Report and Workshop Outcomes by the CB Alexander Foundation, Tocal College on 'Promotion of Agriculture to Schools'.

This report reinforced the positive efforts and understanding of the issues of teachers themselves and identified the need for better agriculture teacher development – something supported in our survey when it came to proposed complementary use of Hurlstone's facilities.

The Report emphasized the need for a national strategy to promote agriculture in schools:

The Promoting Agriculture to Schools Network is very clear that in pursuit of a national strategy it does not want to create another bureaucracy.

Rather it would prefer to leverage off the best practice 'education about agriculture' programs being driven by state or local agencies for maximum effect. Nevertheless it is likely that some 'formal structure' would be required to coordinate and steer the national strategy. This may simply be a collective of co-operating agricultural agencies, agricultural industries and education sector representatives supported by a national secretariat.

The document outlines a range of good initiatives in promoting agriculture in schools. However, it was notable to us, that none of the secondary agriculture schools in NSW were listed as having good promotional programs that have application as part of a 'national approach', while secondary schools in WA, SA, NT, Tas and Queensland were listed.

This reflects poorly on promotion of agriculture as a secondary subject by NSW, the State which originally led the way in secondary agriculture education. However, it also highlights an area of opportunity for the sector, government and Hurlstone with its strong urban profile.

Of more specific relevance to this section of the discussion, the Report noted a number of characteristics of best practice in promoting agriculture to schools (rather than teaching). Some of those characteristics have a strong synergy with best teaching and learning practice, including:

- Quality resources that are integrated into the curriculum Key Learning Areas (KLAs)
- Program/project provides for experiential learning (Practical - 'hands-on')

- Greater science process skill development than simply the in-class model
- Program/project provides students with opportunities to engage in 'systems thinking'³⁰

Many of the other characteristics should be reviewed in the context of how best to 'promote' agriculture to current and prospective students and their parents.

Of interest to our study was the need for better interaction with DPI and industry as part of a future strategy.

However, due recognition has to be paid to the fact that the three schools most likely to be affected are secondary schools, not post schooling VET institutions, that have responsibilities to teach a range of other curricula – all of which ultimately contribute to well rounded school leavers and a broad based agriculture program.

We were concerned by suggestions from one or two of the Inquiry consultants, who had little secondary education experience that better commercial economies might come from reducing the number of enterprises at Hurlstone. These comments suggested both a predisposition to sell some land – at a cost to educational experience – and a lack of understanding that the school farm is a series of educational enterprises, rather than commercial ventures per se.

It is notable that Hurlstone has just seven enterprises compared to eight at Farrer, where the DET has recently supported the acquisition of an additional 450 hectares (to replace 450

³⁰ Scarlet Consulting, *Promotion of agriculture to schools: scoping report and national workshop outcomes*, CB Alexander Foundation, Paterson, NSW, 2005, <http://www.tocal.com/agsch1205.pdf>

formerly leased) to support the future viability of those enterprises.

SCIENCE OR VOCATION?

One of the surprising findings in our survey was a widespread discontent among agriculture teachers that the DET had re-categorised Agriculture from a Science to a Technical course.

Without diminishing the importance of vocational pursuits, many teachers felt that this diminished the prestige of the course and reflected a lack of value placed in agriculture programs at the DET.

Until a few years ago Agriculture was regarded as a science program and, indeed, it is reflected as such in the Universities.

In our view, an appropriately broad agriculture program should recognise and value both the science and vocation of agriculture. Having said that, much of the theory of agriculture and future challenges for agriculture require scientific application.

Indeed, in order to attract some of the best and brightest to pursue tertiary agricultural and related sciences – in competition with other sciences and professions - warrants acknowledgement of the important place of science in the program. Agriculture teachers generally hold science or related agricultural science degrees.

Re-categorising the study of Agriculture as a science program does not undermine recognition of the vocational aspects in the same way that categorising it as a technical course might reduce its recognition as a science.

Finding: The categorisation of Agriculture as a technical program has undermined efforts to promote Agriculture.

Recommendation. That the Inquiry recommend that Agriculture be re-categorised as a Science program in NSW secondary schools.

OVERSEAS EXPERIENCE

The study also reviewed literature about overseas experiences in agriculture education. On the upside, those comparisons suggest Australia is well poised to lead international best-practice. On the downside, it appears the trend in NSW to downscale agricultural education resources ignores the fact that other nations are now seeking to increase practical agriculture education content.

According to a Commonwealth Parliamentary Library brief, 'practical education is well ensconced in the pedagogy of agricultural education in the US' and with its increased emphasis on Supervised Agricultural Experiences or SAE:

"The agriscience classroom must be one of contextual learning where students are provided a variety of learning experiences so they can make meaningful relationships between abstract ideas and practical applications... [students] are ... expected to have a work-based learning experience or SAE, outside the classroom. Content standards should promote SAEs that encourage

*students to conduct research or analyse information to discover new knowledge ...*³¹

The implications for the Inquiry are clear. Hands-on practical experience, albeit stock and land intensive, is a necessary and positive component in best practice educational outcomes. It is also a feature of best practice promotion of agriculture as a discipline.

Conversely, any moves to reduce stock and land at places like Hurlstone are likely to reduce the enterprise value and experiential opportunity – with a consequential impact on educational outcomes.

It appears that while other nations are discovering what Australia has known since Hurlstone was established, that practical and experiential opportunities are vital to good agriculture education, the NSW Government is considering going in the opposite direction.

We hope to explore this issue further in our final submission, noting that Australia appears to already be at the forefront of ‘enterprise based education’. While the level interaction with industry could and should improve – with scope to improve outcomes overall - reduced land resources at the same time would be counter-productive.

Finding. The most positive and lasting agricultural education outcomes accrue from individual or small group practical experience in an agricultural enterprise setting.

When considered together, teaching in enterprise settings with a large practical component and

sufficient resources to support individual or small group practicals contributes to two key outcomes – better educational outcomes and more likely retention of students in agricultural pathways.

Finding. Any reduction in stock or land resources at schools like Hurlstone has an attendant risk of undermining practical education outcomes and student retention in agriculture.

Finding. Unlike tertiary faculties and vocational institutions, secondary schools need to provide for a range of agricultural and non agricultural educational experiences. This requires diverse enterprise experiences and negates significant opportunities for the economies of commercial enterprises of ‘single subject’ tertiary bodies. Seeking to specialise too narrowly within agriculture at secondary level could be counterproductive for students who are still developing an understanding of their aptitudes and career preferences.

Finding. Given the importance of practical experience in enterprise based agriculture, Hurlstone has the potential to support improved retention and outcomes for other non agriculture school students as well as providing exposure to the general community that might help improve community perceptions of agriculture and agriculture careers

³¹ B Hason and K Hutchinson, ‘the value of quality program standards for agriscience education’, *Agricultural education magazine*, vol. 81, no. 4, January/February 2009, p. 19,

Recommendation. That the Inquiry recommend that Hurlstone be retained and appropriately resourced to support practical experience for non Hurlstone agriculture students.

Recommendation. That the Inquiry recommend the retention of the current farm land at Hurlstone, as an essential element of its agriculture education role and consider further opportunities for industry and DPI interaction.

Recommendation. That the Inquiry recognises that best practice agriculture education combines the features of significant practical opportunities and teaching in an enterprise setting. These are, by definition, stock and land intensive. However, any reduction in stock and land resources on the one hand and any increase in classroom, audio visual or IT based instruction on the other is likely to undermine agriculture education outcomes.

Recommendation. That the Inquiry recommends that community educational access to Hurlstone be resourced and formalised as part of a necessary community education program to address negative perceptions in agriculture. Consideration should be given to collaborative opportunities with industry for an “Urban or Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence”, which combines research, marketing, community education and farm exposure and applies some of the best-practice characteristics identified by the Promoting Agriculture to Schools Network.

Figure 16 Hurlstone Rural Youth showing beef cattle at Dubbo Show





Dr Jim Woodhill (Hurlstone 1975 -1980)

A key challenge for any professional is linking good thinking and conceptual understanding with practice. The Hurlstone agricultural experience is unique in this regard. The farm is a critical resource for helping students to understand what theory means in practice, which is so often missing in education. I have been working on the issues of agriculture and rural development in many parts of the world for nearly 25 years. The Hurlstone experience was a key inspiration for me in following this path. Being part of the daily workings of a real farm brings the subject of agriculture to life and provides much inspiration for students. This interest, created at Hurlstone, led me on to study Agriculture at Sydney University and created a foundation for my career in the sector. My practical understanding of agriculture came from experiences at Hurlstone.

Some of the biggest problems facing the world today – climate change; loss of biodiversity; poor diets; and extreme poverty – are intimately connected with agriculture and global food systems. The future is going to require smart people who know about agriculture and who are inspired to think innovatively about the problems we face. Hurlstone, in my experience, has a critically important role to play in this regard. The world is full of houses. It is desperately short of places and spaces for unique and highly valuable educational experiences.

**Programme Director,
Wageningen UR, Wageningen International
Programme for Capacity Development and
Institutional Change, Netherlands**

VOCATIONAL VERSUS TERTIARY PATHWAYS – DOES HURLSTONE HAVE A DIFFERENT ROLE TO THE OTHER AGRICULTURAL SCHOOLS?

The study identified considerable diversity of views about the respective role and performance of the three residential agriculture schools in NSW, and relatively robust views about the tension between the demands and role of a 'selective school' and an 'agriculture school'.

It is clearly true that Yanco and Farrer were more likely to see their students move into vocational pathways while Hurlstone and James Ruse were regarded as more academically orientated.

In James Ruse's case, academic performance has all but superseded its role as an agricultural school, with few if any students graduating to agriculture in the past two years (some graduated to environmental sciences).

Hurlstone, while graduating a slightly lower proportion of students to agriculture pathways than Farrer and Yanco, graduated a higher proportion into tertiary education pathways.

However, it is also clear that there is a reduced attendance at the Hurlstone boarding school that warrants more detailed study. At one level, the DET has contributed to reduced boarder numbers by policy edict and an appallingly low investment in the facilities over time. Uncertainty over the future of Hurlstone as a farm school was also said to have an impact on parent choices as did concern that the school might be less interested in agriculture than it once was.

SHEAP found that while the school has maintained a vibrant Rural Youth program,

achieving considerable success in various shows and other activities, that some traditional farm related activities such as 'farm squad' had diminished. The study provided the opportunity for input from past students, such as Dr Russell Bush, with advice about re-instituting squad and improved signposting of farm enterprises. To the school's credit, these suggestions were warmly embraced – reflecting an undercurrent desire to improve rather than diminish the place of agriculture and farm in the school.

The study found considerable anecdotal evidence that the selective schools entry exam might be having a barrier effect on the boarding school with the smaller catchment of rural students meaning fewer numbers qualifying overall. In addition, some participants suggested that city children were more coached or prepared for the exam and as the competitive threshold increased, fewer country children were able to qualify. SHEAP believes this trend undermines Hurlstone as a well-rounded school catering for the entire state and these demographic differences in opportunity to 'qualify' warrant further examination. While encouraging academic excellence is to be commended, care needs to be taken to not sift out children with potential and aptitude for agriculture at Hurlstone based on an exam applied to children at 10-12 years of age - when there is likely to be considerable variation in maturity, personal development and academic preparation between individuals.

Whatever the reason, there is also some concern that Hurlstone is not, on the one hand, performing at the academic levels expected for its catchment (with comparisons with James Ruse being common), and on the other the increasing entry requirements might be precluding

attendance by some children with a greater interest and aptitude in agriculture.

Put bluntly, this concern suggests that while the entry threshold has been increasing, the output results have not been.

This submission contends that there is a tension between 'selectivity' and the core role of an 'agriculture' school, but these roles are not mutually exclusive as some suggest. With better management, course structure and entry processes, the tension can be resolved so that good academic performance is maintained while improving the agriculture content – with a view to better opportunity to fill unfilled boarding places to more students with interests in agriculture.

Some findings from the survey assist with defining the role of Hurlstone. An overwhelming majority of teacher and student respondents agreeing with the propositions that

As a selective agricultural high school, Hurlstone plays an important role in identifying and encouraging some of NSW brightest students into tertiary studies in agriculture and related disciplines rather than competing tertiary courses.

And

Hurlstone Agricultural High School plays an important role by exposing city based children to agriculture career pathways.

While many parents were consulted in this study, the opinions of parents have not been tested by broader survey. Their views are critical to this consideration. Nonetheless, the State interest and the historical purpose of the school – which this submission contends is more relevant than ever in the national and global context – must be factors in considering the future direction of the school.

The need to develop quality students to fill professional skills shortages in agriculture is overwhelming and must start at schools like Hurlstone. City parents in particular ultimately have the choice to choose other selective schools, noting that the reputation and prestige of Hurlstone carries with it the attendant agriculture focus. It must also be recognised that country families do not have the same array of choices as their city counterparts and that relative disadvantage must be better catered for at Hurlstone as a State boarding school.

Suggestions to improve agriculture emphasis, while balancing academic excellence includes:

- Clearly identifying Hurlstone as an agriculture school of excellence whose goals include developing students for entry into agriculture and related tertiary disciplines. That is, an academic school – but an agricultural academic school. This should not exclude vocational pathways (and some students do both), but it would better clarify Hurlstone's primary role.
- Making agriculture or a related discipline (e.g. biological and environmental science, agricultural economics) compulsory in Years 11 and 12 as well as years 7-10. This would protect choice in post secondary career paths, while maximising the opportunity to retain interested students in agriculture. This firm policy would also encourage a degree of 'self selection' by students and parents who might otherwise choose Hurlstone purely for its local prestige and academic performance (Noting that studying agriculture at HSC level does not undermine academic performance as the voluntary participation of some

students intending other careers demonstrates).

- Include a supplementary interview based selection process or consider a reasonable entry score discount for suitable country students who wish to board and attend Hurlstone for its agriculture content, but who otherwise can't qualify. This supplementary process can consider whether a student with a result lower than the threshold might 'rise' to the academic demands, even though they might not have been as prepared for the exam as their city based counterparts often are.
- Broaden context based agriculture content across other curricula. Teaching agriculture in context for junior school students is considered best practice agriculture education in some jurisdictions. It would reinforce agricultural outcomes without degrading the mandatory elements of other subjects. An example of context based agriculture outcomes might be found in junior 'commerce' or business studies where those enterprises used for projects and case studies would be agricultural enterprises (such as the school dairy), rather than a local retailer.

SHEAP submits that while academic excellence is to be encouraged, Hurlstone's specialisation should be, unashamedly, an agricultural school. Its culture of performance, service and excellence has developed, in part, as a result of its historic connection to land and agriculture.

This submission contends that academic excellence and agriculture are quite consistent outcomes, achievable if Hurlstone lives by the premise that it has an important role in promoting agricultural pathways as pursuits worthy of

excellence. *Excellence in agricultural related tertiary disciplines* should be regarded as a core role, rather than subordinate role, for a selective agricultural school.

It is undoubtedly true that a minority of parents might otherwise prefer that Hurlstone become more selective and less agricultural – a ‘publicly funded private school’ as one participant reflected. SHEAP notes that students can choose other careers, without academic detriment, despite having undertaken agriculture study. However, the inverse is not true. The State is unlikely to encourage more students into agriculture if the role of agriculture is diminished relatively to other academic pursuits.

As a specialist school of long standing, Hurlstone has to serve a broader State interest and take into account the preferences of both country and city catchments.

Hurlstone continues to produce good academic and agriculture outcomes. Nonetheless, it is at a cross-road and there is a concern that it has lost its focus in terms of its core role.

The risk of failing to address this tension between roles is that Hurlstone might, in the future, become more like JRAH and less like Hurlstone. Noting that the Inquiry is premised on retaining Hurlstone as a selective, day and boarding, agricultural high school, the Inquiry has the opportunity to assist the school to assert its role as an agriculture school of excellence.

Finding. SHEAP is firm in its belief, supported by the evidence of best-practice, that reducing the farm holding would only undermine attempts to re-assert the important role of agriculture at Hurlstone now and into the future.

Finding. Initiatives such as including context based agriculture across other curricula and requiring agriculture related study from year 7-12 (currently compulsory from year 7-10), would help clarify Hurlstone’s role as a selective *Agricultural* school, without diminishing academic performance.

Finding. That more effort is required to improve country student attendance at Hurlstone with benefits for both catchments and retention of students within agriculture streams.

Recommendation. That the Inquiry recommends a change to entry selection processes to improve attendance by country based children.

Recommendation. That the Inquiry recommend that, as NSW largest and best known agricultural high school, Agriculture or related subjects be compulsory at Hurlstone from Year 7-12 . Further, that the school consider how to provide more agriculture context based learning in its other curricula.

Recommendation. That Hurlstone’s primary role be clarified to foster and encourage *academic excellence in agriculture* and particularly prepare students for tertiary agriculture and related study and professional development.

DOES LOCATION MATTER?

This report canvassed issues relating to options for an alternative location for Hurlstone in an earlier chapter. When considering the needs of rural skills shortages and the relative opportunities to meet labour market demand, this submission concluded that targeting the urban catchment as well as the country catchment was necessary.

This, combined with Government undertakings, dictates that Hurlstone remain at Glenfield.

Nonetheless, in the context of best practice agriculture education, there remains some speculation about whether Hurlstone might be better located in a country area, or might otherwise access other farm enterprises in lieu of its current farm.

There is no purpose in relocating Hurlstone to country areas. Firstly, those catchments are catered for by Farrer and Yanco and location is largely unimportant for boarding at Hurlstone. If the suggestion is that Hurlstone could better cater for country children if located in the country, this submission offers four key responses:

Firstly, wherever it is located, Hurlstone, as a *selective* boarding school will always have a limited boarding catchment. Initiatives other than re-location are necessary to attract sufficient, qualified students.

Secondly, if the purpose of this suggestion is to improve rural student opportunities alone, it would be more cost effective to expand and improve facilities at Yanco and Farrer and make Farrer co-educational.

Thirdly, catering for the rural catchment alone does not address the needs of the rural skills shortages and moving the school would undermine the ability to tap the urban catchment.

Fourthly, our survey shows that the quality and nature of practical agriculture instruction within the course content has a more determinative effect on results and retention, than the influence of coming from a country area alone.

The other option that has been canvassed is to sell all or part of Hurlstone's land and either relocate or seek access for practical work at other farms, such as Elizabeth Macarthur Agriculture Institute at Menangle or University of Western Sydney Hawkesbury.

Without discounting the opportunity for collaboration with both of those institutions (and others), SHEAP submits that these propositions lack credibility and robust consideration on several counts:

- There is no funding available for substantial rebuilding. The costs of any relocation and rebuilding would obviate the apparent purpose of selling the land in the first place.
- There is simply no evidence that moving will improve the output Hurlstone provides. There is evidence to suggest that Hurlstone in its current location provides a sound foundation for improvement (unless resources are taken away).
- Inherent in these propositions is the fact that substantial land holdings are necessary to good agriculture outcomes

and undermine suggestions that the current land is spare.

