Agricultural College Bill 2005

Explanatory Notes

General Outline

Short title

Agricultural College Bill 2005.

Policy objectives

The policy objectives of the Agricultural College Bill 2005 are to:

- Establish a governance framework which will meet the expectations of key stakeholders in relation to the future delivery of agricultural training in Queensland.
- establish a system for the effective and efficient provision of high quality vocational education and training to meet the immediate and future needs of the agricultural industry and the community;
- provide mechanisms for employees, employers, associations of employees or employers and the community to advise government on agricultural training needs and priorities to meet those needs:
- support the continued development of high quality training by and within the agricultural industry;
- facilitate the provision of agricultural courses that are relevant to employment and encourages the generation of employment opportunities;
- promote a community commitment towards supporting young people in the compulsory participation phase; and
- implement initiatives that are consistent with the ministerial declaration 'Stepping forward: improving pathways for all young people'.

Reasons for the policy objectives

In July 2004, the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations sponsored a review of the Queensland Agricultural Colleges in response to a growing number of corporate governance, financial management and training delivery problems.

A public discussion paper was developed as a framework to engage key stakeholders in the development of recommendations regarding the future governance and operations of the agricultural colleges. Invitations to faceto-face consultations were extended to external stakeholders.

On 13 December 2004, Cabinet considered a submission detailing the proposed changes to the present statutory structure regulating the four established agricultural colleges and decided that the four colleges be amalgamated into one single college to be governed by a corporation sole constituted by the Chief Executive, Department of Employment and Training.

Consequential amendments are being made to the following Acts to reflect the objectives of this legislation:

- Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act 1986
- Education (Overseas Student) Act 1996
- Education (Work Experience) Act 1996
- Public Sector Ethics Act 1994
- Whistleblowers Protection Act 1994

How the policy objectives will be achieved

It is proposed that the corporation will govern the single college to be known as the Australian Agricultural College Corporation and will maximise its potential to lead Australia in the provision of agricultural and rural vocational education and training.

The Bill provides that the corporation may appoint a director of the agricultural college. It will also establish the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board which will have advisory functions including providing advice to the corporation about the:

- training of, and delivery of services to, students of the college;
- the needs of communities serviced by the college; and
- the needs of the agricultural and rural industries.

In addition, a student advisory council is maintained to ensure student support and enhanced youth representation is maintained in the agricultural college.

Estimated administrative cost to government for implementation

All costs associated with implementing the new legislation will be met within existing budget resources.

Consistency with fundamental legislative principles

The provisions of the Bill are consistent with the fundamental legislative principles provided for under the *Legislative Standards Act 1992*.

Consultation

Extensive consultation was undertaken during the review of the Queensland Agricultural Colleges. A public discussion paper entitled "Queensland Agricultural Colleges Review Report, December 2004" was developed as a framework to engage key stakeholders in the development of recommendations regarding the future governance and operations of the Agricultural Colleges. A total of 237 people were engaged in face-to-face consultations. The Department has also received 49 written submissions.

In the main, consultation revealed overwhelming support for the colleges. There was also, however, strong support for action to be taken to address issues impacting on the financial viability of the colleges including the need to amalgamate the colleges and review the current governance arrangements.

Cabinet considered the Queensland Agricultural Colleges Review and resolved to amalgamate Queensland's Agricultural Colleges into a single college governed by a corporation sole constituted by the Chief Executive of the Department of Employment and Training.

Notes On Provisions

Part 1 Preliminary

Short title

Clause 1 states the short title of the Bill is the *Agricultural College Act* 2005.

Commencement

Clause 2 states that the Bill will commence as an Act on a day to be fixed by proclamation.

Dictionary

Clause 3 states that the dictionary is located in the schedule and defines particular words used in the Bill.

Ministerial declaration 'Stepping forward: improving pathways for all young people'

Clause 4 provides the ministerial declaration which involves a commitment to developing practical ways to increase the social, educational and employment outcomes for all young people including those who are at risk, disconnected or in vulnerable circumstances.

