



Save Hurlstone

The Facts About Hurlstone Agricultural High School and the proposed State Government Sell-off

Volume 1, Issue 1

Special points of interest:

- Study shows HAHS Farm fully utilized. Not surplus
- Environmental Impact Study says HAHS of “High Local Significance”
- Spin Award: Former Education and Land and Water Conservation Minister says we’re not selling Hurlstone, just “making some changes” (They announced 90% of the land is for sale)
- Government says money is for education. D-G admits only “part” of the money will go to schooling
- Agricultural and Local Community Leaders say HAHS practical ag education and farm needed as is.

Hurlstone Farm Needed and in Use

Hurlstone Agricultural High School is a day and boarding, state selective agricultural high school that has been providing best practice agricultural education for over 100 years.

While the State Government has proposed to sell up to 140 ha of the farm, suggesting it is surplus land, a recent study has shown the farm is fully utilized. The proposed 20 ha will not accommodate the current fixed infrastructure never mind the work-



Land not in use says DET? The Ayreshire Dairy herd is living proof of the working farm

ing Ayreshire Dairy Farm, the piggery, the small beef cattle herd, the 80 head of sheep, the poultry farm or the horticultural and cropping areas.

Other farm schools have up to 900 ha, but none offer a combination of day, boarding, selective agriculture education for both country and city kids.

DET has clearly misbriefed the Government. They said the land was unused, it's not. They forgot about the Memorial Forest and the Government had to backflip to avoid bulldozing Australia's first living war memorial

At a time quality future education in sustainable agriculture is needed more than ever in the face of the Global Food Crisis and dwindling arable land and

water resources —the state government is proposing to sell the farm from a farm school to cover its financial mismanagement.



Valuable green space and fresh air. HAHS helps as the natural lungs of the local area

Locally, the farm acts as much needed greenspace and the 'lungs' of the growing Macarthur Valley. The Campbelltown City Council carried a motion against the sale saying the current use is the best use for the land.

HAHS is unique, it's land is in use and needed now more than ever.

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Students Send Letter to Minister and Parliament

Dear Minister,

We refer to your commitment to flogging off Hurlstone Agricultural High School's working educational farm and your interesting use of the expression 'agriculture education in a modern setting' in recent correspondence.

It begs the question whether you believe that land and farms are

superfluous to modern agriculture. A modern agriculture education doesn't mean no cows, no sheep, no crops, as convenient as that might seem to the Education Department.



“Help save Hurlstone’s Farm” Letter signed by 600 students

You don't make agriculture or agriculture education a modern setting by taking away the land, the livestock or the crops. Take those away and it's neither modern nor agriculture.

Does your department understand that meat doesn't come from Woolworths, wool doesn't come from Linacraft and

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Student Letter cont.

milk doesn't come from cartons? Do they understand that more meat, better wool, sustainable cropping, better dairy practice and land management will be harder in the future – not easier? Students from Hurlstone do.

Good farming practice and agricultural science is a practical pursuit and even in modern times you can't take hands-on land management, animal husbandry and horticultural science out of agriculture or best-practice agriculture education.

A modern setting means better investment in the land, not flogging the land to developers. We are concerned that you or your department believe that land is optional to practical agriculture education, perhaps in the mistaken belief that modern agriculture is a theoretical pursuit.

Hurlstone is not merely a selective school, it is a 100-year-old day and boarding selective, agricultural school. It is a success story, not a failure.

If you are serious about modern education, we urge you to look

beyond books alone. Sustainable agriculture education needs resources like Hurlstone and its farm now, more than ever, as Australia confronts the hard truths of global food shortages, scarce land and water resources and climate change.

We urge you to reconsider this short-sighted decision to flog off the farm as if land is superfluous to modern agricultural education.

