

Frequently Asked Questions

Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges (QATC)

Including Longreach Pastoral College (LPC), Emerald Agricultural College (EAC), and Statewide Training (previously referred to as Rural Training Queensland (RTQ))

Background

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to ensuring central-western Queensland has access to high quality vocational education and training (VET). As the economy and the agricultural industry evolves, change is needed to make sure training needs are met and rural economies are supported.

A review by Professor Peter Coaldrake has found demand for residential agricultural industry training has declined and more flexible options are needed. He also identified there are opportunities to improve skilling and training options by better utilising the existing facilities, including, but not limited to, agriculture.

The Queensland Government has considered Professor Coaldrake's recommendations and has decided to close the Queensland Agricultural Training College at the end of 2019.

As such, residential-based enrolments at Queensland Agricultural Training College's Longreach and Emerald campuses will cease immediately. Non-residential based enrolments offered by QATC through their state-wide training hubs, will be suspended until alternative options are considered.

To minimise impacts to affected students, staff and communities, the Queensland Government has directed that QATC campuses at Longreach and Emerald continue to operate through 2019 so that currently enrolled students can complete their studies.

After 2019, modern and more flexible industry training will be conducted by other providers.

This decision has not been taken lightly. The long and proud tradition of agricultural education and training and its importance to the region is recognised. However, demand for residential training has been falling and VET needs to keep up with modern industry needs.

The Queensland Government is committed to constructively engage with employees and union representatives throughout this process to ensure the best possible outcomes for staff.

The Government will invest more than \$30 million to reshape VET, to ensure the central-western Queensland has the skilled workers to fill growing industries now and into the future.

Over the coming months the community will be provided opportunities to help shape the implementation of an Economic Transition Strategy for the region, to be coordinated by the Queensland Government.

FAQs

What is the Coaldrake Review and what were the findings?

Emeritus Professor Peter Coaldrake AO was engaged by the Palaszczuk Government to undertake a review of vocational education and training across central-western Queensland in 2018.

The purpose of the review was to optimise the government's investment in vocational education and training in the region to ensure prospective students can access quality training and employment opportunities without having to leave the area.

In summary, the Coaldrake Review found that the residential training model provided by QATC is no longer relevant and should cease operations by 31 December 2018. The review recommended that the Rural Training Queensland program become the responsibility of TAFE Queensland.

The Coaldrake Review concluded that vocational education and training in the region could be improved through better utilisation of the existing assets and resources, with view to supporting additional training needs beyond agriculture.

What is the problem that has resulted in the Coaldrake Review recommending that the QATC cease operating?

Despite years of effort and funding investment by successive governments, the QATC business model (and its predecessor AACC) has not been a success.

The QATC residential colleges at Emerald and Longreach are underutilised and running at a substantial loss with steeply declining enrolments since 2011-12 and costly residential programs all contributing to the business no longer being sustainable.

The growth of tourism, hospitality and allied health industries in regional Queensland is driving the need for diversified training options. This is beyond the current focus of QATC.

What does this mean for QATC moving forward?

In order for the government to implement the direction recommended by the Coaldrake Review and in the interest of QATC staff and students, it is proposed to 'teach out' students until the end of 2019. QATC will ceasing operating at the end of 2019.

How many staff are affected and where are they located?

All staff employed by QATC will be affected by the decision to modernise and reinvigorate vocational education in the region.

QATC currently has staff working in a number of regional locations across Queensland. This includes the residential colleges at Emerald and Longreach. Corporate staff are located in Toowoomba and Rural Training Queensland staff operate from the 'satellite' training hubs located in Ayr, Bundaberg, Cairns, Charters Towers, Dalby, Mackay, Nambour, Rockhampton and Walkamin.

Why not close down the residential colleges and keep the RTQ training hubs open?

QATC is operated as a single Registered Training Organisation (RTO) with multiple delivery sites, including eight study hubs and the two residential colleges. Unlike the residential colleges, the study hubs have no associated training resources and are essentially rented office spaces. Maintaining a dedicated head office and associated resources just to maintain the operation of these hubs was not recommended by the Coaldrake Review.

Why not amalgamate the residential colleges and keep one?

The Coaldrake Review found that the demand for residential agricultural training continues to decline and is no longer the preferred choice for those seeking a career in agriculture. The QATC Emerald and Longreach colleges are unsustainable, and with enrolment targets unable to be reached, they operate at a substantial loss. The review recommended training delivery in these regions be diversified, to develop the skills mix required to meet the needs of the future. As such, one option is the residential college facilities may be repurposed to meet future industry-based training needs.

Where will students be able to access quality agricultural training in regional Queensland?

There is an existing and strong network of local registered training providers that will continue to provide vocational education and training in central-western Queensland. For further

information on these networks please refer to the Student FAQs.

What will happen to the colleges? These are long-standing icons in our community.

The training and accommodation facilities at Longreach and Emerald will be repurposed. Options will be discussed with the community and key stakeholders with a view to benefit central-western Queensland.

Will the community still be able to use the facilities at the colleges (e.g. sporting fields) once QATC ceases operation?