- These speculated locations are not easily accessible by public transport (both being beyond the metro rail footprint) and would undermine day attendance, with the attendant opportunity loss of pathways from the urban demographic to agriculture.
- Proposals for separation of the school from its enterprises undermine the value of a co-located agricultural high school where practical work can occur contiguous to and immediately following theory instruction. In effect it reduces the outcomes at an agricultural school to those of other high schools that teach agriculture but have to seek supplementary practical experience at alternative locations.
- Options for separate campuses fail to properly account for the loss of instructional time due to transit between campuses (some 50 minutes each way to Menangle and longer for UWS Hawkesbury) with the consequent impact on both agriculture and other school disciplines. In Hurlstone's case, with some 730 agriculture students, there is the potential to have some 10 busloads of students perpetually moving in either direction between the two campuses. It is conceivable that the total number of student travel hours might exceed the student practical hours on the ground.
- Canvassing these options would suggest a lack of understanding by proponents of the day to day activities and programming of a *secondary* school, and additionally suggest that the desire to sell the farm and find an alternative might have superseded the requirement for good educational practice in the considerations of the proponents of such options.
- Some of these locations are within the footprint of future development plans (including the growing Hawkesbury - Nepean region). They would inevitably come under the same pressure that Hurlstone is currently facing. Agricultural land in those areas is already coming under pressure.
- In the case of the UWS co-location, there is a risk that this option is being canvassed more for the benefit of providing a feeder school for UWS's flagging agriculture enrolments, rather than best practice secondary agriculture education. It risks sucking a good agriculture school from an ideal catchment location, into one with a demonstrated poorer catchment.
- Access to alternative land should only be considered if the Inquiry has drawn the conclusion that more than the current holding at Glenfield is necessary for scale with the majority of practical work to continue on the existing 115 ha contiguous farm (as occurs at Farrer for example). Even then, due attention to the logistical and programming issues of travel would need to be paid to ensure that it does not undermine achievement in other school disciplines.
- Finally, these options would not satisfy community demand that Hurlstone be retained in its current location with its

coincident educational purpose and green space provision.

NOTE ABOUT RESEARCH AND DATA

In undertaking this study it became apparent that DET has virtually no performance, graduation statistics nor longitudinal research upon which to base sound development strategies for agriculture education.

It is nothing short of a disgrace that an Education Department - of all Departments - should have so little understanding on what makes agriculture students 'tick', what forms of practical instruction derive the best outcomes and what impacts on results changes to resources might have; and yet proposes to sell educational enterprise assets. The DET has no idea how many of its students were graduating to what fields and our survey responses reflected a variation between teacher responses even in the same schools – confirming a lack of quite reasonable records and data about outcomes and results.

Instead, the land sale proposal appears more about the management of its real estate portfolio *which assumes all the elements of a Ponzi scheme* – where one school needs to be sold to fund maintenance and improvements at another.

While the Minister belatedly suggested the purpose of this Inquiry was to make recommendations for the teaching of agriculture in a 'modern setting'; in the absence of proper longitudinal data substantial changes to core resources at a school like Hurlstone assume considerable downside risk, with no or questionable upside benefit.

A three month Inquiry cannot replicate robust longitudinal work which needs to track several cohorts through secondary and post secondary activity.

Given the crisis in rural skills; the relatively large contribution of the agriculture sector and the almost perpetual debate of how to resolve these issues through education; proper statistical, longitudinal work in this area is overdue. It seems that both the Industry and Government have an interest in funding such a study.

The Inquiry is urged to avoid supporting any radical changes – including reduced land holdings – until sufficient longitudinal study has been conducted to properly evaluate the likely outcomes of proposed changes.

Finding. **That DET currently lacks sufficient data and longitudinal research on the inputs, outputs and outcomes of agricultural education to properly make curriculum and resource decisions. Any changes to well held and supported understanding by teachers in the need for practical, enterprise based instruction – at scale – should be avoided in the absence of such research.**

Recommendation: **That the Inquiry recommend a robust longitudinal study of agricultural education inputs, outputs and outcomes as a proper foundation for future curriculum development.**

THE BOTTOM LINE

Respondents to surveys of agriculture teachers and tertiary agriculture students overwhelmingly opposed any proposed land sale at Hurlstone.

94% of responding agriculture teachers, from diverse schools and backgrounds, opposed the proposed sale of land at Hurlstone, of which 82% were strongly opposed. None supported it and the balance either didn't answer or were unsure.

Despite few responding students having attended Hurlstone and some 40% not having undertaken formal agriculture at school at all, a surprising 75% of students opposed the sale of land at Hurlstone in total with 34% strongly opposed and 21% neutral or unsure.

These strong results from students and teaching professionals reflected a general understanding that access to farm land and enterprises is critical to successful agriculture education.

76% of responding students and 82% of responding agriculture teachers felt that land sales at Hurlstone were likely to diminish or highly likely to diminish agriculture education in NSW.

In terms of how much land is enough, on average responding agriculture teachers had access to around 39 hectares with a maximum of 1000 hectares, with half saying they needed more land and 24% suggesting that holding was enough provided they had access to complementary resources. Not surprisingly most of those who felt they had access to adequate land came from specialist agriculture schools. When teachers from specialist agriculture schools were excluded, 78% of respondents said they needed more land

or required supplementary access to practical experience for students.

Facilities like Hurlstone, with their greater land holdings and enterprises were regarded as likely supplementary resources.

Responding students suggested they had had access, on average, to 55 hectares at secondary schools, with 66% suggesting that they needed more land or access to supplementary experiences. The disparity in land access between students and teachers most likely reflects the exposure of former private school students to greater land holdings than available in the public system.

While sampling is subject to error, these results correlated strongly to corroborating opinion in interviews and from sources such as the Universities and the Council of Deans of Agriculture.

This study found that the minimum holding of land varied depending on the following factors:

- Sufficient size to sustain the necessary teaching enterprises at scale.
- The number of students and therefore level of practical experiences required (taking into account ethical animal handling guidelines)
- Whether the school was primarily an agriculture school, where access to adjacent land at scale was more necessary, or a secondary school where agriculture was an elective subject, where adequate land for basic prac was required along with access to supplementary enterprise experience.

Finding. In the case of Hurlstone Agricultural High School, the overwhelming weight of practitioner, student and academic opinion is that the current holdings are the minimum necessary to sustain appropriate teaching enterprises and that any reduction carried the risk of reduced educational outcomes.

Finding. There is a strong view from interviews and survey responses that while the land is at the critical minimum mass for Hurlstone's purpose, the land usage could be improved to accommodate shared, complementary activities – such as camps for external students, agriculture teacher in service training or collaborative “Centres of Sustainable Agriculture Excellence”.

Recommendation. That the Inquiry acknowledges the weight of academic, secondary teacher and student opinion that Hurlstone's farm not be reduced in size and recommends against the sale of land at Hurlstone on the basis that it is likely to undermine best practice agricultural education. However, the Inquiry should propose further investigation into improved, shared use of the existing land holding for complementary activities.



Geoff Bush (Hurlstone 1977-82)

I attended a small country Primary School with 48 students enrolled. The High School in the closest large town had agriculture in a basic form, but Hurlstone gave me so much more. I studied Agriculture from years 7 to 12 (3 unit for the HSC), Wool Science and Sheep Technology from years 8 to 12, and Farm Mechanics for years 11 and 12.

This sound agricultural education, over six years, together with the many hours spent on the Hurlstone Farm, gaining practical experience with beef and dairy cattle, sheep, wool, pigs, poultry, bees, vegetables, irrigation and pasture management has given me a greater understanding of agricultural industries and distinct advantages in practical farming.

I have always aimed to source and utilize new farming techniques and technology to keep ahead in the ever-changing agricultural world. I can thank Hurlstone for giving me a broader outlook.

Geoff Bush “Glenholme” Cootamundra

GREENSPACE – A PLANNING FEATURE AND KEY COMMUNITY DEMAND

This chapter outlines the planning and urban design principles, including community demand for the preservation of green space and the central 'scenic hills' vista.

It is fair to point out that Hurlstone's local community is overwhelmingly opposed to any proposed sale and development of land that is inconsistent with its current educational purpose and its current 'special use' zoning as part of the green space buffer between Liverpool and Campbelltown.

While this submission has sought to emphasis facts and research, it is unavoidable to point out that some 10,000 petitioners, many thousands of emails and letters and now the public comments of the adjacent local State MPs, attest to the depth of feeling against any sale proposal.

The Member for Macquarie Fields, Andrew McDonald, MP said:

*"There are almost 300,000 people in south-west Sydney with almost no support for the sale... We will say this sale should not go ahead."*³²

³² Andrew McDonald MP quoted in Jessica Maher, "Drop it Nathan", Campbelltown- Macarthur Advertiser, July 22 2009



Figure 17. Hurlstone is designated "Special Use" as part of the open space plan for the local area

Even Minister Graham West, who had been reluctant to speak against the sale to date, said:

*"I think there's bigger issues here than politics, for me having grown up in the area . . . protecting that green space is really important."*³³

Further, this opposition spans the political divide with the Executive Government of NSW being isolated in its desire to sell this land – purely for short term revenue reasons – despite the long term risks to agriculture education and planning.

It is factual that the community opposes the State Government proposal and the Inquiry should, quite properly, be mindful of community wishes.

For the sake of the process, it is important for the Inquiry to recognise that the community demands are not political and are well supported by the facts of the local land planning schemes.

This area has long been preserved, quite deliberately, as part of the local structure plan. Even the most recent Sydney planning strategy – the so-called *City of Cities* strategy, confirmed the location of Hurlstone as 'special use' rather than residential, as identified open space.

Any proposal by the DET to sell Hurlstone's land is inconsistent with historical and current planning schemes – the most recent being just 3 years old.

³³ Graham West MP, *ibid*

Neither is there a shortage of immediately developable land in the area with nearly 100,000 developable blocks set aside for this purpose in the South-West Growth Centre.

Governments, of all bodies, have to be seen as operating on the same rules as the community. Put simply, the Government should respect its own planning arrangements.

HISTORY OF THE LOCAL STRUCTURE PLAN

The recent development of the Macarthur district is underpinned by the structure planning of the 1970s.

Importantly, the Three Cities Structure plan of 1973 laid the foundations of the growth in the area that has, largely, been maintained to date.

A key feature of that structure plan was preservation of green space and rural lands within the urban development landscape. It was cutting edge planning in its day and, if respected, would put this area at the forefront of world practice in balancing urban growth with green space and lifestyle.

Notably, the area then occupied by Hurlstone Agricultural High School, the former DPI Veterinary Research Station at Glenfield and the Ingleburn Army Camp were all to be safeguarded as 'special use' land abutting to and part of the 'open space' that together protected the 'Central Hills' from residential and industrial development.

The important lesson to be drawn from this, is that preservation of Hurlstone's land within its urban surrounds was an anticipated feature of local growth.

Put another way, it is not an accidental or an undesirable consequence that Hurlstone now finds itself surrounded by urban growth. It was anticipated in 1973 and planned for. Hurlstone's retention on 'special use' land was considered to be a beneficial feature of a plan that encouraged semi-rural character as part of its growth strategy.

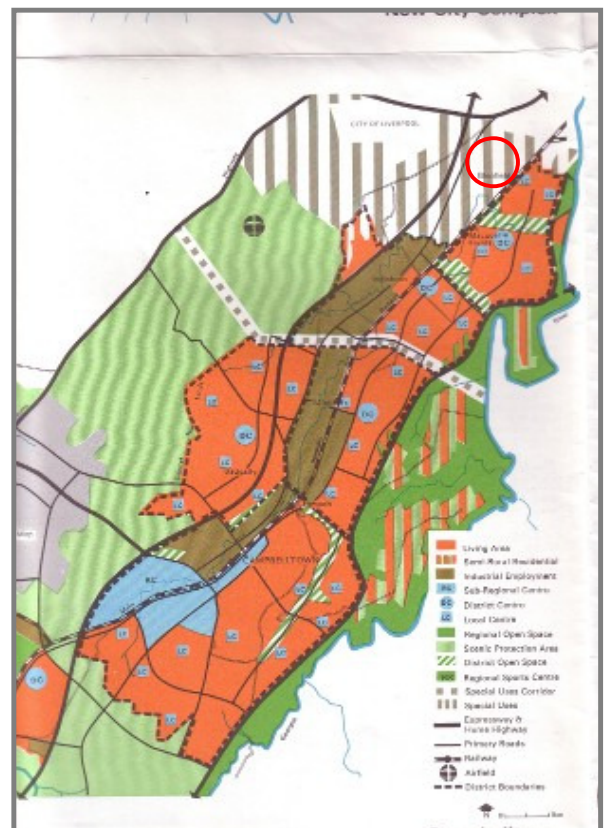


Figure 18. 1973 structure plan. Approximate location of Hurlstone circled in red in the "special use" zone.

This is not a matter of retrospective speculation. We interviewed former Mayor and Councillor Greg Percival, who was also one time head of the State Planning Authority and who played a figurative role in 1982, when the then State Government considered a land sale proposal.

The Inquiry has the rare opportunity to hear, first-hand, the contemporaneous considerations that sought to preserve these special use areas if it

chooses to interview Mr Percival – noting that Mr Percival has made his own submission.

THE CITY OF CITIES PLAN

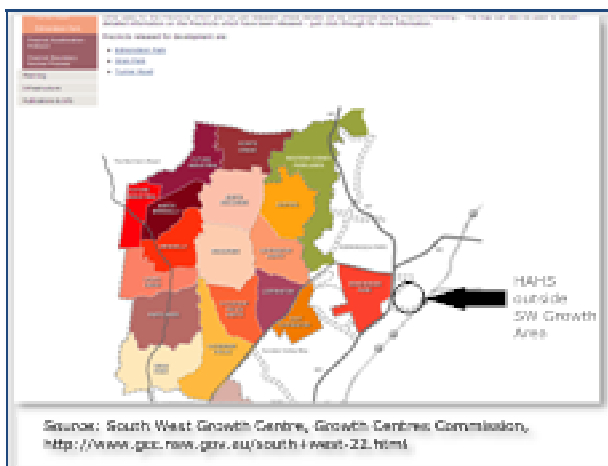


Figure 19. Hurlstone remains special use or non-urban in the “City of Cities” Plan, 2006 – 2031, outside the Growth Centre as shown

The Sydney Metropolitan Strategy – *City of Cities*, was released in December 2005, just over 3 years ago, and remains the extant strategic planning document for the Sydney region. It seeks to map and direct growth in five ‘City’ areas between 2006 and 2031.

Notably, Hurlstone’s land is retained in that plan, at least until 2031, as its current ‘special use’. In the local area, the key features of the 1973 structure plan, including preservation of the Central Hills green space are preserved.

Local growth and infrastructure planning is proposed to be accommodated for the next 25 years in the South West Growth Zones (West of the F5 freeway), with future growth to be accommodated further south of Campbelltown (Menangle) beyond that.

While, for the purposes of the mini budget, the Minister sought to portray the sale of Hurlstone land as part of an ‘accelerated program’ of existing sale proposals, there was no previous suggestion that Hurlstone was subject to sale (indeed it had been reviewed in the 1970s, in 1982 and in 2002) and neither does the planning scheme support other development at that site.

Under public pressure she was forced to deny that there were, in fact, any plans within the DET for school land sales. (This is contradicted somewhat by evidence by the D-G DET to a Parliamentary Committee that there was a plan, but the list was, at that time, under development).

The proposal to sell land at Hurlstone is clearly an ad hoc and unplanned proposal seeking to raise revenue, but without education or planning merit and without regard to the impact on agricultural education outcomes and community opposition.

Any proposal to sell land at Hurlstone for residential, commercial or industrial development is not consistent with either past or current planning strategies.

ADEQUACY OF LAND SUPPLY IN CURRENT PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Mayor of Campbelltown, Cr Russell Mathieson, recently told a meeting of over 700 concerned citizens, that there is no need to develop land at Hurlstone to meet land supply requirements.³⁴

³⁴ Hurlstone Farm Open Day, 5 July

He said that he was aware of over 90,000 blocks available for development in the local area.

The “City of Cities” Strategy, identified 110,000 blocks as part of the South-West Growth Zone, and the developers of nearby Edmondson Park have additional land they could bring to market, but they have felt constrained in doing so.

The Mayor of Campbelltown has additionally made public comment expressing his concern at insufficient State Government investment in infrastructure to support the proposed growth in his area – never mind the impact of unplanned and ad hoc development of sites like Hurlstone.

It is clear that additional land supplies outside the dedicated growth zones are not required in the foreseeable future and neither can current infrastructure accommodate ad hoc development.

It is not surprising that Campbelltown City Council supports the preservation of ‘special use’ land and open space and has resolved to oppose any sale of land at Hurlstone.

As recently as 22 July 2009, the NSW Minister for Planning, the Hon Kristina Kenneally MP announced that investigations into proposed land releases at Menangle had been terminated for the foreseeable future, noting that there was already sufficient land availability in the designated growth zones. According to the Minister:

“We are already planning sufficient land supplies in the South West Growth Centre to meet housing needs in the area for the next 25 years”³⁵.

Noting that small land releases in Macarthur South (south of Campbelltown) might be

considered if infrastructure allowed, this recent announcement by the State Planning Minister supports the view of Campbelltown City Council and others, there is no requirement for additional residential land outside the currently designated Growth Zones.

THE CONFLICT OF INTEREST OF GOVERNMENT AS BOTH ‘PLANNING APPROVER’ AND VENDOR OF LAND.

It is a matter of public record that Hurlstone’s land is intended to be preserved as part of the special use and green space planning. The question is, should the Government be permitted to abuse its planning powers to offend its own planning strategy? The community reaction suggests the answer is no.

This highlights the conflict of interest between Government as potential vendor of land and as the ultimate planning arbiter.

Private and other developers would generally be required to conform to the appropriate planning scheme, and Government should seek to do so also.

The Inquiry has been expressly asked to consider green space and related planning issues as part of the Terms of Reference. This submission contends that the Inquiry should pay due regard to the overwhelming community desire to preserve the Hurlstone Farm as part of its green space, as well as the fact that both past and current statutory plans preserve Hurlstone’s land from residential and industrial development and identify it as special use, non urban land.

³⁵ Hon Kristina Kenneally MP, Media Release, PLANNING STARTS FOR NEW HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT LAND IN SYDNEY, 22 July 2009

Finding. Hurlstone's Farm is part of the Central Hills vista and was intended to be preserved as part of the open space strategy for the local region.

Finding. That Hurlstone's land is not necessary to accommodate residential land demand, with the appropriate Minister confirming that there is adequate supply for the next 25 years in the designated growth centres, at which time proposed areas in Macarthur South will be considered.

Finding. The Inquiry has the express ability and, in our view, the obligation, to recommend against land sale and note that any attempt to sell such land for residential or industrial development is outside the planning guidelines.

Recommendation. That any proposed future development for the school be consistent with the current zoning and its agricultural education purpose. Any future building, consistent with Hurlstone's purpose, should be designed to respect the 'green space' elements of the regional plans.



Figure 20 Children learn where butter comes from. HAHS Open Day



Alison Kirk (Hurlstone 1985-1989)

Holding agriculture and regional Australia at the heart of almost everything I do professional & personally, I am constantly doing my bit to bridge the country/city divide in my role as a Manager at Westpac, where I have been involved in agribusiness finance and now Senior Manager Portfolio Risk and bank representative and specialist at key agricultural industry forums, events and projects.