The Students of Hurlstone Agricultural High School



Hurlstone is the only school to show dairy at the Royal Easter Show

HAHS Land Facts. What DET doesn't want Ministers to know

The Government claims the land is 'surplus', the facts prove otherwise:

- Best practice stocking suggests 160ha can sustain 127 cattle or 1200 sheep. HAHS has 118 cattle, 76 sheep, 29 goats, 58 pigs, 3 alpacas, 248 poultry.
- HAHS is slightly overstocked but sustained with supplementary feeding to meet education needs
- However, the school farm is not 160ha with 140ha surplus. 32 Ha is actually used by facilities including school, DET regional offices, Dept of Planning, 3 other schools/institutions and the Memorial Forest. Roads and laneways use another 13 ha
- The 115 ha of farm is fully utilized at slightly above recommended stocking levels
- 20 ha would allow for no farm at all and require 25 ha of other facilities, access ways and Memorial Forest to be sold



- Land and animals are linked to specific husbandry and agriculture education outcomes
- All schools operate at a loss. However, the herd produces 7000 litres per cow per year and porkers are sold, helping offsetting educational costs
- Hurlstone provides work experience for its students, other school students and participants in a Traumatic Brain Injury Rehabilitation program. The farm provides employment for five farm hands
- HAHS Farm is about the same area or smaller than comparable agricultural schools
- The land was reviewed and adjusted in 1982 and 1992. Nothing has changed to suggest the land is surplus.
- HAHS is the only State, co-educational day, boarding selective agricultural high

“The current site for the school was established in 1926 and has been responsible for fostering and developing a unique and scientific approach to managing Australia's rural enterprises.. Hurlstone Agricultural High School has been assessed as being of high local significance.”

State Government Environment Impact Study

Feds Say More Agriculture Science and Education Investment Needed

Federal Agriculture Minister Tony Burke recently told the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation that more investment in agricultural Science was needed to combat the Global Food Crisis, diminishing land and water resources and climate change.

Better training was required more than ever for the future of sustainable agriculture.

While Tony Burke, the Federal Labor Minister, was telling the rest of the world to improve investment in agricultural development and science, the NSW

Labor Government is proposing to divest Australia's first and arguably best know agricultural school of its practical farm facilities.

The contradiction between what we say and what the NSW Government is doing has been raised in the Senate as well as the NSW Parliament.

The NSW Government has no answer to this contradiction.

Government spokesmen say "The standard footprint for a high school is six hectares.

When the sale is complete, Hurlstone Agricultural High School will still have enough land to operate and to provide agricultural education in a modern setting"

However, neither 6 nor 20 Ha options support farm or current building infrastructure.

While the Federal Government rightly argues for better investment, the state government intends selling not only the farm but other assets.



Dr Russell Bush, Hurlstonian and now educator at Sydney University explains why Hurlstone, with its practical farm focus is so important for the future of sustainable agriculture and developing the leaders for the sector in the future

The Save Hurlstone rally and meeting

Community rallies to save HAHS farm and local green space

Students, Alumni, Families and local community representatives across the political divide have united to oppose the proposed farm flog-off.

More than twice the expected number of people made their way to HAHS for the first "Save Hurlstone" organizing meeting.

200 people expressed their anger and listened to expert agricul-

tural science advice, as well as local leaders and state politicians explain why the proposal is not in the State's nor community interest.

The Macarthur Advertiser is supportive and Campbelltown City Council oppose the sale, arguing that the farm provides much needed local green space



Packed House. 200 at the Save Hurlstone Meeting

and an educational contribution to the Macarthur region.

Agriculture sector peak bodies are also uniting against the farm sale. Because it is detrimental to future sustainable agriculture training.

Did you know that the education zone that HAHS is part of is named after Hurlstonian John Edmondson VC, killed at Tobruk. Hurlstone's Memorial Forest was Australia's first 'living' war memorial

What Others Say

"the sale of the school's farmland, doesn't take into consideration the importance of the school in providing an agricultural education to city and country students...the standard of practical agricultural teaching at the School will undoubtedly diminish (and) impacts on future skill development in agriculture"

NSW Farmers Association

"the Department of Education and Training will accelerate its sale of land and assets that are not directly required for educational purposes...will work with the school leadership to undertake detailed investigations to ascertain the parts of the site that will be included... a maximum of 140 hectares to be sold"

Verity Firth, Minister for DET

I share students' concern that without the working educational farm they will not be able to learn modern land management practices to support sustainable farming... Could you please withdraw the proposal to sell Hurlstone Agriculture High School land

Clover Moore Independent MLA for Sydney

...See more on our web site



Corporal J.H. Edmondson VC Killed in Action, Tobruk 1941



**Want to know
more or lend a
hand?**

We're on the web

**www.hahsalumni.com
and the "Save
Hurlstone" page on
[facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)**



Campbelltown and Glenfield locals are not second class citizens, they need green space and fresh air too. Verity Firth argues for green space in her electorate and that only saves million dollar harbour views. She should practice what she preaches and retain HAHS for its practical agriculture education and its green space

