



6th December 2018

Furner puts Ag on Backburner

ICPA (QLD) is extremely disappointed with the State Government announcement regarding the impending closure of Queensland Agricultural Training College (QATC) campuses in Longreach and Emerald. Coming on the back of the government's decision to cease funding the School to Industry Partnership Program this highlights a seemingly increasing disdain for agriculture and undervaluing of the pivotal role it plays in the Queensland economy.

"It is ironic that as the Queensland Government decreases its investment in programs which initiate interest in agriculture as a desirable career path, our neighboring state, New South Wales, is increasing investment in agriculture as a key pillar of their economy and to support regions reeling from ongoing drought conditions," stated Tammie Irons, ICPA (QLD) President.

Ensuring ready access to quality education and skills development provides important career paths for young people at a time when efforts are being made to encourage them to remain in regional areas, decreasing population drift and ensuring sustainability.

Recognised as a premier body representing the interests of rural and remote students, ICPA (QLD) regularly engages with State Government and participates in forums, inquiries and roundtables at the invitation of Government. Despite this recognition ICPA (QLD) was not consulted as part of the Coaldrake Review.

"The media release issued by Minister Furner is scant on detail when it comes to what this plan involves, and how they are going to improve educational opportunities available to people desiring a career in agriculture," she said. "Whilst important, ongoing investment in planning and strategies as outlined in the media release cannot deliver to students, industry and communities what face to face, practically applied training can and does."

Ms Irons concluded the College closures were "the end of an era" that many people would see as proof that the State Government is undervaluing the contribution made by rural Queenslanders and therefore the investment required to support and sustain that contribution.

ICPA (Qld) encourages the Queensland Government to ensure all relevant stakeholders are included in their plans to "modernise and reinvigorate vocational education, training and skilling in the State's Central West" as announced in the media release.

ENDS

More Information:

ICPA QLD President – Tammie Irons – 0427931629

ICPA QLD Portfolio Leader, Tertiary, Trade & Training – Kylie Camp - (07) 4748 5585

ICPA QLD Publicity Officer – Melissa Iland - 0428203887