This desire to bring city and country and business and agriculture together dates back to my time on the family farm in NSW Central West and then reinforced at Hurlstone. The development of my leadership qualities, skill level and interest in undertaking a long term career in finance, specialising in agriculture can be attributed to Hurlstone's holistic approach to agriculture, its location and facilities. Practical experience on the farm was a key motivator of why I pursued agriculture after school both professionally and in leadership roles in the Royal Agricultural Society. This and Hurlstone's strong academic focus prepared me for a senior role in agribusiness.

A farm background and my experience at Hurlstone taught me that there were many important roles that people in agriculture can pursue from the paddocks to the head offices.

URBAN AGRICULTURE IN SYDNEY

This chapter discusses the statutory, economic and social cases for the preservation of increasingly scarce rural lands in the Sydney Basin.

It also considers a number of views about urban agriculture that might have application to proposed future development and improvement of the Hurlstone Farm as a community and sector resource.

HURLSTONE RURAL LAND PRESERVED IN THE STATUTORY PLAN

In a Chapter dedicated to the Planning and Green Space considerations, we outlined the broader planning principles intended to apply to the Hurlstone locale. Those plans also specifically consider rural, resource and special use land issues.

The Sydney Metropolitan Strategy, *City of Cities*, emphasises the importance of urban agriculture and rural space as part of its strategic planning framework.

The Metropolitan Strategy addresses Sydney's environmental challenges and supports rural industries. It includes actions to protect the loss of biodiversity, protect air quality, manage with less water, move towards cleaner energy, protect

*viable agricultural and resource lands, and respond to the risk of climate change.*³⁶

The Vision for this strategy includes the express provision "Valuable resource lands will be maintained for their agricultural, mineral resource, extractive industry and special uses."

One paragraph in particular might as well have been based on the situation at Hurlstone and the local community:

*Agricultural lands may also include places of value to the community such as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sites of cultural importance, natural heritage areas and scenic amenity. These places are not only irreplaceable but contribute to a sense of regional identity, and may have value for activities such as tourism and education.*³⁷

It is not surprising that Hurlstone is retained as 'special use' or non urban land in all plans within the City of Cities Strategy. Hurlstone's Farm has strong heritage connections, strong regional identity – as attested to by several heritage and project impact studies – and a rural and educational focus.

The strategy could not be clearer about pressure to rezone such land as part of its Action agenda:

E4.2.1 Focus land release in growth centres.

Many regions in Western Sydney are experiencing increasing pressure to allow rural residential lots to be developed on

³⁶ Environment and Resources Strategy, City of Cities – NSW Government Metropolitan Strategy, Dec 2005, p 201.

³⁷ Ibid, p 222

agricultural land, particularly around rural towns.

The Government has already declared that the focus of new urban communities over the next 25 years will be the identified North West and South West growth centres.³⁸

As recently as 22 July, the State Planning Minister reiterated that growth in the designated growth centres was sufficient to meet residential land demand for the next 25 years.

PRESSING NEED TO SAFEGUARD AGRICULTURE IN THE SYDNEY BASIN

Western Sydney has a vibrant rural economy with a diverse community. Agricultural production in Sydney, for instance, is valued at approximately \$1 billion annually (Gillespie and Mason, 2003).

Sydney region agriculture represents up to 12 per cent of NSW's total agricultural production, grown on no more than one per cent of the State's land (not including other forms of land use in the region). There are approximately 13,000 people employed in the agricultural, forestry, fishing and mining industry in the Sydney region, including at least 8,000 full time on farm jobs in the Sydney region³⁹

NSW Department of Primary Industries hosted a planning forum "Sydney Agriculture – Planning for the Future" In December 2008 and produced a report in February 2009. That forum highlighted

the increasing risks to agriculture in the Sydney basin from urban land development – often contrary to the Metropolitan Strategy.

Among its strategies was the need to place higher value on the contribution of agriculture to employment in the Sydney basin, the need to promote the agricultural industry in terms of providing rewarding and challenging career opportunities and the need for a better coordinated and whole of industry approach.

Of particular interest to our study was the following outcome aimed at better linkages between producers and consumers.

"Community awareness about food production should be improved and current community complacency about food security addressed. More widespread recognition and community appreciation about the value of fresh food and the cultural, social and environmental role of agriculture should occur."⁴⁰

Notably, the report recognized the tension between producers' commercial demands and the ability to get involved in policy making – noting that agricultural operators are time poor.

The need for a more prominent showcase for urban agricultural, that can also act as a whole of Government and whole of industry venture to promote urban agriculture and community education has strong synergies with other proposals for complementary uses of Hurlstone's farm while offering the opportunity for a modest income stream.

It was recently reported that DPI had spent some \$15 million over 64 industry supported projects to

³⁸ Ibid p 224

³⁹ Ibid,

⁴⁰ NSW DPI: Sydney's Agriculture – Planning for the Future Forum Outcomes Report, Feb 2009, p 5

support the vegetable growing industry alone. Nonetheless, the recent Sydney Agriculture forum reinforced the fact that efforts to promote agriculture were fragmented and lacking a clear strategic plan. It said that *“both industry and government has contributed to fragmentation of the sector across the Sydney Basin”*.⁴¹

URBAN AGRICULTURE INITIATIVES

In the course of this study, SHEAP became aware of a number of movements to improve urban agriculture, permaculture and other sustainable food production initiatives.

We were particularly impressed by the work of Dr David Mason of the NSW DPI which demonstrates that Urban Agriculture is not a ‘fringe’ movement but which sits comfortably with mainstream agricultural teaching. Regrettably, it appears that while Sydney is becoming a city of international proportions, we are behind the rest of the world in urban Agriculture trends.

Urban agriculture excellence emphasizes the range of production scales and techniques that are relevant to agricultural education in a modern setting and in an urban setting. This is not to diminish the value of other initiatives and movements that seek to produce food at a micro scale. Dr Mason’s recognition of the complexity of food and fibre production in urban settings sat well with our understanding of the increased complexity and demands facing current and future students at places like Hurlstone.

In his Churchill Fellowship Report, Dr Mason fleshed out a number of themes surrounding local food production, direct marketing, innovation and adaptability of urban agriculture, the urban agriculture/public health relationship and agricultural land preservation.

As Dr Mason said:

*“...urban agriculture is a complex and multifaceted discipline. This complexity predisposes urban agriculture and the people involved in it to not being well understood...as a result those people and the communities in which they live and relate to, do not experience the sustainable social, economic and environmental benefits local agriculture is cable of contributing to the quality of all life...”*⁴²

And

*“The issue of agriculture in urban and urbanizing environments is one of increasing recognition and importance around the world in both developed and developing countries. A great deal has been written about what urban agriculture has to offer to communities socially, environmentally and economically. The international data base is extensive and growing. The issue, related concepts and other knowledge now needs to be brought into the mainstream decision making processes associated with development within urban and urbanizing communities in Australia. To do so is timely and responsible action.”*⁴³

And

“In the light of predicted global warming effects on inland Australia generally, it is important the

⁴¹ Ibid, p 4

⁴² Mason, Dr David., Urban Agriculture., Churchill Fellowship Report., 2006., p 9

⁴³ Ibid, p 34

three levels of government ensure sufficient appropriate coastal land is preserved to at least ensure food security, and public health needs of current and future generations are secured. The coastal belt of Australia represents a distinct climate zone. To continue to allow the sterilization of that zone as a sustainable source of agricultural produce, value added product, with their associated social, economic and environmental benefits would reflect badly on all levels of the Australian community.”⁴⁴

This study found that Urban Agriculture should not be seen as a separate discipline, but rather a mainstream issue within the Agriculture discipline. For example, it does not obviate the need for a thorough understanding of mainstream food and fibre production – as Hurlstone’s enterprises currently provide; but rather seeks to expand the relevance and understanding of agriculture in an urban context.

Importantly, Hurlstone provides a unique forum in its urban location but with its city and country cross-over to provide the basis for community education in a way that seems relevant to urban communities, while introducing them to the importance of mainstream agriculture.

Sadly, the tendency seems to be to assume that agriculture is an exclusively ‘rural matter’. This study found that to be a regular response in some sectors (often those suggesting that an agriculture school is best placed in country areas). However, it is that very thought process, sometimes by rural people themselves, which is increasingly isolating agricultural food and fibre production from mainstream awareness.

Agriculture needs to be recognized as a city and national issue not just a rural issue.

PERMACULTURE AND COMMUNITY GARDENS MOVEMENT

The study was approached by a number of advocates for Permaculture and Community Gardens.

Time did not permit a thorough investigation of their proposals. It is quite feasible that both initiatives could have a place within the Hurlstone environs as complementary uses that offer a ‘sharing’ of Hurlstone’s expertise with increased and relevant community use of some land. This is consistent with Hurlstone’s role as an agricultural school and community green space.

We have made no specific recommendations in this space, except to note that such initiatives could form part of a suite of initiatives in a “Centre for Sustainable and Urban Agriculture”.

Further investigation into such initiatives are warranted, noting the need for some offsetting income (by way of rent), and the need to preserve the security of the boarding school.

We understand that the Inquiry might receive submissions from groups with greater expertise in these areas than we could draw on in the time available.

AN URBAN AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE ‘SHOP WINDOW’

Noting that Hurlstone routinely hosts primary school and other visits, there is a potential for

⁴⁴ Ibid., p 35

better coordination and resourcing of this benefit as well as further improving relations with industry and the community.

Currently, the most likely contact between urban communities and agriculture is the Sydney Royal Easter Show, yet the sector expresses perennial concern about the growing negative impact of a lack of understanding of agriculture in the general community.

A co-located “Centre of Excellence for Urban and Sustainable Agriculture and Education” could:

- Provide an urban “shop window” to showcase Sydney’s Urban Agriculture
- Support a “policy shop” that better coordinates industry input to policy making while providing a one stop shop for contact by local government, planning authorities, DPI and educational organizations with Sydney and other urban agriculture sectors
- Support an interactive museum and expo of NSW agriculture to support other school and community educational visits to the farm
- Promote community awareness of Sydney and NSW agriculture more broadly – in conjunction with the RAS shows.
- Foster improved interaction between Hurlstone, industry, peak bodies, government (including DPI) and other users and consumers
- Be a one stop shop for information on a complex and at times uncoordinated range of sectoral, local, state and federal government initiatives to promote agriculture and rural leadership.
- Add value to proposed “Ag Camps” and agriculture teacher in service training.

- Provide a venue for demonstration of sector innovation in urban and sustainable agriculture
- Help facilitate agricultural careers pathways through better coordinated interaction with career advisers, industry, tertiary institutions, and vocational institutions and, indeed, other urban schools.
- Support a community farm (which could draw on student expertise and learning)
- Provide a venue for a farmers’ market in a semi rural but accessible location.
- The infrastructure also offers the potential to include a Vocational Training Centre along the lines of the “Granite Belt College of Wine Tourism” that can support vocational career pathways for both Hurlstone and other local students in agriculture, marketing, agri-tourism and related industries.

With relatively modest government, industry and visitor investment such a centre could provide economies to a range of existing ‘advocacy’ and ‘consultation’ processes and generate a modest income stream to subsidise both its and Hurlstone’s farm costs (noting that the farm already generates some 75% of its operating revenue). It would have the potential to be an excellent educational and industry resource.

Hurlstone is an ideal location given its current purpose, its location on the main suburban rail network and proximity to major roads and its agriculture education focus. Such a Centre would be a value adding and complementary use to Hurlstone’s primary role, with a low land footprint and unlikely to disturb the visual amenity local residents seek to preserve. Importantly, other productive rural land need not be offered up elsewhere to meet the demands for a range of needs such a centre could fulfil.

Finding. The co-location of an Urban Agriculture facility with Hurlstone Agricultural High School's 'mainstream' enterprises would provide an opportunity to both create awareness of the importance of 'urban agriculture' issues while increasing the opportunity for community awareness of more traditional agricultural pursuits.

This study found that vision and ambition to promote agriculture and agriculture education was a far more pressing need than short-term attempts to divest agricultural assets at Hurlstone. This Inquiry represents a real opportunity to turn the 'desires' of any number of forums, reports and studies, into real action to promote the sector.

Recommendation: That the Inquiry recommends further investigation into the feasibility of integrating an urban agriculture/showcase facility with Hurlstone's farm. This could be part of a proposed "Centre of Excellence for Urban and Sustainable Agriculture" or other collaborative research and education institute.

We recommend the Inquiry think big, forward, and strategically rather than support short-term revenue raising with long term down sides.

WHAT THE AGRICULTURE MINISTER SAID

In an earlier chapter, we highlighted the comments of the Federal Agriculture Minister for increased research and development in the context of the global food crisis. The risk of loss of

agricultural land in the Sydney basin – with it consequent risk to community understanding of sectoral issues has also been reinforced by NSW Minister for Agriculture, Ian Macdonald who told a 2008 Budget Estimates hearing:

*"One problem we have is the rural decline in acreage, or the farming decline in acreage, brought about by urban encroachment. I have a strong view that we need to maintain a strong agricultural base within the Sydney Basin and green space around the city."*⁴⁵

When later questioned on this, Mr Macdonald said:

*I have mentioned on a number of occasions the difficulties presented by some of the intensive agricultural production and the conflict with urban encroachment. Those industries have been in the area for a long time—sometimes 40 or 50 years. As urban development moves into their zone, conflict often flares up between the new residents and those long-established industries. That issue continues to confront us to this day. The forum will discuss all of these issues. I have made my views very clear to the previous Planning Ministers on a number of occasions, and I will continue to do so.*⁴⁶ (Author's emphasis)

There is a pressing need to insist that the Government translate its words, on both land planning and agriculture in the Sydney basin, into action. The Terms of Reference provides the Inquiry the mandate to do so.

Finding. The Inquiry should insist that the Government honour its commitment to preserve

⁴⁵ Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, NSW Parliament Hansard, Budget Estimates

⁴⁶ Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, NSW Parliament Hansard, Questions without Notice, 23 October 2008, p 10464

rural, resource and special use land. It is in the position to give some effect to the Minister for Agriculture's concerns about loss of agriculture in the Sydney basin by recommending against the sale of such land at Hurlstone.

Recommendation. That the Inquiry gives effect to any number of reports about the need to preserve and promote agriculture in the Sydney basin by recommending against the sale of educational farmland at Hurlstone.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE



John McLean Bennett BSC (Resource and Env Management (Walla Walla))

I grew up on two farming properties, the first a Braford Cattle Stud incorporating cropping and sheep grazing in Victoria, and the second a 52,000 acre sheep and cattle grazing property west of Bourke, NSW. I attended St. Paul's College Walla Walla which is an agricultural boarding school 45 km north of Albury/Wodonga. The school has approximately 92 hectares of farming land which is utilised by the various agricultural and horse mastership classes from years 7 through 12. We had about 250 children at the school with classes, between 15 to 30 strong depending on the year.

Even though we had this operating farm we were subjected to many field trips to neighbouring regions to look at their on farm practices as well as visiting various education and industry facilities in order to broaden and compliment our learning.

John McLean Bennett continued

I did not complete agriculture formally through years 11 and 12, but this early exposure shaped my interest in the agricultural industry.

In 2002 I joined the army but in 2004 I transferred to the Army Reserve and returned to agriculture study, now majoring in resource and environmental management, at ANU. At the completion of this degree I was offered honours, which I accepted and completed in the field of soil science looking at the interaction between chemical ameliorants and vegetation in sodic soils.

In March 2007 I began my PhD (Agriculture) in soil science. The conscious decision to pursue agriculture as a career is not solely explained by my agricultural learning at school, nor by my growing up on the land, it is explained by the combination of the two and my ability to have been able to get my hands dirty in the process.

Even though I did not attend Hurlstone Agricultural High School, as a post graduate student in agriculture I recognise the demonstrated benefit of combining formal agriculture education with practical experience in an enterprise setting. It is inconceivable that the NSW Government would seek to diminish agricultural education by selling educational farm land at an agriculture school.

With the looming challenges of water and soil management and climate change, we need more people with the passion for agriculture that can only come from touching it and feeling it. That means demanding more of our agriculture schools, like Hurlstone, not taking resources away.

While the issues covered in this submission generally apply to both men and women, this chapter outlines specific issues relating to Women in Agriculture in the context of the contribution of Hurlstone Agricultural High School.

Women play a major role in rural economies. The proportion of self-employed women in rural areas (25.3%) in 2001 was more than double the proportion in major urban centres (10.2%). Much of this can be attributed to women running and operating the family farm either as individuals or in partnership. In rural areas, 42.9% of self-employed women were engaged in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector.⁴⁷

Despite this, women in major urban areas are more likely to have higher educational qualifications and have the higher labour force participation rates.

Improving female participation rates in the work force is a key component of national workforce strategies and has particular relevance to rural Australia which has a critical labour force and skills shortage.

In the report, “Making a difference ~ an action plan for New South Wales women in agriculture and resource management”, it was pointed out that:

At 32% of Australia’s farm workforce, 70,000 women are a major client group for organisations serving the agriculture and resource management sector. Women play a significant role in all the agricultural industries, yet their numbers in higher levels of leadership and decision making remain low. Increasing diversity among leaders and

*decision makers will lead to better decisions on issues of concern to the sector.*⁴⁸

This means that pathways for women into agriculture and related careers, from both rural and city backgrounds, especially those who might become future sectoral leaders are particularly important to the future of the rural sector and good policy making.

The Action Plan has the Vision: “*To achieve profitable and innovative agricultural industries, sustainable resource management and vibrant rural communities by realising the full potential of women.*”⁴⁹

The key goals include greater participation of women in agriculture and, further, greater participation of women in decision making. Access to affordable and relevant education and training pathways is one of the major objectives to achieve the Action Plan’s vision.

Of the three effective agricultural high schools, only two are co-educational (Hurlstone and Yanco) and only one caters for both country and urban young women – Hurlstone.

It is not surprising, then, that NSW Women in Agriculture submitted that:

⁴⁷ ABS, 2006

⁴⁸ Making a difference ~ an action plan for New South Wales women in agriculture and resource management, p vi

⁴⁹ Ibid, p

Saving the Cradle of Australian Agriculture

"NSW Women in Agriculture opposes the sale of any of the land associated with Hurlstone Agricultural High School.

The social, environmental and economic benefits that accrue to both the local community and to agricultural industry from the unique combination of facilities at the school must not be forgone for the short term financial gain of government and developers.

HAHS's contribution to diversity in NSW state education is so important to our state that the NSW government should adequately fund its

operation and growth from state revenue.

*Diminishing the school's facilities by selling any of the farmland would undermine the quality of education at HAHS. "*⁵⁰

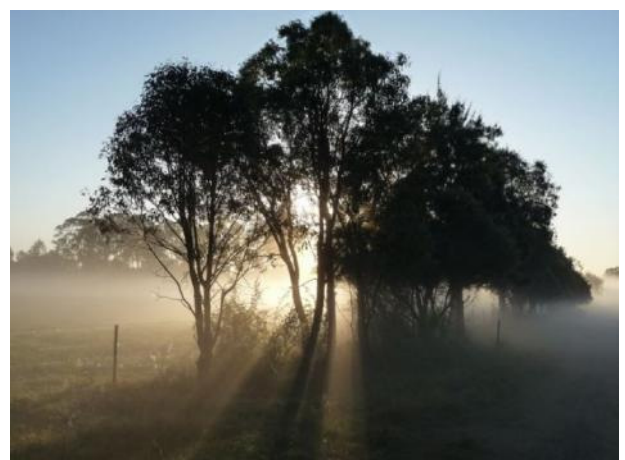
Finding. Any degradation of agriculture learning at Hurlstone undermines the unique position of Hurlstone as a pathway into agriculture by both country and city based young women.



