

NOTICE OF DECISION

The Decision

I, Andrew Barr, MLA, Minister for Education and Training have decided, pursuant to section 20 of the **Education Act 2004**, that:

MELROSE PRIMARY SCHOOL will close at the end of 2006.

Background

1. On 6 June 2006 I released a proposal titled "*Towards 2020: Renewing our Schools*" (the Proposal).
2. The purpose of the Proposal was to reinvigorate the government school system so that it would remain the first choice for the majority of families. The principles underpinning the Proposal were those of choice, diversity and opportunity. The Proposal outlined the Government's plan for the future provision of public education in the Australian Capital Territory (the Territory). The Proposal provided for a different configuration for Territory schooling provision, involving the integration of preschools into primary schools, the closure of a number of schools and preschools, the amalgamation of others and new structures such as P-3 schools, 5-10 schools, 7-12 schools and collegiate arrangements.
3. The Proposal also included the biggest capital injection into schooling since self-government with \$90 million for capital upgrades, \$67 million for new schools and \$20 million for information technology (IT) upgrades.

The Statutory Requirements

4. The *Education Act 2004* (the Act) governs the provision of public education in the Territory. The general principles and objects of the Act are contained in Part 1.2 Section 7 as follows:

7 General principles of Act

- (1) Everyone involved in the administration of this Act, or in the education of children of school age in the ACT, is to apply the principle that every child has a right to receive a high-quality education.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), a high-quality education is based on the following principles:
 - (a) school education and home education provide a foundation for a democratic society;
 - (b) school education and home education should—
 - (i) aim to develop every child's potential and maximise educational achievements; and
 - (ii) promote children's enthusiasm for lifelong learning and optimism for the future; and

- (iii) encourage parents to take part in the education of their children, and recognise their right to choose a suitable educational environment; and
 - (iv) promote respect for and tolerance of others; and
 - (v) recognise the social, religious, physical, intellectual and emotional needs of all students; and
 - (vi) aim over time to improve the learning outcomes of students so that the outcomes are free from disadvantage because of economic, social, cultural or other causes; and
 - (vii) encourage all children to complete their senior secondary education; and
 - (viii) provide access to a broad education; and
 - (ix) recognise the needs of Indigenous students;
 - (c) innovation, diversity and opportunity within and among schools should be encouraged;
 - (d) effective quality assurance mechanisms should be applied to school education;
 - (e) government funding should be directed to children through their schools or school system;
 - (f) the partnership between the home, community and educational providers should be recognised;
 - (g) school communities should be given information about the operation of their schools.
- (3) Everyone involved in the administration of this Act, or in the education of children of school age in the ACT, is to apply the principle that school education—
- (a) recognises the individual needs of children with disabilities; and
 - (b) should make appropriate provision for those needs, unless it would impose unjustifiable hardship on the provider of the school education.
- (4) Corporal punishment is not allowed in ACT schools.

5. The establishment and operation of government schools is governed by Part 3.2 of the Act, in particular section 20 which provides as follows:

20 Establishing government schools etc

- (1) The Minister may establish government schools and preschools (*government schools*).
- (2) The Minister may decide the kinds of government schools to be established and the educational level or levels for the schools.
- (3) The Minister may establish school-related educational institutions and services (*school-related institutions*).
- (4) The Minister may name, and change the name of, a government school or school-related institution.
- (5) Before closing or amalgamating a government school, the Minister must—
 - (a) have regard to the educational, financial and social impact on students at the school, the students' families and the general school community; and
 - (b) ensure that school communities affected by the closure or amalgamation have been adequately consulted during a period of at least 6 months.
- (6) To ensure that school communities affected by closing or amalgamating a government school are adequately consulted, the Minister must, before a decision is made on the proposal—
 - (a) tell the school communities about the proposal; and
 - (b) listen to, and consider, their views.
- (7) The consultation must be done in a way that gives effect to the following principles:
 - (a) consultation should focus on access to, and the provision of, quality educational opportunities;
 - (b) consultation should be open and transparent;
 - (c) consultation should lead to sustainable decisions by involving effective community engagement;
 - (d) without limiting paragraph (c), consultation should ensure that—
 - (i) relevant information is provided in a timely and accessible way to enable maximum community participation in debate about the proposal; and
 - (ii) opportunities are provided for feedback about the proposal, especially from families and other people with significant interest in the proposal;
 - (e) consultation should include seeking the views of school boards that are likely to be affected by the proposal.

The Consultation Process

6. On 6 June 2006 I announced the establishment of a consultation process in accordance with the Act. The consultation process was developed and conducted in accordance with the ACT Government's Community Engagement Strategy. Attachment A – Consultation Strategy outlines the entire consultation process. I am satisfied that the consultation process gave effect to the principles outlined in s 20(7) of the Act.