Part 2 Australian Agricultural College Corporation

Division 1 Establishment and capacity of corporation

Establishment of Australian Agricultural College Corporation

Clause 5 establishes the corporation sole to be constituted by the chief executive and to be named the Australian Agricultural College Corporation.

The Australian College Corporation ("the corporation"):

- has perpetual succession and a seal; and
- may sue and be sued in its corporate name.

Corporation represents the State

Clause 6 prescribes that the corporation represents the State and has all the State's privileges and immunities.

Legal capacity of corporation

Clause 7 provides that the corporation has all the powers of an individual and may:

- enter into contracts;
- acquire, hold, dispose of, and deal with, property;
- appoint agents and attorneys;
- engage consultants;
- fix charges, and other terms, for services it supplies; and
- do anything necessary or convenient to be done in the performance of its functions under this or another Act.

In addition, the corporation has the powers conferred on it by this Bill or another Act and may exercise its powers inside and outside Queensland and Australia.

Corporation declared to be excluded matter

Clause 8 provides that the corporation is to be excluded from the operation of the *Corporations Act* 2001.

Corporation's seal

Clause 9 provides that the corporation's seal is to be kept in the custody of the chief executive and is only to be used by the chief executive, or another person authorised, in writing, by the corporation.

Division 2 Functions

Corporation's functions generally

Clause 10 sets the functions of the corporation as follows:

- to promote the creation of employment opportunities in the State by facilitating the provision of agricultural and rural vocational education and training that is relevant to employment and encourages the generation of employment opportunities;
- to establish a system for the effective and efficient provision of high quality vocational education and training to meet the immediate and future needs of the agricultural and rural industries and the community;
- to provide mechanisms for employees, employers, associations of employees or employers and the community to advise government on agricultural training needs and priorities to meet those needs;
- to work in cooperation with other governmental bodies, industry, commerce and community groups and other persons on matters relating to the agricultural and rural industries;
- to exploit commercially any facility or resource of the corporation, including any study, research or knowledge, developed by or belonging to the corporation;
- to provide facilities or services for study, research and training relevant to the agricultural, rural and related industries, including by ensuring the availability of appropriate resources and support for the agricultural college;

- to comply with national and State quality standards and audit requirements for registered training organisations;
- to support the continued development of high quality training by and within the agricultural industry;
- to promote a community commitment towards supporting young people in the compulsory participation phase;
- to implement initiatives that are consistent with the ministerial declaration 'Stepping forward: improving pathways for all young people' as mentioned in clause 4; and
- to perform other functions given to the corporation under this Bill or another Act.

Additional functions in relation to agricultural college

Clause 11 sets out the corporation's functions specifically in relation to the agricultural college:

- to control, operate and maintain the agricultural college;
- to establish and review the agricultural college's strategic direction;
- to develop and implement strategic plans and business plans for the agricultural college;
- to decide policy for achieving the agricultural college's business purpose, and for other agricultural college purposes;
- to develop and implement appropriate risk management strategies for the agricultural college;
- to improve the participation of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders (*indigenous people*) in training by attracting indigenous people to, and supporting indigenous people in, training resulting in a qualification or statement of attainment in numbers that reflect the composition of the community;
- to improve the participation of young people in training by attracting young people to, and supporting young people in, training resulting in a qualification or statement of attainment;
- to ensure pastoral care is available for students of the agricultural college;

- to develop and implement appropriate strategies to help students made the transition from an educational environment to the workplace;
- to maintain the industry links necessary for achieving support from industry for the agricultural college's activities;
- to encourage opportunities for growth in the agricultural college's training market, including opportunities outside Australia; and
- to monitor the performance of the director and the agricultural college.

Division 3 Financial matters

Corporation is statutory body

Clause 12 provides that the corporation is a statutory body and subject to:

- Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977; and
- Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982.

Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982, part 2B, sets out the way in which the corporation's powers under this Act are affected by the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982, including, for example, section 7(4) and (5) of this Act.