Figure 21 A gateway for women into agriculture



Figure 22 Hurlstone is proud of its Royal Show success



⁵⁰ NSW Women in Agriculture submission to the Hurlstone Inquiry

Dr Priscilla Spendlove BScAgr/AnSc (Hons 1)
PhD MAIAST (Hurlstone 1991 -1998)



Attending Hurlstone was the single most influential and memorable experience leading to my chosen career path as an Agricultural Scientist. The exposure to agricultural and animal industries gained in my six years at Hurlstone was integral to motivating both my University Bachelor and subsequently post-graduate doctoral studies. Not only did Hurlstone foster an environment conducive to learning, the school provided a unique exposure to the agricultural, animal and veterinary science fields which, particularly as a student from the metropolitan area I would not otherwise been exposed.

There are many facets of the 'Hurlstone experience' which shall always be indelible however, without doubt the most significant of those were the hours spent on the farm; handling, caring for and learning about the livestock and becoming intimately involved with farm productivity, management and sustainability. This practical skill acquisition increased my awareness and knowledge regarding agricultural, environmental and animal production issues at an early and impressionable age, thereby solidifying my chosen career path. Furthermore, due to the practical exposure in my years at Hurlstone, I was well informed, well equipped and motivated both theoretically and practically to the challenges and rewards of working to maintain the scientific integrity and sustainability of Australia's rural and animal science sectors. I directly attribute the 'Hurlstone experience' to my chosen career path and strongly believe a school like Hurlstone should be preserved to ensure an equality of opportunity for future generations.

The continuity of practical teaching of agriculture and animal science at Hurlstone is paramount to ensuring Australia's agricultural and animal science sector continues to lead the way for innovation, scientific discovery, sustainable production and animal welfare in these times of global turmoil, heightened public concern and increased consumer awareness. In the absence of fostering interactive learning and enabling students to receive 'true' exposure in the practical sense to our agricultural and animal science industries would be to deprive students themselves and also to jeopardize the integrity of the Australian agricultural and animal science sectors and by in large the future prosperity of our nation.

I currently manage the nutrition and animal health division of Ranvet Pty Ltd in Sydney

COMPLEMENTARY USES OF HURLSTONE'S LAND

Our study canvassed a range of stakeholder opinions within the sector, peak bodies, alumni, community, agriculture teachers, agriculture students and the school, about complementary activities that might occur on Hurlstone Farm without diminishing the use of the farm as a school resource.

While stakeholders were generally opposed to the sale of farmland or the suggestion that some of the farm needed to be sold in order to properly fund core farm operations and other activities; they were broadly in favour of identifying opportunities to share the farm with a range of complementary uses.

The study identified 9 options, some of which overlapped or could be combined. These options were canvassed in both the agriculture teacher and

agriculture student surveys to test them with those users who were most likely to be affected.

- The range of options included:
- Residential agriculture camps for other agriculture students
- Residential and other In service training for agriculture teachers

- Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park
- Urban Showcase for Agriculture
- Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture
- Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park
- Access for the general community
- Preservation of urban green space
- Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture
- Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence
- Joint/shared facility use with

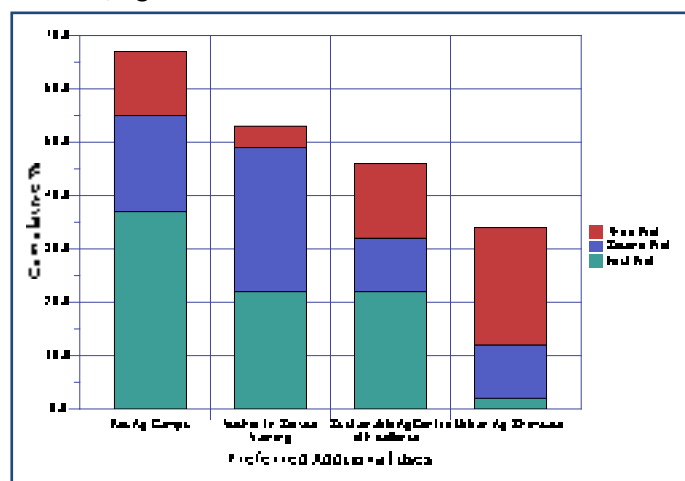


Figure 23. Complementary uses for Farm - Ag Teacher Top Preferences

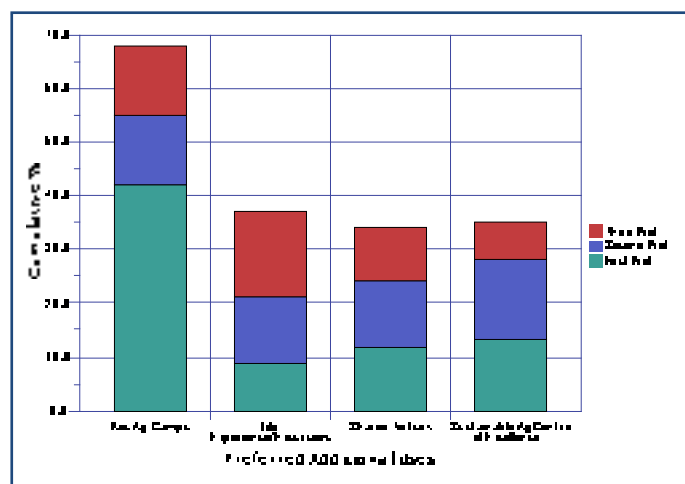


Figure 24. Complementary uses for Farm - Tertiary student preferences.

Tertiary Institutions

The graphs show a slight variance between tertiary student views and secondary teacher

views. Not surprisingly, teachers showed a higher preference for some teacher related uses and students were more inclined to see the opportunity for shared use with tertiary institutions.

The one significant difference was that students were more inclined to see the benefits of life experience / excursions for other students.

Finding: The preferred complementary uses for Hurlstone's farm included: Residential Agriculture Camps for other students, Teacher In Service training for agriculture teachers, A Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Agriculture / Showcase / Innovation, shared facility with Tertiary Institutions and Excursions / Life Experience for non agriculture students.

What was of surprise in our study was that while some stakeholders and international experience demonstrated the benefits of closer industry links, neither students nor teachers ranked joint facilities with agri-business very highly.

SHEAP believes that there is more scope for interaction between the education sector, DPI and agri-business along the lines of the United States FFA partnerships. Joint facilities provide more tangible career pathways and might even offer the opportunity for income streams and sponsorship through joint projects. At the very least it would ensure that teaching keeps up with the most current industry practice.

A weakness in our current model of education appears to be a lack of involvement by industry and other users. It might be that teachers currently are unfamiliar with the opportunities that provides or that such associations are regarded as 'tainting' the education system. Inevitably, any Centre of Excellence/ Showcase

facility is only likely to be sustainable and effective with strong industry support and participation.

Our study identified some projects in other states that are worthy of further study, such as the co-located College of Wine Tourism at Stanthorpe State High School in Queensland, established at a cost of some \$6 million in State funding which introduced marketing, service industry and other elements into the agriculture enterprises of that school – while offering career pathways for those interested in associated careers. The College is a collaborative training and industry venture.

Similar projects at Hurlstone would be consistent with our proposal for more agriculture context based learning in other academic disciplines, while potentially opening up some rural and agricultural vocational pathways for non Hurlstone students undertaking VET courses.

Recommendation. That the Inquiry recommend further study and development of multi-user complementary uses for the Hurlstone site, that are consistent with Hurlstone's primary role as a secondary agricultural school. These uses would preferably have potential to provide some income streams to help offset farm operational costs. Examples include a "Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Agriculture", a Residential training facility for agriculture teachers and non Hurlstone Students and Joint facilities/Joint Ventures with Tertiary Institutions.

HERITAGE ISSUES

Hurlstone's farm sits in the curtilage of historic Macquarie Fields house and is some of Australia's oldest continuously farmed land in Australia.

As outlined in the preamble, this small pocket of rural land is amongst the last that has any association with the 'Cowpastures' of the first fleet. The rural lands of the Macquarie Towns are an irreplaceable link with Australia's earliest colonial history – while continuing to offer potential to both production and agriculture education.

A number of local and other studies have pointed to the historical and local significance of both buildings and land at Hurlstone Agricultural High School.

Not only is Hurlstone a nursery for future agricultural science and leadership, the land itself is part of the Cradle of Australian Agriculture.

NSW GOVERNMENT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STUDY – SOUTH WEST RAIL EXTENSION

The independent EIS for the proposed south west rail extension reinforced the importance of Hurlstone and its land.

The School was the first agricultural high school established in Australia and the first in NSW to accommodate boarders. The current site for the school was established in the 1926 and has been responsible for fostering and developing a unique

and scientific approach to managing Australia's rural enterprises.

Hurlstone Agricultural High School has been assessed as being of high local significance.⁵¹

LOCAL HERITAGE GROUPS

The loss of any land from Hurlstone is opposed by local heritage and historical groups.

A community forum hosted by the Inquiry heard from Ms Jackie Green, President of the Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society who said, in part:

"Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society represents approximately 200 members who are passionate about their local community and protecting its natural and built heritage. Many members have expressed their concerns about the threatened sale of land at Hurlstone and have requested that I convey their concerns to those responsible for decision making..."

The land that Hurlstone stands on has been devoted to agriculture and animal husbandry since the first years of European settlement as it is part of the Cowpastures areas. I am sure everyone here is familiar with the true story of the 2 bulls and 4 cows which escaped from the government farms in 1788 and by 1795 had grown into a herd of over 40 animals...

The land the State government threatens to sell is very significant to the local community as it is part of Governor Macquarie's 1816 land grant to his

⁵¹ Parsons Brinkerhoff, Environmental Impact Study – South West Rail Extension, 2006

hardworking surveyor, James Meehan. Meehan's Macquarie Fields estate has been highly productive since 1822 and as such has been integral to the local culture and economy. The Hurlstone land retains its traditional view of Macquarie Fields House on the hill. Housing development in the 1980s onwards has put an end to agriculture in the Glenfield area everywhere except Hurlstone...

Hurlstone may be viewed as an elite school but the proposed sale of its land threatens the heritage of the entire Campbelltown area as well as that of the school itself...

On behalf of the Committee and members of the Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society Inc I call on Mr Peters and the commission of inquiry to totally reject the land sale proposal.⁵²

CAMPBELLTOWN CITY COUNCIL

Campbelltown City Council has resolved to oppose the proposed sale on land planning and green space concerns. It has also commissioned a study of the heritage issues in order to improve that aspect of its LEP.

At the time of drafting, Council was still considering the study in order to finalise and resolve its response. However, the heritage report identifies that the subject site has considerable historic, aesthetic and social significance, at both State and Local levels, related to the three agricultural and educational

⁵² Jackie Green, President Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society, extract from her address to the Hurlstone Inquiry Community Forum, 2 July 2009

institutions on the land (Glenfield Veterinary Research Station, Hurlstone Agricultural High School, and Glenfield Park School). All three institutions were developed in the early decades of the twentieth century, and each has a degree of historical rarity being the first facility of its respective type established in New South Wales. In part, the report says:

"The NSW Government has indicated it intends to release land within the subject area for residential development. The opportunity to retain the historical and aesthetic values of this site and the rural setting of Macquarie Fields House, is likely to be lost should any part of the site be sold to private ownership for residential development, particularly if the cultural and significant values are not taken into account in any future disposal, planning and development" and

"The subject site is significant to the local area as a remnant rural cultural landscape. Retention of the Site's heritage value as a rural cultural landscape would preclude, or heavily condition, its future urbanisation" and

".... As all of the land parcels of the subject site are in public ownership an opportunity exists at the current time to ensure the heritage values of the site are conserved for future generations".⁵³

NATIONAL TRUST SUBMISSION

A thorough review of the heritage values of Hurlstone has been submitted to the National Trust for their consideration. At the time of drafting that process was not complete.

⁵³ Graham Brooks and Associates, Heritage Report to Campbelltown City Council, quoted in Council Planning and Environment Committee draft agenda.

Finding: That the land around Hurlstone has significant local and, in parts, State heritage significance as supported by a number of independent studies and expert opinions. This land is amongst the last remnants of continuously farmed land dating back to early colonial history. Sale of the land represents a significant risk to heritage values and, given the land is currently held in trust for the community; it would be an abrogation of the Government's responsibility to fail to conserve these values for future generations.

Recommendation: That the Inquiry note the range of reports and submissions showing the heritage and local community significance of the land at Hurlstone and recommend against any sale proposal.



Figure 25. Aerial view in 1956 showing the farm in much the same as the original configuration. Note the Memorial Forest only just developing in the centre of the picture. As well as being a Memorial, according to Hurlstone's "The Harvester" school newspaper in 1947, it was the first scientifically planted woodlot in NSW.

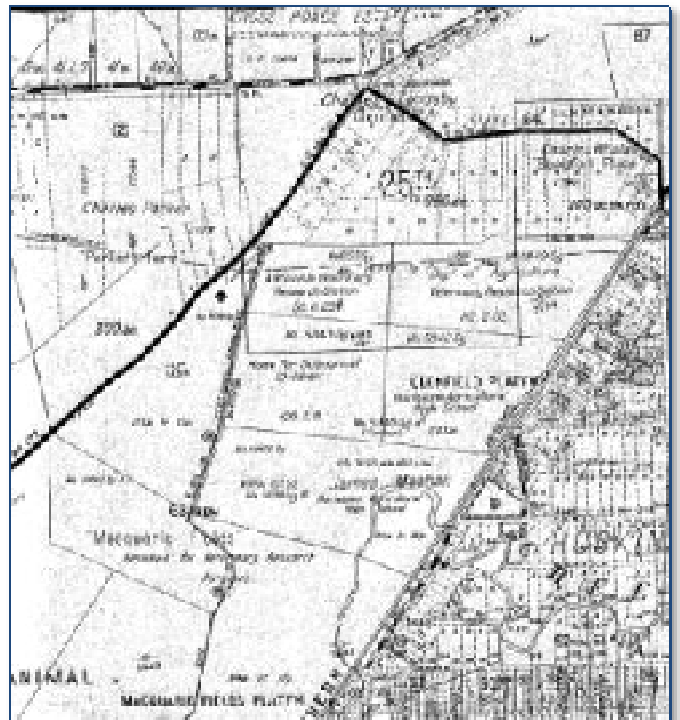


Figure 26 Old Parish of Minto map showing the original Hurlstone boundaries on the James Meehan land. The land for Glenfield Park described in not so 'PC' language.

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS – THE TOP SCHOOLS

Other important stakeholders in the outcome of these considerations are the students and parents of the three top schools on Hurlstone's land.

It is clear that in the initial post announcement period of the proposed sale that DET had forgotten about these schools altogether. It is simply not possible to calculate up to 140 hectares of suggested 'unused land' while accounting for the existence of these three institutions.

The Ajuga, Campbell House and Glenfield Park Schools sit in the grounds of the original Glenfield Park School – established shortly after Hurlstone to accommodate what were then referred to as 'subnormal students'. In a more understanding age, the roles of these three schools have evolved to assist children with disability and behavioural problems beyond the capacity of the main stream educational system.

In our consultations with the staff of these three schools it became clear that the rural land surrounds of those schools and the opportunity to visit Hurlstone's Farm were highly therapeutic for those children. Conversely, close proximity to traffic and residential housing is mutually problematic for these at risk children. For example, a number of children are considered "runners" (more properly known as absconders), whose fight or flight response to problems puts them at severe risk near highly trafficked roads.

There is a long history of cooperation between Hurlstone and the Top Schools, with students from Hurlstone regularly assisting with projects such as assisting Campbell house students build a

fish pond, and of the Top School students participating in farm visits and activities.

While the staff of those schools feel constrained, as employees of the DET, in making a submission to the Inquiry, SHEAP feels that the Inquiry is obliged to make proper consideration of their needs.

Notably, the Member for Macquarie Fields, Dr Andrew McDonald, in his former profession as a paediatrician, routinely referred troubled children to Ajuga and Campbell House – a testament to his professional regard for their value.

Under pressure, the Government was forced to tell media outlets that Ajuga, Campbell House and Glenfield Park would be retained yet it remains an unclear policy setting. Firstly, the Minister continues to refer to a sale of up to 140 hectares, which, by definition includes the land of these three schools. Secondly, the DET suspended the Building the Education Revolution (BER) funding for Ajuga. This action occurred in the wake of exposure that NSW was providing BER funding to schools earmarked for closure. It is clear that the suspension reflected a DET view that the three top schools were under consideration for closure.

Finding. Sale of land puts the work of Glenfield Park, Ajuga and Campbell House schools at risk, directly by threatening their existence and indirectly by removing the therapeutic value of adjacent land and activities.

Recommendation. That the Inquiry recommend that no sale of land occur that undermines the work of Ajuga, Glenfield Park and Campbell House

MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES

This chapter deals with issues and discussions that have arisen since the submission of the Interim Report.

FARRER LAND ACQUISITION

During August 2009 it has been announced that an additional 350ha of land has been purchased for Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School, along with a number of significant equipment grants. Each is premised on the need to make Farrer's enterprises, particularly its Angus stud more viable.

SHEAP recognises the importance of those acquisitions from a viability perspective and, indeed, the acquisition replaces other lower quality land occupied under leasehold (in addition to its 190ha main campus). The points nonetheless remain:

- This acquisition reinforces the argument that agricultural high schools need reasonable land holdings for practical enterprise.
- The acquisition, supported by the DET (the land will be owned by the DET) debunks the suggestion that "agriculture education in a modern setting" can be achieved with just 20 ha as suggested by the DET and the Government at the time of the Hurlstone farm sale announcement.
- Farrer has not been required to find compensating savings for any publicly funded improvement as has been suggested as

necessary for Hurlstone to even get overdue upgrades and investments in its boarding school.

This and the previous interim report point to the disparity in 'policy' between the agricultural high schools and the significantly disproportionate land to student ratio at each school.

It is critical that DET be consistent and even handed in its approach to all of its 'like' schools – lest it feed the increasingly justified charge that it has run down Hurlstone intentionally. To that end, the Farrer acquisition demonstrates that additional land is needed not less land to sustain appropriate enterprises and education at NSW ag schools. Any improvements recommended by the Inquiry need not come at the cost of any land sale as a compensating saving. Not only does Hurlstone have barely enough land to support the enterprises and education of a large, modern agricultural high school, but it has similar claims as Farrer that increased investment is warranted to support future viability. As the Hurlstone boarding school deteriorates in the face of underinvestment and Department policy, the opportunity for future investment is further diminished.

BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION

The ToR ask the Inquiry to be cognisant of potential sources of funding when making recommendations for improvements at Hurlstone.

SHEAP has consistently pointed to the DET's responsibility to make good its underinvestment in the Hurlstone Farm and boarding school. Indeed, improved investment in the boarding school will go some way to arresting falling boarding numbers – along with our recommendations to improve selection processes.

