



Speech by


**Tim Mulherin**

**MEMBER FOR MACKAY**

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## **AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE CORPORATION**

 **Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.20 pm): The flagged closure yesterday of Australian Agricultural College Corporation campuses by the Minister for Agriculture, John McVeigh, is another kick in the guts by the Newman government for rural Queensland. I never thought I would see the day when the National Party would be closing our state agricultural colleges. People in the bush must be outraged by the LNP ripping the heart out of the bush. I wonder what the member for Gregory's view on this move is? There was no hint of this plan before the election and it shows how hollow the LNP's promise is to grow the agricultural sector and create careers in primary industries. We have already seen Minister McVeigh say that he is going to axe hundreds of his own staff within the agriculture department, and now he plans on closing the agricultural colleges and sacking their staff.

I know peak bodies including AgForce and the Queensland Farmers Federation would be very concerned about Mr McVeigh's plans. When I was minister I undertook a comprehensive reform process of the state's agricultural colleges, consulting widely with rural communities, industry and educational institutions. The new model modernised the agricultural college system to deliver relevant agricultural training for today's youth, something that industry was asking for. By expanding the delivery sites of AACC from five to 14, we responded to industry and training needs in rural Queensland to be able to provide the skills and education needed for future growth in primary industries in Queensland. The new model was progressing with the delivery of new sites at Cunnamulla, Bundaberg and Mackay. The Ernst & Young report acknowledges that the implementation of this new model with increased delivery sites was operating well.

The reform process I implemented was also resulting in increased training hours being delivered to students, which essentially is the purpose of an educational institution. Instead of letting the reform process continue to deliver improved results for students at AACC, the LNP's solution is—surprise, surprise—to slash and burn. The LNP wants everything to be profitable. However, the school system does not make money; it is an investment in the future, just like an investment in the agricultural colleges is an investment in the future of the agriculture sector—one of the LNP's four pillars of the economy that it so frequently espouses. The next thing we will see is the Newman government closing schools in the bush because they are not making money. I think it will be a very sad day for the future of agriculture in Queensland when we see the closure of agricultural colleges.