Division 4 Directions and delegations

Minister's power to give directions

Clause 13 provides that the corporation is subject to the Minister and must comply with a signed direction from the Minister about performance of a function. If the Minister gives the corporation a direction, the corporation must include particulars of the direction and particulars of the corporation's response to the direction in its annual report under the *Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977*.

Delegation by corporation

Clause 14 provides that the corporation may delegate its powers to an appropriately qualified officer or employee of the corporation, or an appropriately qualified officer or employee of the department.

Division 5 Staff of corporation

Officers

Clause 15 provides that the corporation may employ officers it considers necessary for staffing the corporation, and it may decide the officers' terms of employment. However, conditions of employment are subject to any relevant industrial instrument. Officers of the corporation are appointed under this Bill and not the *Public Service Act 1996*.

Secondment as officer of corporation

Clause 16 provides that a public service employee may be seconded to the corporation and while seconded the person is taken to be an officer of the corporation under this Bill, and the *Public Service Act 1996* does not apply to the person.

Temporary and casual employees

Clause 17 prescribes that the corporation may employ temporary and casual employees and may decide the employees' terms of employment. However, the terms decided by corporation must be done subject to any relevant industrial instrument. The clause also provides that the employees of the corporation are employed under this Bill and not the *Public Service Act 1996*.

Preservation of rights if public service employee appointed

Clause 18 provides that a public service employee who is appointed as an officer of the corporation is entitled to retain all existing and accruing rights as if service in that office were a continuation of service as a public service employee.

Preservation of rights if person becomes public service employee

Clause 19 provides that on the appointment of a person holding office under this Bill as a public service employee, the person's service must be regarded as service as a public service employee.

Preservation of rights if public service employee seconded

Clause 20 provides that a public service employee seconded to the office of the corporation is entitled to the person's existing and accruing rights as if employment as an officer of the corporation were a continuation of employment as a public service employee. The person may apply for positions, and be employed, in the public service as if the person were a public service employee. If the secondment ended for a reason other than misconduct, the person is entitled to be employed as a public service employee.

Part 3 Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board

Division 1 Establishment and functions

Establishment of board

Clause 21 provides for the establishment of the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board.

Board's functions

Clause 22 sets out the functions of the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board. The board will have advisory functions which will include providing advice to the corporation about the following:

- training of, and delivery of services to, students of the college;
- the needs of communities serviced by the college; and
- the needs of the agricultural and rural industries.

Division 2 Board membership

Board membership

Clause 23 sets out that the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board is to consist of members appointed by the Minister and that the appointments are by written notice.

Board chairperson and deputy chairperson

Clause 24 provides that the Minister must appoint one of the members of the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board as a chairperson and may appoint another member as a deputy chairperson.

The chairperson and deputy chairperson holds office for the time decided by the Minister. However, a vacancy in the office of the chairperson or deputy chairperson may occur if they resign from the office or are removed by the Minister. [This links with *Clause 27*.] Where a chairperson or deputy chairperson resigns or is removed from office, they may continue to be a member of the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board.

Term of appointment to board

Clause 25 provides for the appointment of members to the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board for a term stated in the members' notice of appointment.

The clause also provides that a member may resign from the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board by giving a signed notice to the Minister.

Conditions of appointment to board

Clause 26 provides that a member of the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board is not entitled to any remuneration, other than the reimbursement of reasonable expenses and travel allowance, unless remuneration is approved by the Minister. In addition to the conditions stated in the Bill, the Minister may decide the conditions under which a person holds office as a member of the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board.

Vacating office

Clause 27 provides that a member's position on the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board becomes vacant if the member:

- resigns in writing to the Minister; or
- is absent from 3 consecutive meetings without the board's permission, or without a reasonable excuse; or
- is removed from office by the Minister.

Division 3 Board meetings

Conduct of board's business

Clause 28 provides that the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board may conduct its business in the way it considers appropriate, subject to the Bill.

Times and places of board meetings

Clause 29 provides that the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board may hold meetings at the times and places it decides but must meet at least twice a year. The chairperson of the board or the Minister may call a meeting of the board at any time.

