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Guy Barnett, Minister for Primary Industries and Water

## Extended Blundstone Scholarship to support agricultural education and jobs

A scholarship established to help address skills shortages in Tasmania's agricultural sector has been extended for a further six years, and I urge those considering a career in agriculture to apply now.

The Tasmanian Government, University of Tasmania and iconic Tasmanian business, Blundstone, have reaffirmed their commitment to the Blundstone Scholarship for Agribusiness.

Minister for Primary Industries, Guy Barnett, said the Tasmanian Government has been working to attract appropriately trained people to work in the State's expanding agricultural industry.

"The scholarship aims to help address the longstanding issues around the shortage of skilled agricultural experts, and I would like to encourage those looking at a career in agriculture to take up this opportunity," Mr Barnett said.

The scholarship was originally established by Blundstone to get the new Associate Degree in Agribusiness off to a strong start in 2017, with a generous donation of \$120,000. The Tasmanian Government last year agreed to share funding with Blundstone, maintaining the value of the scholarship at \$120,000 per year.

"The 2018-19 State Budget included a commitment to extend the State Government's funding by providing \$60,000 per year for a further six years, so the scholarship will now apply to students commencing their studies up to 2024," Mr Barnett said.

"This Scholarship complements a range of other State Government initiatives – from upgraded farm schools and curriculum reform right through to additional support for our world-leading researchers in the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture – that aim to provide rewarding jobs in agriculture to Tasmanians and help us to achieve our target of a \$10 billion a year industry by 2050."

Blundstone CEO, Steve Gunn, repeated the company's commitment to strengthening the long-term future of the industry.

"We've always understood that our business – like so many others in the State – depends on the work and the output of our farmers, and that they in turn depend on a whole network of suppliers, agents, contractors and consultants," he said.

"The Associate Degree in Agribusiness is aimed at skilling up the people who will staff farms and businesses across this wide spectrum, and help give them an edge to keep our industry competitive and indeed at the forefront in global agriculture."

"We know that study can be a burden on students, especially if it involves travelling and purchasing study materials, and we are confident that the support of up to \$4,000 a year does make a real difference and enable many students to embark on this journey with some confidence," Mr Gunn said.

University College Chief Executive, Lee Whiteley, thanked the Government and the company for the funding support.

"We are really keen to see this innovative Associate Degree course become firmly established and flourish as a practical way to raise skill levels in the industry.

"This further enhances the University's key role in growing agriculture in this State through its undergraduate and postgraduate programs, as well as through the research, development and extension delivered by the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture," he said.

The Scholarship is available for commencing and continuing students in the Associate Degree of Agribusiness. It pays \$4,000 a year to full-time students, for up to two years, or available pro-rata for part-time students for up to four years.

Applications for the Scholarship are open until 28 February 2019 and eligible students are encouraged to consider applying. Details can be found online at:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/students/student-news/blundstone-supporting-tasmanias-future-agriculture-leaders>