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To: Committees

Subject: ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into school closures and reform of, the ACT education system

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My family and I have sacrificed so much time and emotion on the school closure issues, with three consultations in just over two years, I have been loathed to contribute to the inquiry. But apparently I can't stop myself.

I got involved with the Cook Primary School P&C in 2004, when my eldest son was in year 1, and my youngest was one. I joined because I wanted to help build positive memories for the children at Cook Primary - all of them - not just my own. I have great memories of school fetes and community events from my own primary school. It wasn't until I changed primary schools that I appreciated the support the P&C gave the school in helping fund excursions etc for students that could not afford it. Kids should not be aware that some families can pay for this and some families can't.

Anyway, I helped build up the school fete and undertake fund raising that help pay for the shade cover of the playground. Always with an attitude of building a community. I worked hard on the P&C and put in time with joy because I felt I was contributing something good to the community. In truth, being a member of Cook P&C was part of the way I defined myself. I did not join the P&C to be a political activist - I have no interest in that. And I was mortally offended when the ACT government described Cook Primary School as having "no Community support". I will never forgive them for that thoughtless and totally untrue statement.

Anyway, the government inflicted "Towards 2020" on us. I have three kids, I work part time, and my husband went away from work 4 times during the 6 months consultation period. This isn't the government's fault, but working families with young children have very busy lives! It is not possible these families can drop everything and learn how to play politics without collateral damage. The pressure on our family was huge, and put a tremendous stress on my kids and my marriage. My children started acting out, and for a while I wasn't sure my husband and I would make it. I was completely ineffective at work for about 18 months. I was angry and depressed, and I have only just started getting myself back.

Yet talking about this again still makes me cry.

This isn't what I actually wanted to talk about in the submission.

The government had complete control of the media, particularly the Canberra Times, who could not have set up the background for the introduction of "Towards 2020" any better. The government had already decided to close schools. Our only hope to save our school was to get broad enough public support to keep the school open - enough for the government to know it would affect the poll booths. But we couldn't get the Canberra Times to hear any rational arguments why the school should stay open. They seemed only happy to publish our comments when we were tired and angry and sounded irrational. We also tried the Chronicle, with limited success. However one school - Giralang Primary School - was in the chronicle almost every week, and still is. Who do they know? I believe it had an affect on the outcomes of both Cook and Giralang Primary School.

I don't feel that Cook primary School got a fair trial in the court of public opinion. I feel the Canberra Times conspired with the ACT government to orchestrate the whole school closures affair. And the media the ACT government wasn't conspiring with, WIN NEWS, was pressured by the ACT government.

Not that this will do any good

Jodie