Presiding at board meetings

Clause 30 provides for the chairing of meetings of the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board. If the chairperson is not present at a meeting, the deputy is to preside if one has been appointed. If both the chairperson and deputy are not present, the members present at the meeting are to choose a person to preside.

Voting at board meetings

Clause 31 provides that questions considered at a meeting of the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board are to be decided by a majority vote of the members present (including the chairperson or person presiding over the meeting). If a member abstains from voting, the member is taken to have voted in the negative. In a situation where there is an equal number of votes, the person presiding at the meeting has the casting vote.

Quorum for board meeting

Clause 32 provides that the quorum at a meeting of the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board will be the number equal to one half of the members appointed to the Board, or the next highest even number. For example, if 12 members are appointed to the board the quorum will consist of 6 members; if 13 members are appointed to the board, a quorum will consist of 7 members.

Meetings held by contemporaneous communication

Clause 33 provides that the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board may hold meetings using communication technology which allows members to hear and take part in the meeting.

This clause also provides that a resolution is valid, even if it is not passed at a board meeting, if—

- notice of the resolution is given to the board members under procedures approved by the board; and
- the number of members required for a quorum agree in writing to the resolution.

Board minutes

Clause 34 requires the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board to keep a record of its minutes and its decisions.

Division 4 Other provisions

Establishing committees

Clause 35 provides that, with the corporation's written approval, the Australian Agricultural College Corporation Advisory Board may establish committees to assist it to perform its functions. When seeking the corporation's approval, the board must state the terms of reference for, or functions of, the committee. However, the board does not have to seek the corporation's approval to form a committee for its own members.

The board may make appointments to a committee only if the person has the skills or experience appropriate to the committee's terms of reference or functions. A committee member is not entitled to any remuneration, other than the reimbursement of reasonable expenses and travel allowance, unless remuneration is approved in writing by the corporation.

Part 4 Agricultural college, director and student advisory council

Division 1 Agricultural college

Agricultural college

Clause 36 provides for the existence of the agricultural college and acknowledges that the college has no legal existence apart from the corporation. In addition the corporation may give the college a name as well as establish campuses of the agricultural college.

Division 2 Director and other staff of agricultural college

Director and other staff

Clause 37 provides that the corporation may appoint a director of the agricultural college. The director, subject to the corporation, is responsible for the day to day management of the agricultural college.

The clause also provides that the corporation may employ other officers and employees it considers necessary for the agricultural college, and the corporation may decide the terms of employment for the director and other officers and employees, subject to any relevant industrial instrument. The director and the staff of the agricultural college are appointed under this Bill and not under the *Public Service Act1996*.

Acting director

Clause 38 prescribes that the corporation may appoint a person to act as director during any vacancy, in the office, or during any period when the director is absent from the State or, for another reason, cannot perform the functions of the office.

Division 3 Student Advisory Council

Student advisory council

Clause 39 establishes the student advisory council for the agricultural college. The student advisory council is established to support and enhance youth representation in the agricultural college and will consist of 1 student from each campus of the agricultural college and 2 members of staff of the agricultural college.

Student representatives on the student advisory council are to be elected by the students of each campus. Staff representatives on the student advisory council are to be elected by staff of the agricultural college. Elections of representatives are to be held as and when required by the corporation.

Functions

Clause 40 provides that the functions of the student advisory council are to advise the corporation or the director on:

- matters referred to it by the corporation or the director; and
- matters about the college or students that it considers should be referred to the corporation or director.

The student advisory council may have other functions conferred on it by the Bill. The student advisory council is not the employee or agent of the corporation.

Term of membership

Clause 41 prescribes that members of the student advisory council will hold office until the end of the calendar year unless they resign by written notice to the director. However, a student advisory council member who is a student or a staff member stops being a member of the advisory council on stopping being a student or a staff member.

Conduct of meetings

Clause 42 prescribes that the chairperson of the student advisory council must be a student member and chosen by the student advisory council. The advisory council may regulate its proceedings as it considers appropriate.

Subdivision 2 Campus student advisory councils

Director may establish campus student advisory councils

Clause 43 provides that the director may establish a student advisory council for each campus of the agricultural college.