Reasons for the Decision

7. I have decided to close or amalgamate a number of schools and preschools in the Territory. The Government will then make a large capital investment of \$90 million for school infrastructure upgrades and provide \$20 million for IT upgrades across all schools so that students now, and into the future, receive the best possible educational programs in contemporary facilities.
8. The fundamental principle that underpins the Government's proposal is to provide children and young people in the Territory with a vibrant, responsive and world-class public education system that is second to none, and that provides the very best chance for each student, no matter which government school they attend.
9. I have decided to close Melrose Primary School (Melrose PS) at the end of 2006 as part of the restructure of the Woden Region. With 82 students (ACT Department of Education and Training February 2006 School Census), Melrose PS is one of the smallest schools in the ACT. The cost per student of \$18,205 is significantly higher than the ACT average of \$9,570. Closure of Melrose PS is anticipated to result in a saving of \$1,517,000 between 2007-2010 (derived from ACT Department of Education and Training 2004-2005 audited financial statements - Refer Attachment B).
10. Whilst it is important for all young people to have access to a nearby school which provides for their educational needs, small schools may limit the opportunities for students to access and participate in rich curriculum in all key learning areas. Based on recent Australian research by Professor Brian Caldwell (2005)¹, Melrose PS would be considered a small school. Projections indicate that enrolments will not significantly increase (ACT Department of Education and Training Projected Enrolments 2006 to 2010). As such Melrose PS may be unable to provide the breadth of curriculum offerings and peer group range available to students attending one of the remaining, larger primary schools in the Woden region. There will be a range of educational settings in the Woden area that will provide choice for families seeking similar learning environments and the staff student relationships available at Melrose PS.

¹ Caldwell, B. (2005). Research on school size: An educational transformations briefing paper. *Educational Transformations*. Melbourne. <<http://www.educationaltransformations.com.au/>>

11. Melrose PS attracts 38% (February 2006 School Census) of the students who live in its Priority Enrolment Area (PEA) and attend government schools. Melrose PS is significantly under utilised and there is excess capacity within the Woden Region. The Woden Region requires a range of educational facilities that will be financially sustainable into the future. Melrose PS will be closed to align the region's capacity with demand.
12. The educational model for the Woden region will provide P-6 schools at Curtin PS, Farrer PS, Garran PS, Hughes PS, Mawson PS and Torrens PS, with a P-2 school at Lyons providing specialist early childhood education from the beginning of 2009. Access to special education units and centres will continue to be provided within the region. Years 7-10 will be provided for at Melrose and Alfred Deakin High Schools with The Woden School providing programs for students with special needs from years 7-10. Malkara Special School will continue to provide programs for young students with a disability and The Canberra College will provide a diverse range of innovative programs for years 11-12 at Phillip.
13. The provision of ICT across all schools in the ACT is a strong focus of the Proposal. The Government will make a large capital investment of \$20 million over four years for ICT upgrades across all schools to ensure students have greater access to the most modern ICT including hardware, such as computers and interactive whiteboards and also the best online curriculum offerings.
14. The requirements of special needs students and their families have been considered to ensure that the learning environment in an alternative setting provides the appropriate facilities. The continued provision of the Learning Support Unit – Autism (LSUA) program and the inclusion program will be achieved at Hughes PS. Facilities at Hughes PS are the most suitable to cater for special needs children. Individual transition planning provides an opportunity for parents to discuss specific family needs and Departmental representatives will assist families with school selection. Processes supporting staff relocations have been developed by the Department in consultation with the Australian Education Union (AEU) and staff have been given the opportunity to nominate preferences for transfer. All consideration will be given to staff who wish to transfer with students from the LSUA.
15. When Melrose PS closes, property and assets no longer required by the Department will be transferred to the Property Group of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) for management, in accordance with usual practice.
16. In reaching this decision I have had regard to the general principles and objects of the Act, the criteria specified in section 20 of the Act and the views expressed by school communities by way of the consultation process as outlined above. An assessment of the pertinent issues, considered by me to be material to this decision, is included in the Findings on Material Questions of Fact.

FACILITY – MELROSE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Findings on Material Questions of Fact

17. Melrose Primary School is situated in the Woden Region for the purposes of the *Towards 2020* Proposal.
18. The educational model for the Woden Region includes The Canberra College providing a diverse range of innovative programs for years 11-12 at Phillip. Years 7-10 will be provided for at Melrose and Alfred Deakin High Schools with The Woden School providing programs for students with a disability from years 7-10. Malkara Special School will continue to provide programs for young students with a disability, and other P-6 schools will operate at Curtin PS, Farrer PS, Garran PS, Hughes PS, Mawson PS and Torrens PS. A P-2 school at Lyons will provide specialist early childhood education from the beginning of 2009. Access to special education units and centres will continue to be provided within the region.
19. This model will ensure the provision of a network of innovative and contemporary educational facilities for the region, allowing for a continued focus on high standards and a range of educational opportunities for students
20. The provision for the Woden Region focuses on a regional, rather than a neighbourhood provision of education, more closely reflecting the choices that parents in the Woden Region have been making over recent years. Currently there is excess capacity in the region with a number of schools in close proximity. The proposed model will give families greater choice and diversity within the region. The model is designed to improve the learning outcomes of all students.
21. A number of issues in relation to the educational, financial and social impacts of the Proposal on students, students' families and the school community in relation to Melrose PS were raised and I had regard to and considered these. The major issues and my findings in relation to those issues are detailed in the following sections.