It should be noted also that since the Hurlstone sale was proposed – as a budgetary measure – the Commonwealth Government has announced the \$14 billion (now \$15 billion) BER program. This has not only supported the NSW schools investment program but the NSW Government has reportedly skimmed some 15-20% of such funds as administration fees.

There is also widespread reporting of schools destined for closure being provided grants and duplication of resources in schools.

A small proportion of the wastage and the ‘creamed’ administration fees would easily fund immediate upgrades at Hurlstone. Noting the Farrer acquisition is a precedent for funding without sale offsets, the Inquiry should desist in being pressured into making any such recommendation.

Not only were the terms of reference amended to allow for the Inquiry to find against any sale, the Premier was reported as saying at a Camden Community Cabinet that the Government will do whatever the Chairman recommends.

In short, the Chairman has open to him the express ability to recommend appropriate improvements and investment at Hurlstone – without needing to find offsets. Nonetheless, it should be recognised by him, that the Government has set a new precedent since the Inquiry began and clearly has the ability to redirect ‘admin fees’ from the BER to more appropriate investment directly into schools such as Hurlstone.

The convergence of the need for improvements in sustainable agriculture, climate change, agricultural skills shortfall and Hurlstone’s unique place as a selective co-educational agricultural

school catering for both country and urban students makes it as worthy of funding under the BER as any school and more a target for funding than the Government ‘skimmed’ administration fees.’

PART SALE OPTIONS

The Inquiry has been quietly canvassing ‘part-sale’ options reflecting an attempt to balance the widespread opposition to land sales against a desire to find sources of revenue for additional investment at Hurlstone.

For reasons canvassed throughout this report, SHEAP rejects such suggestions on the basis they reflect a predisposition for sale rather than a recognition that the land is a necessary educational and green space resource on the one hand and DET’s responsibility to properly fund its school upgrades and maintenance on the other.

In the period since the interim report, Agriculture staff at HAHS estimate that a 20 ha loss of grazing land will necessitate a reduction in the Dairy Herd by 10 milking cows and 10 replacement heifers with a direct consequence of:

- Loss of hands-on practical education experience for 730 students particularly 160 year 10 students given current resources are stretched already.
- Difficulty in meeting the milk contract, putting the entire enterprise at risk.
- Undermining the breeding program
- Inability to meet the demands of the Ayreshire calf day

At a time where a comparable school has purchased 450 ha to sustain future enterprise operations, any such option would be unjustifiable.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF SURVEYS

SURVEY OF TERTIARY AGRICULTURE STUDENTS

Qualification. Quantitative results in this summary are provided without some correlating text comments that could affect analysis of the results. The author's conclusions in the body of the Report reflect consideration of both table and text comments along with other research.

This is an internet based survey (not randomised). There is not a representative sample of students from agricultural high schools and 40% of respondents had no exposure to formal secondary agriculture education. The responses are, nonetheless, useful qualitative results and, in several cases, the trend is so strong as to be indicative of a general view (e.g. Opposition to the land sale is strongly consistent across respondents with starkly different backgrounds and relationships with Hurlstone. Similarly, the importance of practical experience and learning outcomes is consistent across a range of groups and is corroborated by other research).

While these responses still support the conclusions of our report about the importance of experiential learning and hands-on practical exposure to agriculture on career choices and learning, those with no formal exposure to agriculture education at school can't make a fair assessment of that impact (as many of respondents noted). Nonetheless, this survey still offered constructive input to our considerations in relation to learning and the question of the impact of proposed sale of land along with other experts and sources.

We have also provided a filtered version of this summary for those students who did undertake agriculture education at high school, noting that those who attended specialist schools are under-represented.

In some responses there were contradictory answers by particular respondents. For example, in a few cases, strong anti land sale comments contradicted the correlating multiple choice response (i.e. a person might have ticked 'support sale' but commented adversely against the sale). In some others, comments about adverse impacts of any loss of educational land contradicted the correlating multiple choice response. In most cases it occurred where the survey design had intentionally varied the pattern of positive and negative options in order to avoid 'pattern' responses. The author sought to clarify those where possible and with respondent permission made appropriate amendments. Where contact had not been achieved, those contradictory responses remain in the survey to retain the integrity of the survey. The number of such cases is statistically insignificant and where contradiction remains, analysis is informed by the comments rather than by the multiple choice option.

In the interest of space some low scoring responses are omitted and results are rounded (so not all responses total 100% in this summary). There were 145 responses at the survey closure of which 9 were incomplete. In some cases the responses for those who undertook secondary agriculture education is included for comparison with the overall sample.

What sort of tertiary agriculture course are you currently undertaking?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Undergraduate degree at University (00101) | 111 | 76.55% |
| Postgraduate degree/course at University (00102) | 29 | 20.00% |
| Vocational Study at a specialist agriculture institution (00103) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Vocational study at TAFE or similar institution (00104) | 0 | 0.00% |

Which of the following best describes the type of secondary school you attended before your tertiary studies?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| NSW Agricultural High School (00201) | 21 | 14.48% |
| NSW Public School other than a specialist Agricultural High School (00202) | 46 | 31.72% |
| NSW private school (00205) | 56 | 38.62% |
| School in another State/Country (00206) | 15 | 10.34% |

Did you study agriculture at school? Which answer best describes the nature of your formal agriculture education at school.

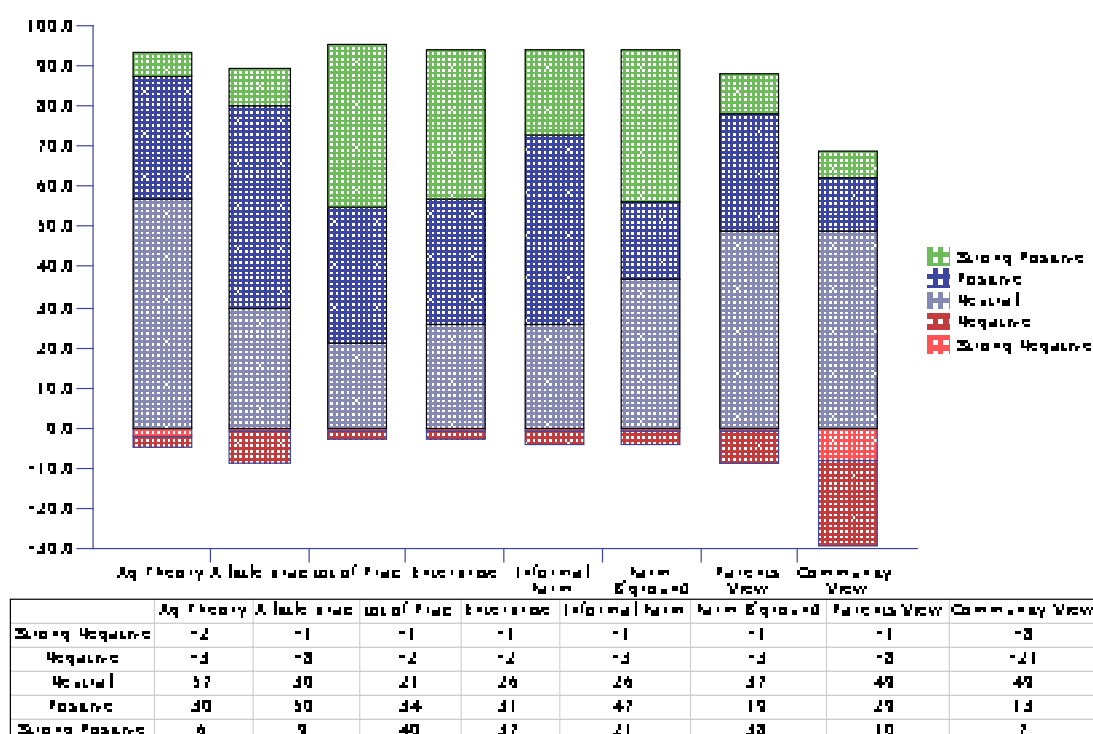
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| HSC / Year 12 level Agriculture (002C1) | 46 | 31.72% |
| HSC/ Year 12 Primary Industries (002C2) | 1 | 0.69% |
| Year 7-10 Agriculture Only (002C3) | 17 | 11.72% |
| I didn't study agriculture or an ag related course at school (002C4) | 58 | 40.00% |
| Other <input type="text" value="Browse"/> | 20 | 13.79% |

Thinking about the general community view of agriculture careers, how well do you think careers in agriculture are regarded? Briefly explain why you feel that way.

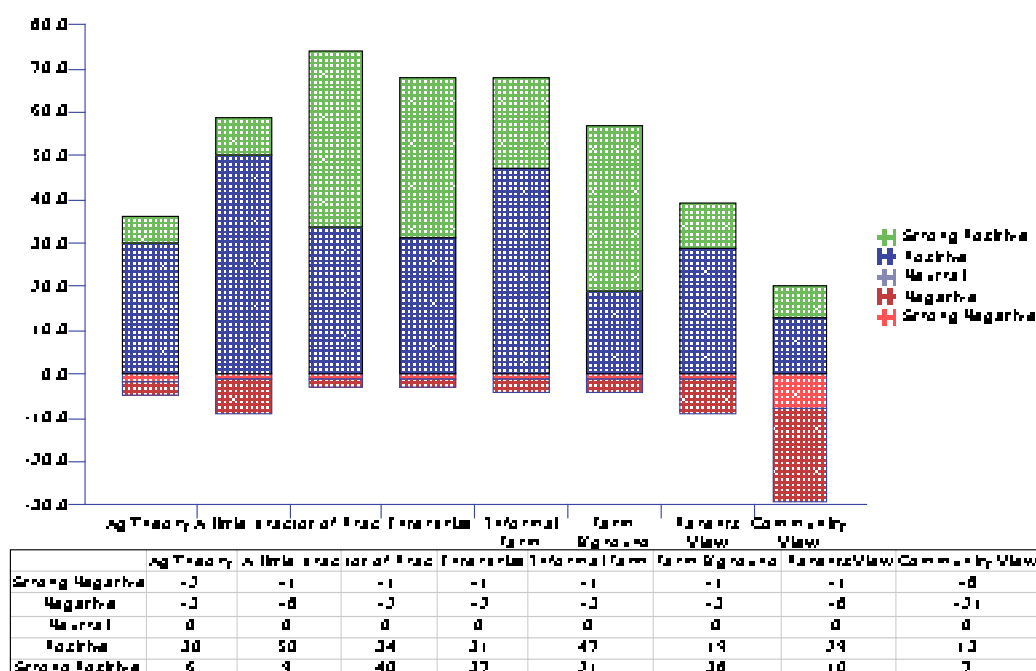
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Very well regarded (00501) | 7 | 4.83% |
| Well regarded (00502) | 30 | 20.69% |
| Neither well nor poorly regarded (00504) | 45 | 31.03% |
| Poorly regarded (00505) | 48 | 33.10% |
| Very poorly regarded (00506) | 8 | 5.52% |
| Unsure (00507) | 4 | 2.76% |

Thinking about your experience in deciding to pursue an agriculture related career and your understanding of colleagues' choices, to what degree did the following factors positively or negatively influence student decisions to continue onto agriculture studies or into farm employment after school

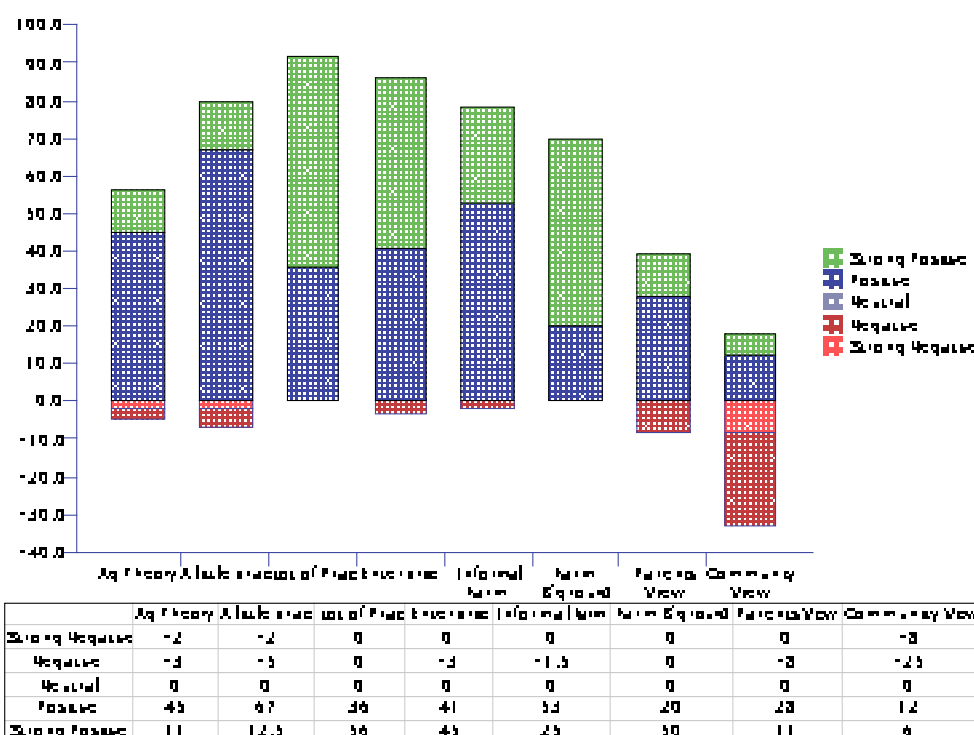
Graph with Neutral Responses. % of respondents



Graph without Neutral Responses (Pos/Neg Difference). % of respondents



Graph without Neutral Responses (Pos/Neg Difference). % of respondents. Those with Secondary Ag Education



Thinking about the ideal balance between theory and practical components of agriculture education, to what extent do you agree or disagree that there should be more practical work compared to theory content for agriculture students at secondary school?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strongly agree (00701) | 51 | 35.17% |
| Agree (00702) | 59 | 40.69% |
| Neither agree nor disagree (00703) | 20 | 13.79% |
| Disagree (00704) | 11 | 7.59% |
| Strongly disagree (00705) | 0 | 0.00% |

Ideally, what do you think the best balance between theory and practical components of agriculture education should be for secondary students?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|-------|------------|
| 100% practical (01001) | 0 | 0.00% |
| 75% practical and 25% theory (01002) | 25 | 17.24% |
| 50% practical and 50% theory (01003) | 83 | 57.24% |
| 25% practical and 75% theory (01004) | 22 | 15.17% |
| 0% practical (01005) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Other | 12 | 8.28% |

Thinking about the resources needed to learn agriculture, in your view does ready access to school farm land and the livestock and crops it contains, positively or negatively impact on educational outcomes?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strong positive impact (01201) | 98 | 67.59% |

Thinking about the resources needed to learn agriculture, in your view does ready access to school farm land and the livestock and crops it contains, positively or negatively impact on educational outcomes?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Positive impact (01202) | 40 | 27.59% |
| It makes no difference either way (01203) | 2 | 1.38% |
| Negative impact (01204) | 2 | 1.38% |
| Strong negative impact (01205) | 0 | 0.00% |
| No answer | 3 | 2.07% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

How much land did your former school have for practical agriculture education? (Provide approximate area in hectares)

| Calculation | Result |
|-------------|--------|
| Average | 54.51 |
| Minimum | 0 |
| Maximum | 950 |

Approximately how many students at your school studied agriculture in total (all years)?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|-------|------------|
| 1-20 (01601) | 29 | 20.00% |
| 21-50 (01602) | 15 | 10.34% |
| 51-100 (01603) | 15 | 10.34% |
| 101-300 (01604) | 18 | 12.41% |
| 301-600 (01605) | 6 | 4.14% |
| More than 600 (01606) | 13 | 8.97% |
| Don't know / unsure (01607) | 44 | 30.34% |

Approximately how many students at your school studied agriculture or Primary Industries at HSC/Yr12 level in the same year you completed year 12?

| Calculation | Result |
|-------------|--------|
| Average | 19.7 |
| Maximum | 150 |

Approximately how many students from your school, who left school the same year as you, proceeded on to agriculture related studies or employment?

| Calculation | Result |
|-------------|--------|
| Average | 10.18 |

Thinking about the land and resources your school offered to support practical agriculture education, do you think it was enough land to achieve the objectives you would like to have achieved or not? Which statement best reflects your preference.

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| More land/resources are required at my school to achieve good agriculture outcomes (01401) | 57 | 39.31% |
| The land/resources are adequate for day to day needs provided students can get supplementary practical experience elsewhere (01402) | 39 | 26.90% |
| The amount of land/resources is about right at my school to achieve good agriculture outcomes (01403) | 25 | 17.24% |
| Good agriculture outcomes are still possible with less land than at my school (01404) | 3 | 2.07% |
| Unsure (01405) | 18 | 12.41% |

Thinking about the land and resources your school offered to support practical agriculture education, do you think it was enough land to achieve the objectives you would like to have achieved or not? Which statement best reflects your preference. (Those with Secondary Ag Education)

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| More land/resources are required at my school to achieve good agriculture outcomes (01401) | 13 | 20.31% |
| The land/resources are adequate for day to day needs provided students can get supplementary practical experience elsewhere (01402) | 28 | 43.75% |
| The amount of land/resources is about right at my school to achieve good agriculture outcomes (01403) | 20 | 31.25% |
| Good agriculture outcomes are still possible with less land than at my school (01404) | 2 | 3.12% |
| Unsure (01405) | 1 | 1.56% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 1]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 2 | 1.38% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 2 | 1.38% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 1 | 0.69% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 29 | 20.00% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm enterprise) (015B8) | 15 | 10.34% |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 52 | 35.86% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 9 | 6.21% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 32 | 22.07% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 0 | 0.00% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 2]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 2 | 1.38% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 3 | 2.07% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 5 | 3.45% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 31 | 21.38% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm enterprise) (015B8) | 24 | 16.55% |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 32 | 22.07% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 15 | 10.34% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 28 | 19.31% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 1 | 0.69% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 3]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 2 | 1.38% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 1 | 0.69% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 7 | 4.83% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 26 | 17.93% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm enterprise) (015B8) | 33 | 22.76% |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 28 | 19.31% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 20 | 13.79% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 20 | 13.79% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 4 | 2.76% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 7]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 19 | 13.10% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 48 | 33.10% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person | 16 | 11.03% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 7]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| in a larger group) (015B5) | | |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 5 | 3.45% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm enterprise) (015B8) | 3 | 2.07% |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 4 | 2.76% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 13 | 8.97% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 4 | 2.76% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 29 | 20.00% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 8]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 47 | 32.41% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 22 | 15.17% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 14 | 9.66% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 5 | 3.45% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm enterprise) (015B8) | 1 | 0.69% |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 2 | 1.38% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 3 | 2.07% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 1 | 0.69% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 46 | 31.72% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 9]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 45 | 31.03% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 41 | 28.28% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 9 | 6.21% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 2 | 1.38% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm enterprise) (015B8) | 1 | 0.69% |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 7 | 4.83% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 9]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 36 | 24.83% |

In order to provide exposure to practical experience that could not be achieved at your school, what other resources did you access/ did your school organise in order to supplement your understanding of agriculture?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Occasional visits to a real farm (015A1) | 21 | 14.48% |
| Regular visits to a real farm (015A2) | 10 | 6.90% |
| Student participation in multiple day farm camps or similar (015A3) | 17 | 11.72% |
| Access facilities at Hurlstone Agricultural High School (015A4) | 5 | 3.45% |
| Access facilities at another agricultural education facility (015A5) | 7 | 4.83% |
| I don't have ready access to other facilities to fill the gap (015A6) | 8 | 5.52% |
| Other | 14 | 9.66% |

What is your relationship, if any, with Hurlstone Agricultural High School?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Had friends / current colleagues who attended Hurlstone (02101) | 47 | 32.41% |
| Attended Hurlstone as a student (02103) | 18 | 12.41% |
| Visited Hurlstone to attend ag events / camps (02104) | 9 | 6.21% |
| Visited Hurlstone casually (02105) | 1 | 0.69% |
| I have no relationship with Hurlstone/ don't know about Hurlstone (02106) | 53 | 36.55% |
| Have some understanding of Hurlstone from reading (02107) | 36 | 24.83% |
| Other <input type="text" value="Browse"/> | 8 | 5.52% |

In November 2008, the NSW Government proposed to sell up to 140 hectares of Hurlstone's 160 Hectare property as part of the NSW mini budget. It subsequently announced an Inquiry into the sale. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposed sale of Hurlstone Agricultural High School farm land?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Strongly opposed to the sale of land at Hurlstone (02601) | 77 | 53.10% |

In November 2008, the NSW Government proposed to sell up to 140 hectares of Hurlstone's 160 Hectare property as part of the NSW mini budget. It subsequently announced an Inquiry into the sale. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposed sale of Hurlstone Agricultural High School farm land?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|--------------|-------------------|
| Inclined to oppose the sale of land at Hurlstone (02602) | 32 | 22.08% |
| Neither opposed nor supportive (02603) | 19 | 13.10% |
| Inclined to support the sale of land at Hurlstone (02604) | 1 | 0.7% |
| Strongly support the sale of land at Hurlstone (02605) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Unsure (02606) | 11 | 7.59% |

In November 2008, the NSW Government proposed to sell up to 140 hectares of Hurlstone's 160 Hectare property as part of the NSW mini budget. It subsequently announced an Inquiry into the sale. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposed sale of Hurlstone Agricultural High School farm land? (Students with high school Agriculture education)

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Strongly opposed to the sale of land at Hurlstone (02601) | 44 | 68.75% |
| Inclined to oppose the sale of land at Hurlstone (02602) | 8 | 12.50% |
| Neither opposed nor supportive (02603) | 8 | 12.50% |
| Inclined to support the sale of land at Hurlstone (02604) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Strongly support the sale of land at Hurlstone (02605) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Unsure (02606) | 3 | 4.69% |

From your knowledge of Hurlstone and its contribution to agriculture education, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "As a selective agricultural high school, Hurlstone plays an important role in identifying and encouraging some of NSW brightest students into tertiary studies in agriculture and related disciplines rather than competing tertiary courses."