Functions

Clause 44 provides the functions of the student advisory council for a campus of the agricultural college are to advise the director on:

- matters the director refers to the advisory council; and
- matters about the campus or students the compass student advisory council considers should be referred to the director.

The student advisory council is not the employee or agent of the corporation.

Part 5 General

Driver training

Clause 45 provides that despite the *Transport Operations* (*Road Use Management*) *Act 1995*, a student who is required to drive a specifically constructed vehicle in agricultural college grounds as part of the student's training at the agricultural college and is at least 16 years and 6 months of age is taken to hold a learner licence to drive the specifically constructed vehicle.

However, this does not apply to a student whose driver's licence has been suspended or cancelled, or by an order of an Australian Court, has been disqualified from holding or obtaining a driver licence. 'Driver licence' and 'learner licence' has the meaning given by the *Transport Operations* (Road Use Management) Act 1995, schedule 4, and 'specifically constructed vehicle' has the meaning given by the *Transport Operations* (Road Use Management) Act 1995, schedule 6.

Delegation by Minister

Clause 46 provides that the Minister may delegate the Minister's powers under the Bill to the corporation.

Regulation-making power

Clause 47 empowers the Governor in Council to make regulations for the purposes of the Bill. In particular, it is provided that regulations may be made for fees including the refunding of fees, and for the creation of offences and the imposition of penalties. The maximum penalty that can be prescribed is 20 penalty units.

Part 6 Repeal and transitional provisions

Division 1 Repeal

Repeal of Agricultural Colleges Act 1994

Clause 48 provides that the *Agricultural Colleges Act 1994* No. 58 is repealed.

Division 2 Transitional provisions for Agricultural Colleges Act 2005

Definitions for div 2

Clause 49 provides the definitions for division 2.

References to repealed Act or college board

Clause 50 provides that references to the repealed Act may, if the context permits, be taken as a reference to the new Act. Additionally, a reference in an Act or document to a former agricultural college or a college board may, if the context permits, be taken to be a reference to the corporation.

Dissolution of college boards

Clause 51 provides that on commencement of the new Act each of the college boards is dissolved, and the members of each of the board go out of office.

Additionally, no compensation is payable to a member of a college board because they go out of office.

Assets and liabilities

Clause 52 provides that on commencement of the new Act:

- the assets and liabilities of the college boards will become the assets and liabilities of the corporation;
- any contracts entered into by or on behalf of a college boards and all guarantees, undertakings and securities given by or on behalf of a college board, in force immediately before the commencement of the new Act are taken to have been entered into or given by or to the corporation and may be enforced against or by the corporation;
- any property that, immediately before the commencement, was held on trust, or subject to a condition, by a college board continues to be held on the same trust, or subject to the same condition, by the corporation; and
- any lease granted by, or to, a college board, in force immediately before the commencement of the new Act, is taken to have been granted by, or to, the corporation.

Additionally the clause provides that the registrar of titles or other person responsible for keeping a register for dealings in property must, if asked by the corporation, record the vesting of the property under this section in the corporation.

Proceedings

Clause 53 provides that a proceeding that could have been started or continued by or against a college board before the commencement of the new Act may be started or continued by or against the corporation.

Existing decisions of college boards

Clause 54 provides that if a decision of a college board had not had full effect at the commencement of the new Act, the decision continues in force, subject to the new Act, and is taken to be a decision of the corporation.

However, if the decision is one in relation to which a person had a right to appeal against the decision that had not ended immediately before the commencement of the new Act, the person may appeal against the decision as if it were a decision of the corporation.

Dealing with disciplinary matters

Clause 55 provides that a matter under a disciplinary rule which started to be, or could have been, dealt with by a former agricultural college before the commencement of the new Act may be continued, or started, to be dealt with by the director.

Administrator

Clause 56 provides that an administrator for a former agricultural college immediately before the commencement of the new Act will stop holding office at the commencement of the new Act and any decisions made by the administrator while in office that has not had full effect continues in force, subject to the new Act, and is taken to be a decision of the corporation. There is to be no compensation payable to an administrator because the administrator stops holding office.

