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Farmers welcome appointment of Hurlstone Inquiry Chair

The NSW Farmers' Association has welcomed the appointment of Mal Peters as the Chair of the Independent Inquiry into the sale of land at Hurlstone Agricultural High School.

NSW Farmers' Association Rural Affairs Committee Chair Sarah Thompson says the appointment of such an industry leader recognises the important role of agriculture at Hurlstone and indicates the commitment of the Government to this Inquiry.

"Agricultural education is a critical issue for the Association as it provides the foundation for our future leaders and promotes the wider understanding of agricultural issues among the community," Ms Thompson said.

"Schools such as Hurlstone play an integral role in this education.

"This Inquiry will provide an opportunity for Members of the public to have direct input into the decision making process for Hurlstone's future, which is vitally important.

"We welcome the appointment of an independent chair to this Inquiry, and the Minister for Education's comments that a decision on the fate of Hurlstone is yet to be made and will not be made until after the Inquiry has reached its decision," Ms Thompson said.

The Association has also welcomed the release of the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry, in particular the reference to the future skills and knowledge demands for the agricultural sector, the appropriateness to those demands of the NSW agriculture syllabus and the role of Hurlstone Agricultural High School in meeting those demands.

"The release of the specific Terms of Reference indicates that this Inquiry is now moving forward, following its announcement some three months ago," Ms Thompson said.

"We will, of course, be looking to provide input into this Inquiry, focusing on the Association's work to increase the profile of agriculture and the message of sustainable food and fibre through our State's education system.

"As we have previously stated, the practical education available at Hurlstone provides a key opportunity to develop this message and foster the agricultural leaders of the future.

"Hurlstone is unique in that it is the only State funded agricultural boarding school in a metropolitan area and has a working dairy farm. If the land sale was to go ahead, it would force the loss of the farm; a vital and unique agricultural teaching facility which provides students with a practical understanding of agriculture and farming.

"As a result, the Association remains opposed to the sale of land at Hurlstone, and we will continue to lobby to ensure that the future of agricultural education in this State is secure," Ms Thompson concluded.

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