



David Guest
Professor of Plant Pathology
Associate Dean (Development)

Room 408
JAR McMillan Building A05
The University of Sydney NSW 2006
AUSTRALIA
Telephone: +61 2 9351 2946
Facsimile: +61 2 9351 2945
Email: d.guest@usyd.edu.au
Web: www.usyd.edu.au

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

Dear Ms Firth,

Hurlstone Agricultural High School

I am writing on behalf of the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, the only city-based agriculture faculty in NSW, and one of the few in Australia. As a city-based campus we pride ourselves on the strength of our research, teaching and outreach activities. Our research contributes significantly to improving the security of global food, fibre and biofuel production, as well as environmental sustainability. The success of our research depends on a stream of high-quality students and graduate students, many who come from NSW, including a strong intake of students from Hurlstone Agricultural High School. However, this dependence on high-quality students for our research success is in many ways also our greatest weakness.

Agricultural education in NSW high schools is in a dire state. Our research shows that it is under-resourced and out of date, and fails to address the key issues facing contemporary agriculture and the environment. Consequently it is not a popular choice for high school students, or for incoming university students. Ironically, our graduates are in very high demand and have excellent career prospects, indeed, much more so than in more popular courses.

We are concerned to hear of the planned sale of land attached to Hurlstone Agricultural High School because this compounds the challenges facing agricultural education in NSW. Hurlstone Agricultural High School draws on students from remote areas of the state where specialist agricultural education is not available, as well as from the many students in the Sydney Basin who are passionate about agriculture and horticulture as a potential career. Because of these interests and aspirations, students attracted to Hurlstone Agricultural High School form a very different cohort to those attracted to other selective "Agricultural" high schools. The land proposed for sale is an essential part of their practical education in agriculture, and provides an opportunity to learn aspects of agriculture that are not amenable to classroom teaching.

On behalf of the faculty, I urge you to reconsider the sale of land at Hurlstone Agricultural High School because of the effect that this will have on agricultural education, and ultimately research, in NSW. I would be happy to meet with you at your convenience to show you around our faculty and 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.

Regards, and season's greetings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. G. G.' with a horizontal line extending to the right.