Continuation of appointment of staff

Clause 57 provides that a person who held the position of director of a former agricultural college, or a member of a former agricultural college, is taken to be an officer of the corporation at the commencement of the new Act.

The clause also provides that until otherwise decided, the person is taken to be employed by the corporation on the same conditions on which the person was employed by the former agricultural college. The person, subject to any relevant industrial instrument, will:

 keep all rights accrued or accruing to the person as an employee of the former agricultural college;

- be entitled to receive long service, recreation and sick leave and any similar entitlements accrued or accruing to the person as an employee of the former agricultural college; and
- keep all entitlements accrued or accruing to the person as a member of the superannuation scheme; and

Amalgamation of former agricultural colleges

Clause 58 provides that on the commencement of the new Act the former agricultural colleges are amalgamated and taken to be the agricultural college under clause 36(1) and each former agricultural college is taken to be a campus of the agricultural college as if it had been established by the corporation as a campus under clause 36(2).

Registered providers under the Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996

Clause 59 provides that immediately before the commencement of the new Act, the director of the agricultural college will be taken to be the registered provider under the *Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996*. The director must return any registration certificate given to the former agriculture college, and the chief executive of the department in which the *Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996* is administered must return to the director the certificate suitably amended or give the director a suitable new registration certificate. The certificate must include a condition stating the campuses of the agricultural college where registered courses under the *Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996* may be delivered.

Part 7 Amendment of Acts

Acts amended in sch 1

Clause 60 refers to schedule 1 which amends the Acts mentioned in it.

Schedule 1 Consequential amendments

Clause 60:

Criminal Law (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Act 1986

Clause 1 ensures consistency with the *Agricultural College Act 2005* by omitting a reference to 'an agricultural college under the *Agricultural Colleges Act 1994*' and inserting 'the agricultural college under the *Agricultural College Act 2005*'.

Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996

Clause 1 ensures consistency with the *Agricultural College Act 2005* by omitting section 5(1)(a)(iii) and inserting with 'the director of the agricultural college.

Clause 2 ensures consistency with the *Agricultural College Act 2005* by omitting section 19(2) and inserting 'the director of the agricultural college.

Clause 3 ensures consistency with the *Agricultural College Act 2005* by omitting section 19(2) and inserting 'or college'.

Clause 4 ensures consistency with the *Agricultural College Act 2005* by omitting the Schedule definitions 'agricultural college' and 'chairperson of the board of an agricultural college' and inserting:

'agricultural college 'means the agricultural college under the Agricultural College Act 2005.

'director, of the agricultural college', means the person appointed under the Agricultural College Act 2005, section 37, as the director of the agricultural college.'.

Education (Work Experience) Act 1996

Clause 1 ensures consistency with the *Agricultural College Act 2005* by omitting section 5(1)(f) 'an agricultural college under the *Agricultural Colleges Act 1994*' and inserting 'the agricultural college under the *Agricultural College Act 2005*'.

Public Sector Ethics Act 1994

Clause 1 ensures consistency with the *Agricultural College Act 2005* by omitting Schedule, definition 'agricultural college' and inserting 'agricultural college' means the agricultural college under the *Agricultural College Act 2005*.

Whistleblowers Protection Act 1994

Clause 1 ensures consistency with the *Agricultural College Act 2005* by omitting Schedule 6, definition 'agricultural college' and inserting 'agricultural college' means the agricultural college under the *Agricultural College Act 2005*.

Schedule 2 Dictionary

Schedule introduces the definitions referred to in clause 3.

Attachment

Ministerial Declaration 'stepping Forward: Improving Pathways For All Young People'

Attachment inserts the Ministerial Declaration 'Stepping Forward: improving the pathways for all young people' referred to in clause 4A as an attachment to the new Act. The declaration sets out the commitment by Ministers for Education, Employment, Training, Youth Affairs and Community Services to developing practical ways to increase the social, educational and employment outcomes of Australia's young people, including those who are at risk, disconnected or in vulnerable circumstances.