Yes, it is anticipated that local communities will continue to be able to utilise the facilities moving forward. As part of the repurposing process all possible uses of the facilities will be explored with the community.

How can I find an alternative training provider?

You can access professional assistance provided by the Queensland Government during the transitional period or contact either the QATC student help line (1300 160 972), or the Training Queensland Customer Centre (1300 369 935).

What will happen to the properties?

The Coaldrake Review found that QATC assets were not being fully utilised and there was an opportunity for facilities to be optimised for the benefit of the local community.

The plan is for properties to be more effectively utilised moving forward, and in some cases repurposed, to meet the broader training needs and economic opportunities for the local community.

What happens to the records and items of heritage significance from the colleges?

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries will work with the local community to ensure that records and historical equipment of significance to the colleges including memorabilia, student of the year boards, and historical equipment e.g. blacksmithing equipment, treasured horse saddles etc. are preserved.

What will be done for the students currently residing at the colleges?

Current students will have the opportunity to complete their studies through a soft close of teaching services on-site, or will be assisted to transition to alternative training providers.

Students currently residing at Longreach and Emerald Colleges will be engaged and alternative options for accommodation explored.

What is happening to the QATC Board?

The Board's professionalism and conduct while the Coaldrake Review was being conducted, and in subsequent months while the Government considered the review, is to be commended.

It is acknowledged that the QATC Board has been looking for urgent direction from the

Palaszczuk Government regarding a sustainable business model for QATC.

It is understood that the Board's first concern will be the welfare of staff and students during the transition.

Moving forward, there will need to be an assessment of the Board to ensure the right skills and experience are present to guide the transitioning arrangements.

It is noted that members have indicated a strong willingness to work constructively with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to implement whatever course of action Government determines appropriate. If this results in the need for a renewed Board composition, it is hoped that members will continue to support the Government's direction through their leadership roles in the community.

FOR STUDENTS

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FAQs

Can I can graduate as planned?

Yes, all current students will have the opportunity to complete their qualification or course. Nearly all existing students should be able to finish the course they are currently enrolled in through QATC.

If students do not complete their qualification before QATC ceases delivery, the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) will assist students to transfer to an alternative training provider.

Will I get a statement of attainment?

Yes – QATC will continue to issue a statement of attainment to students who withdraw from their training or complete a course.

QATC will also continue to issue certificates and diplomas for current students who complete a qualification.

I am an apprentice or trainee. What do I do?

Your apprenticeship and traineeship (including school-based) will continue as normal into 2019.

DESBT will monitor the progress of your apprenticeship or traineeship in 2019.

If your apprenticeship or traineeship is not close to completion as the QATC closure approaches, you will be helped to transfer to another training provider. At this time you will be assisted to ensure your training record is updated by QATC.

DESBT or your Australian Apprenticeship Support Network provider will provide this support to you and your employer.

More information on completing apprenticeships and traineeships is available at:

www.training.qld.gov.au/apprenticeshipsinfo

I am doing my training through Skilling Queenslanders for Work. What do I do?

Your Skilling Queenslanders for Work project will continue as usual. You will be able to complete your qualification as planned.

I am a school student. What do I do?

You will not be affected by the changes at QATC if you complete your training as part of your school studies by the end of the 2018.

If your training is scheduled to continue into the 2019 school year, DESBT will work with your School Principal to ensure that either QATC or another suitable training provider provides the training you need to complete your qualification.

I am a residential student at Emerald or Longreach. What do I do?

Like other students, you will be able to complete your course or qualification at QATC or be supported to transition to another provider. You will be advised directly by QATC about student accommodation options for 2019.

What options do I have if I fail a subject?

If this happens, students will be able to re-sit the subject in 2019 prior to QATC ceasing operations.

If this is not possible within this timeframe, students will be able to transfer to an alternative training provider to complete the required training.

I am about to finish year 12 and have applied through QTAC for tertiary study offered with QATC. What do I do?

You should contact the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) on 1300 467 822 or via <https://www.qtac.edu.au/>. Students have until 8 January 2019 for changes to round 1 preferences and until 25 January to change round 2 preferences.

I have paid the full cost of my training. What do I do?

If you have not received a government subsidy for your training, you are referred to as a fee-for-service student. You will not be financially impacted on by the changes at QATC.

If you have not completed your qualification by the time QATC ceases delivery of your qualification, DESBT will work with the Australian Government's Tuition Assurance Scheme or Tuition Protection Service to help you transfer to a similar provider at no cost to you.

I have a VET Student Loan. What do I do?

There will be no changes to your VET Student Loan while you continue your studies with QATC.

Can I keep my VET Student Loan if I transfer to a new training provider?

Yes, but generally only if your new training provider is approved to offer VET Student Loans and you must have a remaining loan amount within the cap of the qualification. If you have a VET Student Loan, assistance to transfer this loan will be provided for as part of the support available to each student affected by the eventual closure of QATC. Advice for all VET Student Loans is available from the Australian Government's Department of Education and Training on 1800 020 108 and at www.education.gov.au/vet-student-loans

What options are available if I want to do further studies in agriculture?