Your Questions Answered

- Q.** The State Government says 'surplus land will be sold'. Isn't that OK?
- A.** The farm land is not surplus, it is fully used for agriculture education at a time when that is needed more than ever. Our facts on page 2 explain the land use. The Government sends mixed messages, suggesting the final decision is not made, but then saying up to 140 ha will be sold and that 20ha is adequate. They are proposing the land sale for a quick buck,
- Q.** I have seen statements that the proceeds will be used to fund education needs, is this true?
- A.** This is how the Government is trying to justify flogging off a farm that is fully utilized and needed for agriculture education at Australia's first agricultural high school. The fact is, while Ministers try to promote this, the Director-General of the Department told a committee that only "part of the proceeds" will return to education. Most will go to consolidated revenue. The state government should be fully resourcing state education needs and not robbing one school's education assets to fund another. Pitting school against school and parent against parent is a disgrace.
- Q.** I saw one statement from a government MP that a dairy farm can't be viable in an urban area. Isn't it better to find a more commercial location for a farm?
- A.** We saw that statement also. In fairness the same MP said he was yet to make up his mind. The school farm is not a commercial dairy, it's a school practical education resource, that also happens to return funds to the school to offset costs. No school can be assessed on commercial viability, otherwise we'd close them all. In any case, the Government is proposing to sell the farm, not move it to other land and the land in Glenfield also provides valued local green space and helps as the 'lungs' of the area to provide clean air .
- Q.** The Government says other Agriculture Schools only need 10 hectares. Why does Hurlstone need 160 hectares?
- A.** In fact, two other agriculture schools have more land than Hurlstone . For example, Farrer has 900 hectares. It is true that James Ruse only has 10 hectares but the Government fails to admit that Ruse only has six head of cattle and six sheep. Even then adjacent electricity commission land is required beyond the school land. JRAHS is a fine academic selective school but it does not provide the same pathway to practical agriculture as Hurlstone. Neither does it have a boarding school. James Ruse and Hurlstone both have fine academic results, but that's the only valid comparison. Not only does James Ruse need more land than it has for far fewer animals, but experts all point to the need for Hurlstone's practical asset for good future education in sustainable agriculture. Hurlstone is the only state, selective, day and boarding agriculture school than can continue to bridge the city country divide. Its farm has been vital to its success for over 100 years and is still needed now. It's a furphy that a practical agriculture program only needs 10 or 20 ha.
- Q.** The Minister says 20ha is enough for agriculture education in a modern setting? Is that true?
- A.** No. 20 ha won't even keep the school buildings on the Hurlstone site, never mind area for practical agriculture. The government also says it hasn't decided how much it will sell, so it is all over the place on trying to justify a decision that is about anything but good agriculture education. The Government was caught out on the Memorial Forest site that would have been gone if only 20ha was retained, and its clear DET doesn't know much about the school and its farm usage. Agriculture is a practical activity and any suggestion that agriculture can be properly taught out of books alone has been rejected by most experts who support the retention of the farm.
- Q.** Isn't it better to have more land available for housing for Sydney's growing population?
- A.** Good planning also requires green space in urban planning and the Hurlstone farm offers the additional benefit of being fully used as a school working farm. Local infrastructure is not adequate for 3000 extra houses and the only beneficiaries will be land developers. Sydney has tens of thousands of undeveloped blocks already being land banked by land speculators. Liverpool City Council says it could release 2000 blocks except the State government has not provided the necessary infrastructure. Campbelltown City Council opposes the sale of the farm saying green space is more valuable and other master planning points to better developments already in progress elsewhere. If housing and economic return were the main reasons for the sale, the State Government could sell areas of the harbor foreshore, unused land at Callan Park in the Education Minister's electorate or even Centennial Park. Research suggests more high density in the inner city is better than more houses in the outer suburbs like Campbelltown-Camden. A number of State MPs including Verity Firth (Balmain) and Geoff Corrigan (Camden) have argued strongly to retain green space in their maiden speeches to Parliament. We believe that Campbelltown and Glenfield locals are not second class citizens when it comes to clean air and green space. These Ministers and MPs should practice what they preach and retain the HAHS farm.