MEDIA RELEASE

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Ag colleges do more with less under Labor

QUEENSLAND'S Agricultural Colleges have achieved outcomes above budgeted expectations but have not been rewarded by the Bligh Labor government.

LNP Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Queensland Andrew Cripps said Labor had again cut funding for the colleges in the state budget.

"The budget papers report the Australian Agricultural College Corporation achieved an increase in qualifications of 24 per cent above 2009 – 10 levels and delivered more than the targeted hours of vocational education and training last year.

"Despite increasing the number of people completing qualifications and delivering more than the expected number of hours of training, the capital funding to the colleges will actually decrease by $167,000, from $3.167 million to $3 million," Mr Cripps said.

"And despite the Labor government stating the Australian Agricultural College Corporation was aiming to increase the number of sites where it delivers training, the budget papers shows staff numbers have fallen by 20 over the last year."

Mr Cripps said the Bligh government had set high hopes for the AACC in yesterday's budget papers, including growth in full-time residential training, creating partnerships with schools and developing new models of training such as cadetships, among others.

"The steady decline in core funding and staff at Queensland's agricultural colleges indicates that these worthy goals will be much harder to achieve. To do so, the AACC will have to do more with less. This is not the mark of a government that takes training seriously.

"Careers in agriculture can be rewarding. There's currently a shortage of skilled people available to work in agriculture. Investment in training and our educational institutions is the key to redressing the shortage, not slowly starving them of core funding and staff."

Mr Cripps said Labor's sale of agricultural college campuses at Dalby and in the Burdekin was short-sighted and ignored the current major challenge facing Queensland to deliver sufficient skilled workers for the agricultural sector.

Media contact – Andrew Cripps 0407 741 997

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Andrew Cripps MP
Member for Hinchinbrook
Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Queensland

Address: PO Box 1515 Ph: 07 4776 1428
Ingham Qld 4850 Fax 07 4776 3503
Web: www.andrewcripps.com.au
E-mail: Hinchinbrook@parliament.qld.gov.au