



NEW SOUTH WALES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



**YANCO
AGRICULTURAL
COLLEGE**

YANCO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

Education was an integral part of the early plans for the Yanco Experiment Farm.

Chomley, the original manager, had seen the value of the provision of education for students and demonstration for settlers. However, apart from limited training of small numbers of trainees and, between 1948 and 1951, ex-service personnel under the Commonwealth Rural Training Scheme, the educational potential of the Experiment Farm was not fully realised.

In 1947 the farm reverted to the Department of Agriculture, for use as a research station where important problems in seed and plant production, irrigation and soil control could be solved.

"When the Yanco Experiment Farm was handed back to my department last year, I developed the idea of using the splendid facilities there for instituting a two or three year course in irrigation farming".

MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE,
HON. E. H. GRAHAM, 1947

However, it was not until the completion of the Heath Enquiry in 1961, that the Yanco Agricultural College was established. In 1963 a one year Farm Certificate Course for residential students commenced,

specifically designed to provide students with practical skills in agriculture. The Principal was Mr F. D. McKenzie, the manager of the Research Station, and the college had an intake of 38 students.

At first there was no distinct identity for the College. In 1965, the education section was officially named Yanco Agricultural College and the site was renamed Yanco Agricultural College and Research Station, with the two operated as separate entities.

The provision of education, as distinct from the research and extension services at Yanco saw the true educational potential of the institution being met. There was a high demand for places at the College with over 100 students enrolled each year from 1960s to 1980s. Students lived and worked at the College, with study, chores, sport, social activities and the wonderful atmosphere of the dining room forming a strong basis for the establishment of an ex-students network. Graduates were sought after and established careers in the various facets of agriculture.

Over forty years, one of the outstanding features of the College was its ability to deal flexibly with the changing farming and social needs, government policy changes and their imposition, reorganisation within the Department of Agriculture and the

perceived use of the College for employment and training programs.

It implemented significant changes over the years with the introduction of female students, provision of Certificate IV courses, introduction of Rural Traineeships, provision of an alternative educational opportunity to the HSC, and equipping students with the theoretical knowledge, practical application and skills to carry on and advance rural industries.

The College was renamed Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture in 1983 to reflect these changes and won many awards for its training including the NSW Training Provider of the Year in 1998 for the Aboriginal Rural Training Program.

The devastating drought since the turn of the 21st century made the MCA even more important by providing opportunities for rural families stretched for funds to obtain the relevant skills and knowledge to equip them to continue to make the agricultural industry viable and to keep pace with developing technologies.

The saddest situation was that the decline in interest in rural NSW and high operation costs led to the ultimate closure of residential courses at the College in 2003.



CLOSURE OF MURRUMBIDGEE COLLEGE

"Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture and the Yanco Agricultural Institute represented the type of model required for agriculture generally, multi-purpose, well-utilised and with cross-cultural benefits from research, practical experience, training and even cross-fertilisation of ideas, to the general benefit of agriculture."

TONY WINDSOR MHR, INDEPENDENT FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND, ADDRESSING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY DEALING WITH RURAL SKILLS TRAINING AND RESEARCH ON MARCH 10, 2006.

The Minister for Primary Industries, the Honourable Ian McDonald announced on September 3, 2003 that full-time courses at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture would be transferred to CB Alexander College, Tocol. This meant that full time residential courses offered at MCA would cease and that the residential facilities would also be removed.

It was argued that progressive decline in the actual number of students at the MCA no longer warranted the amount of money supporting the student base. The Minister stated "full-time enrolments at the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture have been steadily declining for 10 years — well

before the drought began — while demand for short courses for farmers has increased. As a result, it is simply not responsible to continue the status quo."

"In my view, full-time residential education should be continued at Tocol, with continuing education, which is an increasingly important part of agricultural education, particularly for farmers in the field ... I believe that we can concentrate effectively on full-time and part-time residential courses at Tocol and do continuing education at Yanco. That is our position and that position will not change."

MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES, THE HON. IAN MACDONALD

It was widely felt that the decision overlooked the differences in geographic and farming conditions faced in the south of the state, including specialisation in irrigation and rangeland environments.

A concerted local campaign including the ICPA and other bodies representing interests in Murrumbidgee College and a Federal Government Inquiry chaired by the Hon. Ian Cohen failed to have the decision reversed.





MURRUMBIDGEE RURAL STUDIES CENTRE

"In order to introduce administrative efficiencies and to market agricultural education across the state, the two existing NSW DPI agricultural colleges...are being combined. A major focus for 2006 will be the broadening the role of Murrumbidgee campus for the community."

CAMERON ARCHER, PRINCIPAL,
Tocal College,
THE IRRIGATOR, DECEMBER 16, 2005

In 2004, as part of a restructure of NSW DPIs education services, the full-time residential courses at Murrumbidgee College were terminated and education consolidated under the name of Tocal College.

The College operates two campuses, CB Alexander Campus at Tocal and the Murrumbidgee Rural Studies Centre at Yanco.

Full-time and part-time agricultural courses are conducted at Tocal, providing the development of industry-relevant skills in general agriculture, beef cattle, dairying, rural business management, sheep production, cropping and conservation and land management. The campus includes large commercial farms that offer students a practical edge to career entry.

A wide range of short training courses for primary producers, owners of small

farms, new entrants to agriculture and horticulture, and to those thinking of investing in a rural enterprise is provided at Murrumbidgee Rural Studies Centre.

Murrumbidgee Rural Studies Centre presents a wide range of short courses and traineeships under NSW DPIs PROfarm.

Courses offered at MRSC include Agricultural Resource Management, Pastures and Rangelands, Livestock, Dairy, Cropping, Horticulture, Farm Skills, SMARTtrain® Chemical Accreditation program, communication and personal development, and Rural business management. An important area of development is the Aboriginal Rural Training Program (ARTP).

MRSC Skills Assessment, a process which counts experience, skills and knowledge already gained towards obtaining a nationally recognised qualification, is available, together with customised training for workplaces.

The Aboriginal Rural Training Program (ARTP) governance program aimed at indigenous staff and directors of formal organisations was established in 2006. Often Aboriginal communities face special difficulties in managing incorporated organisations because of the familial nature of the community and the ARTP is based on

finding ways of overcoming difficulties in delivering good governance and management services.

Because the Murrumbidgee College facilities were closed with the disbanding of the full-time courses, they had to be recommissioned. Since 2006, MRSC has been reinstated as a valuable resource and a valuable element in the local economy, providing the only large-scale accommodation and conferencing facility in the region. It provides for visiting school groups, conferences, and educational courses and there is the potential for ever-expanding use for one-off events as well as residential short courses.