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strongly agree (02201) | 55 | 37.93% |
| Agree (02202) | 45 | 31.03% |
| Neutral (02203) | 34 | 23.45% |
| Disagree (02204) | 5 | 3.45% |
| Strongly disagree (02205) | 1 | 0.69% |

From your knowledge of Hurlstone and its contribution to agriculture education, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "As a selective agricultural high school, Hurlstone plays an important role in identifying and encouraging some of NSW brightest students into tertiary studies in agriculture and related disciplines rather than competing tertiary courses." (Those with Secondary Ag Ed)

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strongly agree (02201) | 33 | 51.56% |
| Agree (02202) | 16 | 25.00% |
| Neutral (02203) | 10 | 15.62% |
| Disagree (02204) | 4 | 6.25% |
| Strongly disagree (02205) | 0 | 0.00% |
| No answer | 1 | 1.56% |

From your knowledge of Hurlstone and its contribution to agriculture education, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:"Hurlstone Agricultural High School plays an important role by exposing city based children to agriculture career pathways."

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strongly agree (02201) | 63 | 43.45% |
| Agree (02202) | 46 | 31.72% |
| Neutral (02203) | 28 | 19.31% |
| Disagree (02204) | 1 | 0.69% |
| Strongly disagree (02205) | 2 | 1.38% |
| No answer | 5 | 3.45% |

From your knowledge of Hurlstone and its contribution to agriculture education, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:"Hurlstone Agricultural High School plays an important role by exposing city based children to agriculture career pathways." (Those with secondary Ag Ed)

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strongly agree (02201) | 36 | 56.25% |
| Agree (02202) | 16 | 25.00% |
| Neutral (02203) | 9 | 14.06% |
| Disagree (02204) | 1 | 1.56% |
| Strongly disagree (02205) | 1 | 1.56% |
| No answer | 1 | 1.56% |

From your knowledge of Hurlstone and its contribution to agriculture education, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:"Hurlstone Agricultural High School should also be a resource for other agriculture students who have less access to land and resources, so they can participate in practical education in a farm enterprise setting."

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strongly agree (02201) | 70 | 48.28% |
| Agree (02202) | 52 | 35.86% |
| Neutral (02203) | 18 | 12.41% |
| Disagree (02204) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Strongly disagree (02205) | 0 | 0.00% |
| No answer | 5 | 3.45% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

From your knowledge of Hurlstone and its contribution to agriculture education, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:"Hurlstone Agricultural High School should also be a resource for other agriculture students who have less access to land and resources, so they can participate in practical education in a farm enterprise setting." (Those with secondary Ag Ed)

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strongly agree (02201) | 39 | 60.94% |
| Agree (02202) | 22 | 34.38% |
| Neutral (02203) | 2 | 3.12% |
| Disagree (02204) | 0 | 0.00% |

From your knowledge of Hurlstone and its contribution to agriculture education, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Hurlstone Agricultural High School should also be a resource for other agriculture students who have less access to land and resources, so they can participate in practical education in a farm enterprise setting."

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strongly disagree (02205) | 0 | 0.00% |
| No answer | 1 | 1.56% |

Thinking about the proposal to sell all or part of Hurlstone's farm, to what extent do you think the sale of farm land at Hurlstone Agricultural High School would impact on agriculture education in NSW?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Highly likely to improve agriculture education (02501) | 2 | 1.38% |
| Likely to improve agriculture education (02502) | 2 | 1.38% |
| Not likely to improve or diminish agriculture education (02503) | 11 | 7.59% |
| Likely to diminish agriculture education (02504) | 49 | 33.79% |
| Highly likely to diminish agriculture education (02505) | 61 | 42.07% |
| Unsure (02506) | 15 | 10.34% |

Thinking about the proposal to sell all or part of Hurlstone's farm, to what extent do you think the sale of farm land at Hurlstone Agricultural High School would impact on agriculture education in NSW? (Those with secondary Ag Ed)

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Highly likely to improve agriculture education (02501) | 2 | 3.12% |
| Likely to improve agriculture education (02502) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Not likely to improve or diminish agriculture education (02503) | 9 | 14.06% |
| Likely to diminish agriculture education (02504) | 17 | 26.56% |
| Highly likely to diminish agriculture education (02505) | 32 | 50.00% |
| Unsure (02506) | 3 | 4.69% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 1]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Residential camps for non Hurlstone ag students who have less access to farm enterprises (02801) | 61 | 42.07% |
| Residential or other In Service Training for Agriculture Teachers (02802) | 3 | 2.07% |
| Urban showcase for agriculture (02803) | 7 | 4.83% |
| Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture (02804) | 13 | 8.97% |
| Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park (02805) | 5 | 3.45% |
| Access for the general community (02806) | 5 | 3.45% |

Thinking about the proposal to sell all or part of Hurlstone's farm, to what extent do you think the sale of farm land at Hurlstone Agricultural High School would impact on agriculture education in NSW?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Preservation of urban green space (02807) | 6 | 4.14% |
| Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture (02808) | 3 | 2.07% |
| Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence (02809) | 19 | 13.10% |
| Joint/shared facility use with Tertiary Institutions (02810) | 18 | 12.41% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 2]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Residential camps for non Hurlstone ag students who have less access to farm enterprises (02801) | 19 | 13.10% |
| Residential or other In Service Training for Agriculture Teachers (02802) | 22 | 15.17% |
| Urban showcase for agriculture (02803) | 13 | 8.97% |
| Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture (02804) | 17 | 11.72% |
| Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park (02805) | 9 | 6.21% |
| Access for the general community (02806) | 5 | 3.45% |
| Preservation of urban green space (02807) | 8 | 5.52% |
| Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture (02808) | 7 | 4.83% |
| Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence (02809) | 22 | 15.17% |
| Joint/shared facility use with Tertiary Institutions (02810) | 18 | 12.41% |

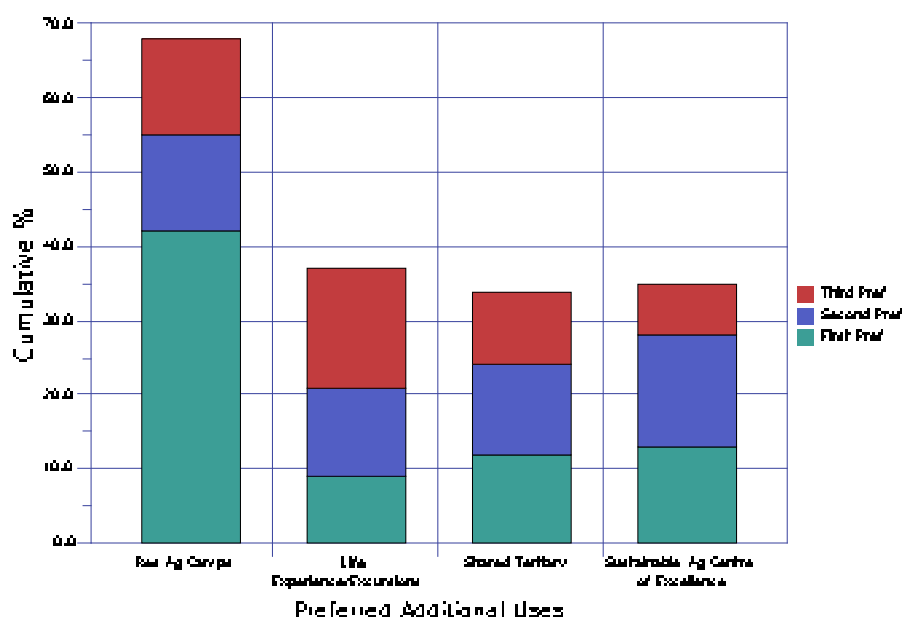
In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 3]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Residential camps for non Hurlstone ag students who have less access to farm enterprises (02801) | 19 | 13.10% |
| Residential or other In Service Training for Agriculture Teachers (02802) | 15 | 10.34% |
| Urban showcase for agriculture (02803) | 18 | 12.41% |
| Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture (02804) | 24 | 16.55% |
| Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park (02805) | 9 | 6.21% |
| Access for the general community (02806) | 5 | 3.45% |
| Preservation of urban green space (02807) | 9 | 6.21% |
| Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture (02808) | 17 | 11.72% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 3]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence (02809) | 10 | 6.90% |
| Joint/shared facility use with Tertiary Institutions (02810) | 14 | 9.66% |

Graph of Preferred Complementary Uses (Cumulative % Prefs 1,2,3 of 10)



A Selection of Verbatim Comments about the Sale proposal

The sale of land at Hurlstone Agricultural High School will be devastating to Agricultural education in many ways, including diminishing an interest in Agriculture from prospective students and the community, making practical aspects of Agriculture more difficult to teach and comprehend, and ensuring Agriculture is pushed further out of reach for bright students in the Sydney basin. The long term negative impacts have not been thoroughly considered. The sale will also diminish green space in the Macarthur/Liverpool region.

There are only 4 agricultural high schools in all of NSW, it is the governments' responsibility to retain and maintain these schools to provide agricultural education for the generations ahead. Without this there will be a shortage of people working in the industry which in time will cause a financial crisis worse than what the government is facing now. The sale of Hurlstone land is both disgusting and outrageous.

Agricultural education is vital in Australia, and by removing one of the pillar of not only agricultural education, but also one of the most important points of making people aware of agriculture, this is one more piece of short term and destructive thinking. If this sale is conducted, Hurlstone will become another James Ruse, where a low quality teach to the test course is given with no competence in animal handling, management or other vital skills for anyone involved in the agricultural sector requires.

Don't sell it. The government should not sell off valuable assets to fund its self made deficits. the government has the wrong incentive for selling off this land.

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| Don't sell the land, it could be used as a micro model to study more efficient farming methods, which is easily accessible by those not living rurally. |
| As a large provider of agricultural education, Hurlstone high school should open up its campuses towards outsiders as well. Since the perception of agricultural sector is not well perceived in the general public view, this may change with more public access to Hurlstone's facilities. |
| I think it is highly unsupported in the ag community and will be a great loss to ag's future in Australia. |
| I simply can't believe how poorly agriculture is treated in this day and age. Where do people who have no connection with agriculture think their food comes from and how do they think they will continue to be able to live the way they do if agricultural education is further diminished. All governments should be supporting and improving agricultural education for the betterment of the entire population of Australia and the world. |
| Just can't see why the government would proceed with this - it's a long term cost to education and the economy |
| no one even mentioned ag in my school i had to find the distance ed course by my self |
| Agriculture needs to be promoted more in schools as a potential career path. The loss of the facilities at Hurlstone High School will have a severe negative impact on the number of city based kids who are exposed to Agriculture, and lead to a decrease in students studying Ag. at Tertiary level. |
| Once it is sold it is gone forever, there is no other land of this size in sydney that will be available, let alone affordable, for agricultural studies and related uses. |
| I wish i had the opportunity to learn agriculture at the secondary level, so any closure or decreasing size of Hurlstone would be a great loss for the opportunities for other young students |
| Agricultural education is vital for Australia to move forward and stay at the forefront of agriculture on a global scale. Hurlstone is vital for this. The state government is trying to use this as a selfish attempt to cover up their own incompetencies. In a couple of years, when the state government is replaced by a more competent one, the small amount of funds gained will be irrelevant and the state of NSW will have lost one of its finest educational and historical resources. Hurlstone is vital for nurturing the future of Agriculture. |
| My final comment is this, agriculture is the basis of human survival in that we can not rely on nature alone to supply the demand created by population pressure. To do anything which would diminish educational services or disadvantage future students in agriculture would have the potential to cause havoc in the agricultural industry. The agricultural industry is increasingly demanding higher education to fill roles which were previously filled by those with school certificate qualifications. This is an indication of agriculture developing into a science rather than an ad-hoc process. For this reason, if students become disadvantaged or the number of students study ag diminished, then there is less chance of educational facilities being able to fill job vacancies being demanded by the ag industry. The proposed sale of the Hurlstone Farm is ludicrous considering we do not produce enough ag graduates as it is - why further compound this problem for short term monetary gain I ask? |
| Not only would the sale diminish the quality of agricultural education available to interested secondary students, but it also fuels the public perceptions that a) the government is not doing the right thing by the education system, and b) that agricultural education is not important. I think it is very important that the government try to dissuade these views, not encourage them. |
| Would limit the exposure and development of skills and techniques vital for the continued success of Australia's agricultural industry. |

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| The farm should definitely not be sold. It provides Hurlstone with a unique educational opportunity for both city kids and those from a rural background, as well as having a high standard of education in subjects other than agriculture. Hurlstone provided me with the opportunity to enter a field of expertise I never thought I would be a part of, and I loved every single minute of my high school time at Hurlstone. The practical component equips students with the basic livestock handling and husbandry techniques needed in the field, an educational component of agriculture lacking at other agricultural high schools within the Sydney district. |
| Agricultural education is an extremely important and under-appreciated area of study, it would be nice if the public was educated about its importance. |
| It would be a shame to sell the land. It is difficult enough to get access to residential land. Hurlstone should not be selective, every one should have access to these facilities. Agriculture needs as many people as it can get. |
| I think it is very unfortunate that this is occurring. What has not been mentioned however is the proposed future for this land. In the likelihood of the farm being destroyed, there will be a huge negative impact. Alternatively, if this farm is used as another gateway to agriculture studies then the school could benefit from a more diverse learning. |
| Really bad idea if the land is sold. There are about 30 students studying Horticulture/Agricultural science degrees at Sydney uni in my year and we're one of the biggest groups to go through in many years... If the land is sold, that's gonna mean even less students leading to a shortage of consultants, national parks officers, quarantine people, research, ag and science teaching, etc..... |
| Coming from a small private urban highschool, Hurlstone was always the school to admire when it came to shows and presentations, the sale of the farm would remove its high standing and reduce the amount of urban students exposed to such an environ. |
| I have a VERY strong feeling about the union of selective and agricultural high schools. I think that the two should be separate because there are many people I know who would have benefited enormously from going to an agricultural high school but never would have got into a selective high school. And, on the other side I know people who have gone through selective high schools, including James Ruse (which is also an ag high school) where their academic standing means that they would not even consider a career in agriculture and didn't especially benefit from it whilst they were at school. |
| Opportunities for practical experience should under-pin all agricultural related courses, at secondary and tertiary level - regardless of the theory component or direction of the course. |
| It appears to be an example of the NSW state government's disregard for agriculture in this state. It is such an important industry and it needs to be helped rather than restricted. |
| Without early exposure to the agricultural industry, it is unlikely that high school leavers would choose this career path. This is an industry in which there is a shortage of workers. |
| should be used for many other schools to become more cost effective and provide excursions for primary school children as well to allow more people entering the agriculture industry |
| It would be hugely disappointing to think that one desperate government's decision will ruin such a unique institution that Hurlstone is, because once the damage is done, it cannot be turned back, and it will be largely detrimental to the experience gained from an education at Hurlstone. |
| It would negatively impact on students entering tertiary education in agricultural studies and should be maintained and opened up to other students who do not have access to agricultural land. |
| When I was studying agriculture at high school I had never heard of Hurlstone and I was the top ag student at school. Perhaps the school should be advertised to students from rural areas. I think rather than focussing on specialty schools the gov should emphasise access to good agricultural education in rural areas as these students are probably most likely to go on to agricultural careers due to strong family ties to farming and the higher career profile ag has in the country. |

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| HAHS has been one of the state's leading agricultural high schools for over 100 years. The farm is an integral part of the great reputation that this school has built up in this time in terms of ex-students entering the agriculture industry. With the world's growing population and ever increasing need for agricultural research in many different areas, it would be very short-sighted for the government to sell off land that is potentially channeling bright minds into this industry. I thoroughly enjoyed my 5 years at HAHS, and would love it if my children could some day have a high school experience like mine, however without the farm at HAHS, I would be forced to look at an alternative school. I believe many other ex-students share this view. |
| As a student of Hurlstone I believe agriculture played an extremely important role in my education and coming from a farming family the fact the school offered such a great agricultural program was a major draw card! I completed year 12 at Hurlstone studying both Ag and Primary Industries and the school farm was vital to the successfully running of these courses. I am very strongly opposed to the sale of the land!!!! |
| I enrolled at Hurlstone when i was in year 9 and became very swiftly involved in the schools agricultural offerings. As well as being an enthusiastic student of agriculture i also became heavily involved with 'rural youth'. I spent most of my free time participating in activities with dairy and beef cattle, poultry and bees. In my year proceeding my HSC i went on Agricultural exchange to denmark where, for a year, i was employed on a dairy farm with a wonderful danish family. Here, on an everyday basis, I used skills that i received from my time at hurlstone. I hoped one day to send my children to this school mainly so they could get same access to agricultural education that i received. If the farm were to go however then there would be little reason. Agriculture will never cease in importance to the Australian or global community and institutions like Hurlstone are required so that we always have educated minds working towards more sustainable and more productive agriculture. |
| We need more schools like Hurlstone, with farm land, practicality and a focus on systems. These are life lessons in how things grow, work, live. How to think objectively and to experience new things. We already have a shortage of proffessionals in agriculture, reducing the pool where they are cultured will diminish this further. |
| Agriculture has a bright future in Australia if educated people continue to return to the industry providing knowledge, innivation and fresh thinking. To jeopardise one of our oldest and profitable export industries by reducing the capacities of one of NSW finest agricultural educational institutions is irresponsible and short sighted ane should no be allowed to take place. |