Queensland has a strong network of training providers that deliver rural training. TAFE Queensland, CQUniversity and a range of other training providers deliver rural training across Queensland.

The Queensland Skills Gateway provides information on available courses, training providers, government funding and career pathways at:

www.skillsgateway.training.qld.gov.au

The Student Guide may also assist you to choose the right training provider for you, as it contains useful information for training consumers and is available at:

www.training.qld.gov.au/training/courses/studentguide

How do I find a new training provider?

Existing students will be supported to complete their studies at QATC where possible.

If you do require a new training provider, the Queensland Skills Gateway provides information on available courses, training providers, government funding and career pathways at:

www.skillsgateway.training.qld.gov.au

The Student Guide may also assist you to choose the right training provider for you, as it contains useful information for training consumers and is available at:

www.training.qld.gov.au/training/courses/studentguide

If I transfer, will my new training provider recognise the training already completed at QATC?

The national VET training system provides a mechanism for the full transfer of credits for completed coursework between training providers. This means that your new training provider should not ask you to repeat any subjects or competencies that you have been awarded by QATC.

If I transfer, do I still get access to subsidised training?

Yes, if you are undertaking subsidised training at QATC and need to transfer to a new training provider to complete your training, other training providers will be able to offer you subsidised training.

I have enrolled at QATC but my course or qualification has not yet started. What do I do?

If you are doing a taster or course which finishes in 2019, your course is expected to be delivered.

Plans will be put in place so that all currently enrolled students are able to complete the course they are enrolled in and receive the appropriate qualification when the training is completed.

For some individuals, this may mean undertaking your full course or qualification with QATC.

For others, it may mean supporting you to transfer your enrolment to an alternative training provider.

I have had an unsolicited approach from another training provider. What should I do?

If you have an unsolicited approach from another training provider, you should act with the usual degree of caution that you apply to all uninvited approaches by sales people.

There is no need to do anything. Most students will finish their course or qualification at QATC.

QATC and government agencies that hold your study details have strict privacy protocols for the treatment of your records. These agencies do not share your details without your permission.

However, some training providers may learn that you are a student of QATC through other means, including word of mouth.

The **Training Queensland Customer Centre** (TQCC) is here to help on 1300 369 935 or via email at training@det.qld.gov.au. Please feel free to contact the TQCC at any time in the coming months. TQCC will have the most up-to-date information about the changes at QATC and how they affect you as a student.

Advice on VET Student Loans is available from the **Australian Government's Department of Education and Training** on 1800 020 108 and at www.education.gov.au/vet-student-loans.

If you have any concerns that cannot be resolved by QATC or the above helplines, you can contact the Queensland Government's **Training Ombudsman** through their online inquiry form at <http://trainingombudsman.qld.gov.au/> or by phone on 1800 773 048.

FOR STAFF

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QATC staff will play an important role during the transition over the next 12 months by continuing to provide training and support to students.

The Queensland Government is committed to constructively engaging with employees and union representatives throughout this process to ensure the best possible outcomes for staff.

Support, advice and assistance will be provided to all staff.

Efforts will focus on maximising employment opportunities and may include retraining, deployment, and redeployment.

Avenues of assistance offered will be in line with the Queensland Government's Employment Security Policy.

The Employment Security Policy undertakes that tenured government employees will not be forced into unemployment as a result of organisational change, other than in exceptional circumstances.

FAQs

Will I lose my job?

The Queensland Government's Employment Security Policy outlines its commitment to permanent employees and states that tenured

employees will not be forced into unemployment because of organisational change other than in exceptional circumstances.

All staff will be offered support, advice and assistance throughout the transition.

Can I be transferred elsewhere in the public service?

In accordance with the Queensland Government's Employment Security Policy permanent QATC employees affected by organisational change will be offered maximum employment opportunities, including retraining, deployment, and redeployment.

What support is being offered to us?

Support, advice and assistance will be provided to all QATC staff.

Support services (such as financial advisors, counsellors and recruitment consultants) will be engaged to work with all staff.

Where else can I go for help to find a job?

There is a strong commitment to work with all QATC staff to take full advantage of new employment opportunities that may arise in your community.

There are a number of employment agencies located in the community which can also provide support and assistance to find alternative employment opportunities as needed.

What support will be provided to continue employment in my local community?

The Queensland Government is committed to constructively engaging with employees and union representatives throughout this process to ensure the best possible outcomes for staff, including pursuing employment opportunities in your local community.

Will I be forced to move?

There will be no forced relocations and all efforts will be made to secure employment in the local community.

There may be opportunities in other locations for you to consider, and depending on your personal circumstances, these may be a suitable option for you.

For further information contact the **Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges** on 1800 888 710 via email at enquiries@qatc.edu.au.

Staff can also contact the Employee Assistance Program which is a free, confidential counselling and consultancy service available to QATC employees to assist with the resolution of personal and work related problems. This service, provided by Benestar, is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can be accessed by phoning 1300 360 364 or by emailing <https://benestar.com/contact-us>.