



Speech by
Marc Rowell

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (11.23 p.m.): On 27 September the Minister for Employment and Training released a discussion paper on the review of Queensland's agricultural colleges which proposes three different governance options to be considered. There are a number of options as to what future direction our agricultural colleges should be heading in, reflected by the options that have been canvassed in the discussion paper. Our four agricultural colleges play a crucial role in providing training to students who are going to work to preserve and enhance our agricultural industries in rural and regional communities throughout Queensland.

Over the last 12 months the Australian College of Tropical Agriculture delivered a record 402,923 annual hours of training, exceeding its target of 13 per cent, with more than 2,200 individuals benefiting from the college's services. Some 1,758 students are enrolled in training programs offered by the Dalby Agricultural College's business centre throughout the year. During the year, 321 qualifications were awarded across a number of areas. Some 107 full-time students, 127 trainees and 49 school based trainees were enrolled over the last year at Emerald Agricultural College. Some 113 students graduated in December 2003 and 85 per cent of these graduates were employed full time within three months of graduating. The Longreach Pastoral College, the only ag college specialising in sheep, wool and semiarid farming during the last year, had 274 active students enrolled and has over the last three years seen its graduates employed across a number of areas including livestock, field cropping, jackaroos and farm managers.

The cut-off date for public submissions has now passed, and the minister and his department will consider the future direction of Queensland's agricultural colleges over the next three months. I urge him in making this decision to take into account the many students who continue to benefit from the specialised training, the staff and the communities they support. These considerations must outweigh any predetermined outcomes that anyone had in mind when the review was announced.