A Selection of Verbatim Comments about the Motivation to pursue Agriculture Study and Careers

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| I developed a strong interest and concern for Agriculture during my Agricultural studies at High School and wished to continue a strong relationship with it throughout the rest of my life. |
| - Wanted to be a vet - Needed experience with animals - Wanted to know if the industry suited me - Wanted to know whether I wanted to be a rural, suburban or specialized vet |
| To learn more about the genetics behind animal breeding for production and potentially to find ways of improving this |
| Because I am passionate about it, and believe that it is a meaningful study to help make the world better. |
| I come from a farm, beef and lucerne. Ag was of interest to me and so was economic. I am motivated to ensure the survival of Agriculture within Australia. |
| I chose my degree because it is an applied economics degree and I wanted something that is more applied rather than theoretical |
| I did well in HSC agriculture and it seemed an area which was rather interesting, yet neglected by a lot of intelligent people. |
| I've lived on a farm all of my life and have always had an interest in the industry. |

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| Alternative to the mainstream economics degree. Saw agricultural related studies as an integral part to the economy and also stepping stone in working in the field of development economics. |
| I wanted to diminish world hunger... |
| Mainly after studying agriculture at Hurlstone, if i didn't attend hurlstone i don't think i would have thought of ag as a career. Also I was offered a scholarship at Usyd for an ag course. |
| Performed well at high school level. Enjoyed the course. Offered a tertiary scholarship to study agriculture |
| I have always had an interest in nature, plants and science so I thought it only natural to study agriculture/horticulture. |
| I wanted to study economics, and found the idea of applied economics less daunting. This was the best decision I could have made for myself as Agricultural Economics and Sydney university turned out to be exactly what I wanted to do. Being able to relate theoretical ideas to agricultural examples provides us with a much deeper understanding than others receive in straight economics. |
| interest in sustainable food production, soil science and catchment management |
| The main motivation was more to do with the breadth of the degree in Ag Economics, in that it offers more of an applied degree, and covers more areas in economics than an economics degree would. |
| - The narrow mindedness of the industry and the need to learn more about sustainable industries like hydroponics and aquaculture. - parental farming influences - jobs |
| Having a good teacher at high school sparked my interests in this field |
| An interest in Agriculture and the environment. A desire to work in developing countries, and not be stuck in a office job. |
| I got really interested in Agriculture at high school and didn't find anything else. |
| the agricultural sector is crucial to the Australian economy and culture. Australia has always been at the forefront of the agricultural world, and it is important that we maintain this for future years to come. (so i can help with this) |
| I wanted to work in the non-government organisation, helping charities and poverty. I liked the requirement of professional experience as part of the degree as well. |
| Interest and a belief in the fundamental importance of agricultural advancement to the global population and economy. |
| I have always been interested in animals but wanted to be involved in the production side of things rather than the medicine/vet side of things. |
| The main motivations were that I was good at it and that I found it interesting compared to other subjects at school. |
| I have grown up in the country and always been interested in agriculture |
| My degree is not an agricultural degree, but it is to do with animals. I am interested in animal research NOT for production purposes. |
| Job security the degree helps provide and a wide range of opportunities in the workplace. |
| I just always wanted to work with animals, I volunteered with Taronga Zoo, Symbio Wildlife Park and the RSPCA and that made me want a career in this area. |
| I grew up in an agricultural area and have an interest in agriculture |

| |
|---|
| Agriculture is an integral part of living; production of food will always be a necessity regardless of how little importance producers are actually given in society. |
| I have always been passionate about animals and animal related research and I feel that agriculture has always allowed me to pursue this and has definitely nurtured my passions and aspirations. |
| I came from a family farm and agricultural economics seemed the best way to combine two of my interests, agriculture and economics. |
| I have always had a love for animals. When I commenced university I wanted to look after dogs and cats, but after spending time working with cattle at university I chose that path instead |
| study the high technologies of agriculture, and very interesting in plants and animals stuffs. |
| Im interested in wildlife research and conservation, not necessarily agriculture although i am finding the agriculture components quite interesting |
| My interest in animals that we are not normally exposed and a chance to do something that was not economics or computer based. |
| Hurlstone is the reason I am currently undertaking studies within the animal industry. Hurlstone provided very positive theoretical and practical experiences, and if I hadn't gone to Hurlstone, it is unlikely I would have entered this field. |
| Agriculture was taught in an inspiring and hands-on manner. Tertiary study in agriculture seemed an opportunity to gain an in-depth yet applied science education. |
| Security of the industry, people need to eat - there will always be a job for an agriculturalist |
| The livestock industry driven economy in many countries all over the world. |
| WANTING TO RETURN TO THE COUNTRY AND AN INTEREST IN THE LAND |
| working and researching production animals |
| Observing badly degraded farmland across Australia. |
| I enjoy scientific research but also to be in the field and using my hands. |
| Grew up working on the family's commercial cattle property, commodity trading and livestock management interested me as a result. |
| I want to become a large animal vet |
| Agricultural studies are a very important part of veterinary science when incorporating farm management. Reasons behind animal behaviour and wellbeing lie within their environment. |
| interest in both science, and particularly environmental cycles and environmental issues |
| Very interested in animals and i know that agriculture is a big part of animal management and care. |
| It was definitely attending Hurlstone - and having to do ag in years 7-10 - that made me want to pursue animal science further. I never thought that ag would be one of my favourite subjects, but it definitely was during the last two years of school. |
| Have always been interested in the ag field. High school helped broaden my understanding of the importance and opportunities in agriculture. |
| Love plants and always wanted to do a career to do with them. |
| Industry exposure and practicality on a global scale |

| |
|---|
| I would like to contribute to environmental management. This is the reason I applied for the job in the agriculture and natural resources research institute. |
| Interest in the primary industry; as food source is the initial energy source for all living organisms, controlling the human food source can possibly rule the world. |
| I have an Agricultural background, am interesting in it and hence want a career in agriculture |
| I enjoy the rural lifestyle and was interested in livestock and their interaction with agronomy. i also had a great teacher which made me want to continue with it |
| With no interest in what my parents did Secondary school exposed me to Agriculture for the first time, including a 10 day trip in year 10 to Charleville, and it was from here that I grew to love it. |
| Completed first degree in Health Science, now looking for career change. Grew up on dairy farm and wish to return to agricultural industry. |
| I felt the need to improve the sustainability of farming practices and wished to learn about the industry in detail. |
| I was heavily involved in animal husbandry activities outside of school hours. |
| Whilst attending my Agricultural High School I was immersed with so many opportunities to experience agricultural life and enterprises, it was with these experiences where i discovered my passion for Agriculture and all of its related fields. I believe Agriculture to be one of Australia's most important industries both now and into the future and i strongly believe high school education plays a large role in motivating the youth of today to undertake an Agricultural related career path. |
| I feel that Agriculture is going to have a very significant role in the future, as developing nations start to excel, and their economies, and population starts to grow, there will be and even higher demand on agricultural goods. Agriculture will therefore play an important role in Australia's future. Education at Hurlstone has definately guided me towards further study in Agriculture, and i am glad for it. |
| An interest in hydrology and soil. Also experiences on the farms of family friends. |
| It was close to veterinary science without extremely high marks and had a broader potential for jobs at the end including agriculture, biology, genetics, animal husbandry and ecology. |
| there are very few animal options available and with the growing need for food and increasing drought it is important to research better resource utilisation |
| Come from a farming family and excelled in Agriculture studies at school. |
| Having a farm background and liking science, I looked for a course that offered both of them. |
| I didn't want to do nutrition or dietetics, but still wanted to do a food related course, and the agriculture faculty offered me the major I wanted to do. |
| My involvement with the Hurlstone dairy motivated me to take an agricultural exchange to denmark in the year after my HSC. |
| I enjoyed both agriculture and primary industries courses at Hurlstone Ag high school. These gave me a keen interest in undertaking a tertiary agricultural course. |
| I have been working part time during university holidays on a mixed farming enterprise - beef, sheep and cropping in central west NSW. I gained a good understanding of the mechanisms of primary industry productions, as well as practical experience from studying agriculture at HAHS. Living and working on Hurlstone's farm instilled in me a passion for agriculture and a love of the land, and strengthened my resolve to return to rural areas to live and work after tertiary education. |

SURVEY OF AGRICULTURE TEACHERS

Qualifications. Similar to the survey of students.

This is an internet based survey (not randomised), noting that the final sample (72) was around 50% of the NSW Agriculture Teachers Association membership and results are consistent with a range of other sources.

How long have you taught Agriculture or a related course?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------|------------|
| Less than 1 year (00101) | 1 | 1.39% |
| 1-5 years (00102) | 10 | 13.89% |
| 6-10 years (00103) | 9 | 12.50% |
| 11-15 years (00104) | 11 | 15.28% |
| More than 15 years (00105) | 40 | 55.56% |

Which of the following best describes the level of education you teach and the type of school you teach in?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Secondary Teacher at a NSW Agricultural High School (00201) | 11 | 15.28% |
| Secondary Teacher at NSW Public School other than a specialist Agricultural High School (00202) | 49 | 68.06% |
| Tertiary Teacher/Lecturer in a practical agriculture discipline (00203) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Tertiary Teacher/Lecturer in another related discipline (Science/ Economics etc) (00204) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Agriculture Teacher in another State/ different Institution (00205) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Former agriculture teacher but no longer teaching (00206) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Other <input type="text" value="Browse"/> | 7 | 9.72% |

Thinking about your experience in teaching agriculture, would you agree that agriculture education in your State is heading in the right direction?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strongly agree (00401) | 9 | 12.50% |
| Agree (00402) | 20 | 27.78% |
| Neither agree nor disagree (00403) | 13 | 18.06% |

Thinking about your experience in teaching agriculture, would you agree that agriculture education in your State is heading in the right direction?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|
| Disagree (00404) | 23 | 31.94% |
| Strongly disagree (00405) | 6 | 8.33% |
| Unsure (00406) | 0 | 0.00% |
| No answer | 1 | 1.39% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

Thinking about the general community view of agriculture careers, how well do you think careers in agriculture are regarded? Briefly explain why you feel that way.

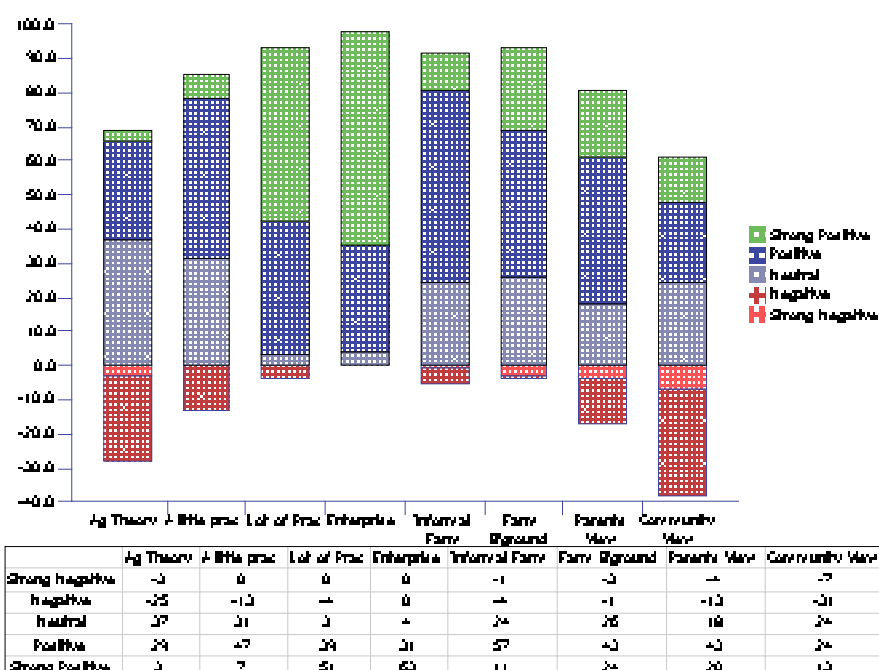
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Very well regarded (00501) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Well regarded (00502) | 18 | 25.00% |
| Neither well nor poorly regarded (00504) | 16 | 22.22% |
| Poorly regarded (00505) | 34 | 47.22% |
| Very poorly regarded (00506) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Unsure (00507) | 0 | 0.00% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

How well do you think the NSW State Government values agriculture education? Add a brief comment to explain your answer.

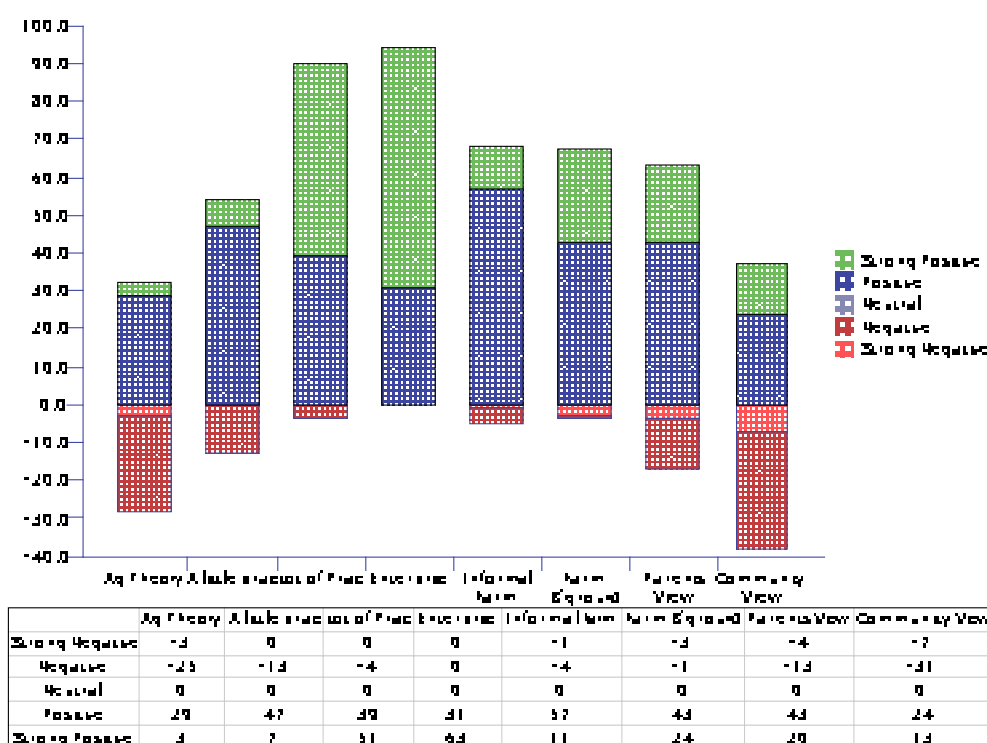
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Very highly (005A1) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Highly (005A2) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Neither highly nor poorly (005A3) | 17 | 23.61% |
| Poorly (005A4) | 31 | 43.06% |
| Very Poorly (005A5) | 18 | 25.00% |
| Unsure (005A7) | 2 | 2.78% |

Thinking about your experience teaching agriculture and observing student career choices, rate the degree to which the following influences positively or negatively impact on student decisions to continue onto agriculture studies or into farm employment.

Graph with neutral responses % of respondents



Graph with neutral responses (Pos/Neg difference) % of respondents



Thinking about your experience teaching agriculture and observing student career choices, rate the degree to which the following influences positively or negatively impact on student decisions to continue onto agriculture studies or into farm employment.
[Undertaking Theory Agriculture course]

Answer Count Percentage

Thinking about your experience teaching agriculture and observing student career choices, rate the degree to which the following influences positively or negatively impact on student decisions to continue onto agriculture studies or into farm employment.

[Undertaking Theory Agriculture course]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strong Negative Influence (L1) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Negative Influence (L2) | 18 | 25.00% |
| Neutral (L3) | 27 | 37.50% |
| Positive Influence (L4) | 21 | 29.17% |
| Strong Positive Influence (L5) | 2 | 2.78% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

Thinking about your experience teaching agriculture and observing student career choices, rate the degree to which the following influences positively or negatively impact on student decisions to continue onto agriculture studies or into farm employment.

[Theory course and a little practical]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strong Negative Influence (L1) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Negative Influence (L2) | 9 | 12.50% |
| Neutral (L3) | 22 | 30.56% |
| Positive Influence (L4) | 34 | 47.22% |
| Strong Positive Influence (L5) | 5 | 6.94% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

Thinking about your experience teaching agriculture and observing student career choices, rate the degree to which the following influences positively or negatively impact on student decisions to continue onto agriculture studies or into farm employment.

[Theory course and a lot of practical]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strong Negative Influence (L1) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Negative Influence (L2) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Neutral (L3) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Positive Influence (L4) | 28 | 38.89% |
| Strong Positive Influence (L5) | 37 | 51.39% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

Thinking about your experience teaching agriculture and observing student career choices, rate the degree to which the following influences positively or negatively impact on student decisions to continue onto agriculture studies or into farm employment.

[Organised exposure to real farming enterprises]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strong Negative Influence (L1) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Negative Influence (L2) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Neutral (L3) | 3 | 4.17% |

Thinking about your experience teaching agriculture and observing student career choices, rate the degree to which the following influences positively or negatively impact on student decisions to continue onto agriculture studies or into farm employment.
[Organised exposure to real farming enterprises]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Positive Influence (L4) | 22 | 30.56% |
| Strong Positive Influence (L5) | 45 | 62.50% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

Thinking about your experience teaching agriculture and observing student career choices, rate the degree to which the following influences positively or negatively impact on student decisions to continue onto agriculture studies or into farm employment.
[Informal exposure to farming]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strong Negative Influence (L1) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Negative Influence (L2) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Neutral (L3) | 17 | 23.61% |
| Positive Influence (L4) | 41 | 56.94% |
| Strong Positive Influence (L5) | 8 | 11.11% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

Thinking about your experience teaching agriculture and observing student career choices, rate the degree to which the following influences positively or negatively impact on student decisions to continue onto agriculture studies or into farm employment.
[Coming from a farming background]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strong Negative Influence (L1) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Negative Influence (L2) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Neutral (L3) | 19 | 26.39% |
| Positive Influence (L4) | 31 | 43.06% |
| Strong Positive Influence (L5) | 17 | 23.61% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

Thinking about your experience teaching agriculture and observing student career choices, rate the degree to which the following influences positively or negatively impact on student decisions to continue onto agriculture studies or into farm employment.
[Parental influence]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strong Negative Influence (L1) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Negative Influence (L2) | 9 | 12.50% |
| Neutral (L3) | 13 | 18.06% |
| Positive Influence (L4) | 31 | 43.06% |
| Strong Positive Influence (L5) | 14 | 19.44% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |

Thinking about your experience teaching agriculture and observing student career choices, rate the degree to which the following influences positively or negatively impact on student decisions to continue onto agriculture studies or into farm employment.

