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The Hon Verity Firth MP,
Minister for Education and Training
Level 31 Governor Macquarie Tower,
1 Farrer Place,
SYDNEY NSW 2000

18 December 2008

Dear Ms Firth,

Hurlstone Agricultural High School

I am writing on behalf of the Faculty of Veterinary Science, an educator and centre for research in animal and veterinary science. The success of our teaching and research depends on a stream of high-quality undergraduate and graduate students, many who come from Hurlstone Agricultural High School.

The Faculty Veterinary Science recognises the importance of Hurlstone as a provider of 'Excellence in Agricultural teaching' and important source of future leaders in the agriculture and production animal industry. This will be severely compromised if the planned sale of land attached to Hurlstone Agricultural High School proceeds.

To engage students in superior participatory agricultural learning and teaching as well as prepare them for tertiary studies it is necessary to have access to sufficient animal and agricultural land resources. With approximately 600 junior and 130 senior students currently utilising the farm's enterprises and resources at Hurlstone it is justified to maintain the current farm size on educational and animal welfare grounds. This land provides a proper context for the practical aspects of agriculture and animal husbandry that are not amenable to classroom teaching.

The University of Sydney also recognises the contribution of Hurlstone in providing students, undertaking studies in Agricultural Science, Animal Science and Veterinary Science at the University, with an opportunity to gain valuable 'hands-on' professional experience at a farm in close proximity to the Camperdown and Camden campuses. Therefore, the University of Sydney is in the process of forming an association with Hurlstone in order to strengthen this important resource in the areas of animal production, cropping and sustainable agriculture.

The contribution from the University would consist of access to academic staff for forums, seminars and mentoring as well as an opportunity to collaborate on research projects using the current livestock, infrastructure and land resources at Hurlstone. The aim is to offer additional opportunities for students from Hurlstone, as well as surrounding High Schools that teach agriculture.

On behalf of the faculty, I urge you to reconsider the sale of land at Hurlstone Agricultural High School because of the detrimental effect that this will have on the quality of agricultural education, and ultimately standard of student knowledge. I would be happy to meet with you to discuss our teaching and research activities, so that you can gain a better understanding of what we do and why schools like Hurlstone are important.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Leo Jeffcott', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Leo Jeffcott
Dean