[Parental influence]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---------------|-------|------------|
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

Thinking about your experience teaching agriculture and observing student career choices, rate the degree to which the following influences positively or negatively impact on student decisions to continue onto agriculture studies or into farm employment.

[Community perception of agriculture careers]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strong Negative Influence (L1) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Negative Influence (L2) | 22 | 30.56% |
| Neutral (L3) | 17 | 23.61% |
| Positive Influence (L4) | 17 | 23.61% |
| Strong Positive Influence (L5) | 9 | 12.50% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

Thinking about the ideal balance between theory and practical components of agriculture education, to what extent do you agree or disagree that there should be more practical work compared to theory content for agriculture students at your school?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strongly agree (00701) | 19 | 26.39% |
| Agree (00702) | 25 | 34.72% |
| Neither agree nor disagree (00703) | 17 | 23.61% |
| Disagree (00704) | 9 | 12.50% |
| Strongly disagree (00705) | 0 | 0.00% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

Ideally, what do you think the best balance between theory and practical components of agriculture education should be for secondary students?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| 100% practical (01001) | 0 | 0.00% |
| 75% practical and 25% theory (01002) | 15 | 20.83% |
| 50% practical and 50% theory (01003) | 44 | 61.11% |
| 25% practical and 75% theory (01004) | 3 | 4.17% |
| 0% practical (01005) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Other <input type="text" value="Browse"/> | 8 | 11.11% |

Thinking about the resources needed to teach agriculture, in your view does ready access to school farm land and the livestock and crops it contains, positively or negatively impact on educational outcomes?

Please add a short comment explaining why you answered the way you did.

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Strong positive impact (01201) | 66 | 91.67% |
| Positive impact (01202) | 4 | 5.56% |
| It makes no difference either way (01203) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Negative impact (01204) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Strong negative impact (01205) | 0 | 0.00% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

How much land does your current school have for practical agriculture education? (Provide approximate area in hectares)

| Calculation | Result |
|--------------------|---------|
| Count | 70 |
| Sum | 2729.05 |
| Standard deviation | 125.94 |
| Average | 38.99 |
| Maximum | 999 |

Thinking about the land and resources your school offers to support practical agriculture education, do you think it is enough land to achieve the objectives you would like to achieve or not? Which statement best reflects your preference.

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| More land/resources are required at my school to achieve good agriculture outcomes (01401) | 35 | 48.61% |
| The land/resources are adequate for day to day needs provided students can get supplementary practical experience elsewhere (01402) | 17 | 23.61% |
| The amount of land/resources is about right at my school to achieve good agriculture outcomes (01403) | 17 | 23.61% |
| Good agriculture outcomes are still possible with less land than at my school (01404) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Unsure (01405) | 0 | 0.00% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 1]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 29 | 40.28% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm | 2 | 2.78% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 1]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| enterprise) (015B8) | | |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 18 | 25.00% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 16 | 22.22% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Non completed | 2 | 2.78% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 2]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 17 | 23.61% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm enterprise) (015B8) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 13 | 18.06% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 28 | 38.89% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Non completed | 2 | 2.78% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 3]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 10 | 13.89% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 16 | 22.22% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm enterprise) (015B8) | 6 | 8.33% |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 19 | 26.39% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 14 | 19.44% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 3]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Non completed | 2 | 2.78% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 4]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 8 | 11.11% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 15 | 20.83% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm enterprise) (015B8) | 15 | 20.83% |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 12 | 16.67% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 11 | 15.28% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 6 | 8.33% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Non completed | 2 | 2.78% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 5]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 12 | 16.67% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 12 | 16.67% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 4 | 5.56% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm enterprise) (015B8) | 20 | 27.78% |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 14 | 19.44% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Non completed | 2 | 2.78% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 6]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 6 | 8.33% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 13 | 18.06% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 14 | 19.44% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm enterprise) (015B8) | 11 | 15.28% |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 16 | 22.22% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Non completed | 2 | 2.78% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 7]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 15 | 20.83% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 15 | 20.83% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 8 | 11.11% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm enterprise) (015B8) | 10 | 13.89% |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 11 | 15.28% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 7 | 9.72% |
| Non completed | 2 | 2.78% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 8]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 15 | 20.83% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 9 | 12.50% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 4 | 5.56% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm | 1 | 1.39% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 8]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| enterprise) (015B8) | | |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 36 | 50.00% |
| Non completed | 2 | 2.78% |

Thinking about the best form of practical experience or exposure for agriculture students, in your view which of the following provide the most positive and lasting impact on the understanding of agriculture and agriculture skills. Rank them in order of priority. [Ranking 9]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Audio Visual Presentations (015B1) | 33 | 45.83% |
| Teacher demonstrations only (015B4) | 7 | 9.72% |
| Watching other students doing practical (i.e one person in a larger group) (015B5) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Each student doing practical as an individual (015B6) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Visiting a farm for day trips (Exposure to farm enterprise) (015B8) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Practical participation in farm enterprises (015B9) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Residential 'Practical' Camps to confirm formal lessons (015B3) | 6 | 8.33% |
| Each student doing practical in small groups (015B7) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Classroom based interactive IT based instruction (015B2) | 21 | 29.17% |
| Non completed | 2 | 2.78% |

Approximately how many students at your school study agriculture?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------|------------|
| 1-20 (01601) | 2 | 2.78% |
| 21-50 (01602) | 13 | 18.06% |
| 51-100 (01603) | 14 | 19.44% |
| 101-300 (01604) | 24 | 33.33% |
| 301-600 (01605) | 10 | 13.89% |
| More than 600 (01606) | 7 | 9.72% |

Approximately how many students at your school are studying agriculture or Primary Industries at HSC/Yr12 level? N.B There was considerable and statistically significant variation in responses to this question including from respondents at the same school

| Calculation | Result |
|-------------|--------|
| Count | 70 |

Approximately how many students at your school are studying agriculture or Primary Industries at HSC/Yr12 level? **N.B There was considerable and statistically significant variation in responses to this question including from respondents at the same school**

| Calculation | Result |
|--------------------|--------|
| Sum | 1802 |
| Standard deviation | 40.36 |
| Average | 25.74 |
| Maximum | 300 |

Approximately how many students at your school, who graduated last year, proceeded on to agriculture related studies or employment? **N.B There was considerable and statistically significant variation in responses to this question including from respondents at the same school**

| Calculation | Result |
|--------------------|--------|
| Count | 62 |
| Sum | 431 |
| Standard deviation | 9.45 |
| Average | 6.95 |
| Maximum | 50 |

To your knowledge how many students at your school who will graduate this year are considering agriculture related courses or employment when they leave? **N.B There was considerable and statistically significant variation in responses to this question including from respondents at the same school**

| Calculation | Result |
|--------------------|--------|
| Count | 70 |
| Sum | 495 |
| Standard deviation | 9.7 |
| Average | 7.07 |
| Maximum | 60 |

What is your relationship, if any, with Hurlstone Agricultural High School?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Teach at Hurlstone currently (02101) | 6 | 8.33% |
| Have taught at Hurlstone previously (02102) | 6 | 8.33% |
| Attended Hurlstone as a student (02103) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Have visited Hurlstone (02104) | 29 | 40.28% |
| Have accompanied students visiting Hurlstone (02105) | 10 | 13.89% |
| I have no relationship with Hurlstone/ don't know about Hurlstone (02106) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Have some understanding of Hurlstone from reading/colleagues (02107) | 36 | 50.00% |
| Other <input type="button" value="Browse"/> | 13 | 18.06% |

In November 2008, the NSW Government proposed to sell up to 140 hectares of Hurlstone's 160 Hectare property as part of the NSW minibudget. It subsequently announced an Inquiry into the sale. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposed sale of Hurlstone Agricultural High School farm land? Please add a brief comment to explain your choice

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Strongly opposed to the sale of land at Hurlstone | 59 | 81.94% |
| Inclined to oppose the sale of land at Hurlstone | 9 | 12.50% |
| Neither opposed nor supportive | 1 | 1.39% |
| Inclined to support the sale of land at Hurlstone | 0 | 0.00% |
| Strongly support the sale of land at Hurlstone | 0 | 0.00% |

From your knowledge of Hurlstone and its contribution to agriculture education, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:"As a selective agricultural high school, Hurlstone plays an important role in identifying and encouraging some of NSW brightest students into tertiary studies in agriculture and related disciplines rather than competing tertiary courses."

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strongly agree (02201) | 43 | 59.72% |
| Agree (02202) | 20 | 27.78% |
| Neutral (02203) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Disagree (02204) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Strongly disagree (02205) | 1 | 1.39% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

From your knowledge of Hurlstone and its contribution to agriculture education, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:"Hurlstone Agricultural High School plays an important role by exposing city based children to agriculture career pathways."

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strongly agree (02201) | 40 | 55.56% |
| Agree (02202) | 21 | 29.17% |
| Neutral (02203) | 7 | 9.72% |
| Disagree (02204) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Strongly disagree (02205) | 1 | 1.39% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

From your knowledge of Hurlstone and its contribution to agriculture education, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:"Hurlstone Agricultural High School should also be a resource for other agriculture students who have less access to land and resources, so they can participate in practical education in a farm enterprise setting."

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|
| Strongly agree (02201) | 47 | 65.28% |
| Agree (02202) | 17 | 23.61% |
| Neutral (02203) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Disagree (02204) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Strongly disagree (02205) | 0 | 0.00% |
| No answer | 2 | 2.78% |
| Non completed | 0 | 0.00% |

Thinking about the proposal to sell all or part of Hurlstone's farm, to what extent do you think the sale of farm land at Hurlstone Agricultural High School would impact on agriculture education in NSW?

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Highly likely to improve agriculture education (02501) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Likely to improve agriculture education (02502) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Not likely to improve or diminish agriculture education (02503) | 7 | 9.72% |
| Likely to diminish agriculture education (02504) | 18 | 25.00% |
| Highly likely to diminish agriculture education (02505) | 41 | 56.94% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 1]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Residential camps for non Hurlstone ag students who have less access to farm enterprises (02801) | 26 | 36.11% |
| Residential or other In Service Training for Agriculture Teachers (02802) | 13 | 18.06% |
| Urban showcase for agriculture (02803) | 4 | 5.56% |
| Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture (02804) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park (02805) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Access for the general community (02806) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Preservation of urban green space (02807) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture (02808) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence (02809) | 17 | 23.61% |
| Joint/shared facility use with Tertiary Institutions (02810) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Non completed | 5 | 6.94% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 2]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Residential camps for non Hurlstone ag students who have less access to farm enterprises (02801) | 13 | 18.06% |
| Residential or other In Service Training for Agriculture Teachers (02802) | 19 | 26.39% |
| Urban showcase for agriculture (02803) | 7 | 9.72% |
| Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture (02804) | 7 | 9.72% |
| Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park (02805) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Access for the general community (02806) | 0 | 0.00% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 2]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Preservation of urban green space (02807) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture (02808) | 8 | 11.11% |
| Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence (02809) | 7 | 9.72% |
| Joint/shared facility use with Tertiary Institutions (02810) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Non completed | 5 | 6.94% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 3]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Residential camps for non Hurlstone ag students who have less access to farm enterprises (02801) | 10 | 13.89% |
| Residential or other In Service Training for Agriculture Teachers (02802) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Urban showcase for agriculture (02803) | 14 | 19.44% |
| Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture (02804) | 7 | 9.72% |
| Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park (02805) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Access for the general community (02806) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Preservation of urban green space (02807) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture (02808) | 10 | 13.89% |
| Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence (02809) | 9 | 12.50% |
| Joint/shared facility use with Tertiary Institutions (02810) | 7 | 9.72% |
| Non completed | 5 | 6.94% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 4]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Residential camps for non Hurlstone ag students who have less access to farm enterprises (02801) | 4 | 5.56% |
| Residential or other In Service Training for Agriculture Teachers (02802) | 8 | 11.11% |
| Urban showcase for agriculture (02803) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture (02804) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park (02805) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Access for the general community (02806) | 1 | 1.39% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 4]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Preservation of urban green space (02807) | 8 | 11.11% |
| Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture (02808) | 17 | 23.61% |
| Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence (02809) | 9 | 12.50% |
| Joint/shared facility use with Tertiary Institutions (02810) | 7 | 9.72% |
| Non completed | 5 | 6.94% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 5]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Residential camps for non Hurlstone ag students who have less access to farm enterprises (02801) | 4 | 5.56% |
| Residential or other In Service Training for Agriculture Teachers (02802) | 7 | 9.72% |
| Urban showcase for agriculture (02803) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture (02804) | 8 | 11.11% |
| Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park (02805) | 10 | 13.89% |
| Access for the general community (02806) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Preservation of urban green space (02807) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture (02808) | 6 | 8.33% |
| Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence (02809) | 14 | 19.44% |
| Joint/shared facility use with Tertiary Institutions (02810) | 8 | 11.11% |
| Non completed | 5 | 6.94% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 6]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Residential camps for non Hurlstone ag students who have less access to farm enterprises (02801) | 6 | 8.33% |
| Residential or other In Service Training for Agriculture Teachers (02802) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Urban showcase for agriculture (02803) | 15 | 20.83% |
| Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture (02804) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park (02805) | 4 | 5.56% |
| Access for the general community (02806) | 3 | 4.17% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 6]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Preservation of urban green space (02807) | 7 | 9.72% |
| Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture (02808) | 11 | 15.28% |
| Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence (02809) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Joint/shared facility use with Tertiary Institutions (02810) | 10 | 13.89% |
| Non completed | 5 | 6.94% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 7]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Residential camps for non Hurlstone ag students who have less access to farm enterprises (02801) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Residential or other In Service Training for Agriculture Teachers (02802) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Urban showcase for agriculture (02803) | 9 | 12.50% |
| Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture (02804) | 12 | 16.67% |
| Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park (02805) | 17 | 23.61% |
| Access for the general community (02806) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Preservation of urban green space (02807) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture (02808) | 7 | 9.72% |
| Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence (02809) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Joint/shared facility use with Tertiary Institutions (02810) | 8 | 11.11% |
| Non completed | 5 | 6.94% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 8]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Residential camps for non Hurlstone ag students who have less access to farm enterprises (02801) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Residential or other In Service Training for Agriculture Teachers (02802) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Urban showcase for agriculture (02803) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture (02804) | 14 | 19.44% |
| Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park (02805) | 12 | 16.67% |
| Access for the general community (02806) | 8 | 11.11% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 8]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Preservation of urban green space (02807) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture (02808) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence (02809) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Joint/shared facility use with Tertiary Institutions (02810) | 12 | 16.67% |
| Non completed | 5 | 6.94% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 9]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Residential camps for non Hurlstone ag students who have less access to farm enterprises (02801) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Residential or other In Service Training for Agriculture Teachers (02802) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Urban showcase for agriculture (02803) | 4 | 5.56% |
| Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture (02804) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park (02805) | 9 | 12.50% |
| Access for the general community (02806) | 21 | 29.17% |
| Preservation of urban green space (02807) | 18 | 25.00% |
| Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture (02808) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence (02809) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Joint/shared facility use with Tertiary Institutions (02810) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Non completed | 5 | 6.94% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 10]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|--|-------|------------|
| Residential camps for non Hurlstone ag students who have less access to farm enterprises (02801) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Residential or other In Service Training for Agriculture Teachers (02802) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Urban showcase for agriculture (02803) | 2 | 2.78% |
| Life experience/excursions for other students not studying agriculture (02804) | 3 | 4.17% |
| Facility for interaction with agribusiness / technical park (02805) | 5 | 6.94% |
| Access for the general community (02806) | 31 | 43.06% |

In your view, what additional uses can Hurlstone's farm and other facilities be put to improve the delivery of agriculture education in NSW? Select those options, in order of priority, you think would improve the value Hurlstone provides.[Ranking 10]

| Answer | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Preservation of urban green space (02807) | 18 | 25.00% |
| Opportunity for demonstration of innovation or other related uses e.g. Permaculture (02808) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Sustainable Agriculture Centre of Excellence (02809) | 1 | 1.39% |
| Joint/shared facility use with Tertiary Institutions (02810) | 6 | 8.33% |
| Non completed | 3 | 4.17% |

A SELECTION OF COMMENTS

Proposed sale strikes at the very heart of the teaching of agriculture in secondary schools. “ **Agriculture Teacher**

“The land at Hurlstone needs to be developed to be an integral part of the Agricultural curriculum ...utilised not only by the Hurlstone students but also the wider agricultural students in the State.” **Agriculture Teacher**

“This is just the next step from the closure of facilities and programs such as Murrumbidgee College...” **Agriculture Teacher**

“The important role of a residential agricultural high school is to better meet the needs of rural and remote students with an interest in agriculture...” **Agriculture Teacher**

Is very disappointing that just when Australia should be increasing its focus on encouraging training and development of highly skilled agricultural scientists and related fields, it seems to be working towards hindering this much needed growth. In the face of climate change, increasing world demand and growing land degradation issues, it is vital to promote studies that will ensure a workforce with skills in innovative approaches, development of sustainable practices and breeding of more climate appropriate species **Agriculture Teacher**

Agricultural education is vital in Australia, and by removing one of the pillars of not only agricultural education, but also one of the most important points of making people aware of agriculture, this is one more piece of short term and destructive thinking. If this sale is conducted, Hurlstone will become another James Ruse, where a low quality teach to the test course is given with no competence in animal handling, management or other vital skills for anyone involved in the agricultural sector requires **Tertiary Ag Student from a country public school.**

Agriculture needs to be promoted more in schools as a potential career path. The loss of the facilities at Hurlstone High School will have a severe negative impact on the number of city based kids who are exposed to Agriculture, and lead to a decrease in students studying Ag. at Tertiary level **Tertiary Ag Student from the city.**

I wish I had the opportunity to learn agriculture at the secondary level, so any closure or decreasing size of Hurlstone would be a great loss for the opportunities for other young students **Tertiary Ag Student from the city**

The school I attended, ..., had only 92 ha of land to service their ag needs. However, the size of this school was only 260 students strong (when I attended) which meant that class sizes were small and student head to

hectare ratio was high. Even still, our school supplemented our learning by sending us on excursions and allowing us to participate on 'real' farms. The amount of land we had was not quite enough, even for a very small school. Hurlstone is a much larger school and, based on my argument above, would require much more land than my school did. To take this away from the educational services would be a huge injustice to the education of our future farmers and ag related researchers/workers as well as a dramatic blow to the agricultural industry itself **Post Graduate Tertiary Student with a country background.**

The farm should definitely not be sold. It provides Hurlstone with a unique educational opportunity for both city kids and those from a rural background, as well as having a high standard of education in subjects other than agriculture. Hurlstone provided me with the opportunity to enter a field of expertise I never thought I would be a part of, and I loved every single minute of my high school time at Hurlstone. The practical component equips students with the basic livestock handling and husbandry techniques needed in the field, an educational component of agriculture lacking at other agricultural high schools within the Sydney district.

Tertiary Ag Student from Hurlstone