1 Educational

Projected enrolments

22. The current enrolment at Melrose PS is 82 students (February 2006 School Census). The 2010 projected enrolment is 61 students (Projected Enrolments 2006 to 2010).
23. Projections are based on recent demographic trends and are generally in line with population figures released by the Demography Unit, Chief Minister's Department. Population forecasts are subject to change, but projections from each school are determined from: school census data; data from the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages on the number of births by suburbs; recent levels of grade to grade retention rates; estimates of enrolments from any proposed new residential developments; and any

known enrolment policies or other factors, such as capacity limitations, which influence enrolment levels.

24. The community questions these figures as they report a growth in the birth rate for the suburb and an increase in the number of young families moving into the suburb. They argue urban renewal and ABS data from 2006 show births and fertility rates in Chifley growing. They argue that the school should remain open to cater for this increase in the future.
25. **I find that of the students who live in the PEA for Melrose PS and who attend government schools only 38% are enrolled at Melrose PS (February 2006 school Census). The increase in the birth rate in Chifley although marginally higher than in other Woden suburbs² will not have a significant impact on the growth of students for Melrose PS, particularly given that parents will continue to access a range of choices about schooling for their children.**

Small School

26. Parents have indicated that they specifically chose the small school environment for their children as they feel it provides a better learning environment as all staff and students are known to each other.
27. Current Australian research by Professor Brian Caldwell (2005) indicates that the appropriate and effective size for a primary school is 300-400 students. While it is important for all young people to have access to a nearby school which provides for their educational needs, small schools may limit the opportunities for students to access and participate in a rich curriculum in all key learning areas due to their small size and fewer teachers. This also places higher demands on teaching staff.
28. **I find that Melrose PS, with 82 enrolments, would be regarded as a small school based on Professor Caldwell's research and projections indicate that enrolments will not significantly increase. As such Melrose PS may be unable to provide the breadth of curriculum offerings and peer group range available to students attending one of the remaining, larger primary schools in the Woden Region. There will be a range of educational settings in the Woden area that will provide choice for families seeking similar learning environments and the staff student relationships currently available at Melrose PS.**

ICT facilities offered at school

29. Parents value the ICT resources currently available at Melrose PS and are concerned that these would be lost or not available at alternative schools.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population Estimates by Age and Sex, Australia by Geographic Classification (3235.0.55.001), 30 June 2006

- 30. I find that the provision of ICT across all schools in the ACT is a strong focus of the Proposal. The Government will make a large capital investment of \$20 million over four years for ICT upgrades across all schools to ensure students have greater access to the most modern ICT including hardware, such as computers and interactive whiteboards and also the best online curriculum offerings.**

Parental choice

31. I recognise, based on February 2006 School Census figures, that many parents within the Woden Region are not currently choosing the option of public education within their Priority Enrolment Area (PEA). Of the students who live within the PEA for Melrose PS and who attend government schools, 38% are enrolled at Melrose PS. Many parents are choosing to send their children outside of their PEA for their schooling.
32. The educational provision proposed in *Towards 2020* focuses on providing families with a range of options to consider when making decisions as to where to enrol their children. This was also aimed at ensuring that ACT schools, many of which were developed in the 1970s, will be able to meet the educational needs of students through to 2020.
- 33. I find that current figures indicate that a majority of parents of children living within the PEA for Melrose PS are not choosing the schools within their area. The proposed model for Woden Region will provide six P-6 schools at Curtin PS, Farrer PS, Garran PS, Hughes PS, Mawson PS and Torrens PS, with Lyons providing a specialist early childhood P-2 school from the beginning of 2009. Access to primary special education units and centres will continue to be provided within the region. Years 7-10 will be provided for at Melrose and Alfred Deakin High Schools with The Woden School providing programs for students with a disability from years 7-10. Malkara Special School will continue to provide programs for young students with a disability and The Canberra College will provide a diverse range of innovative programs for years 11-12 at Phillip.**

Educational outcomes

34. Currently the ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP) is one of the forms of assessment undertaken by students in the areas of literacy and numeracy. These results are reported to parents to inform them of their child's progress. ACTAP results are used to assist schools in developing teaching and learning programs to address the needs of students.
- 35. I find that the 2002-2006 ACTAP results show that average student progress in reading, writing and numeracy from year 3 to year 5 at Melrose PS was similar to the system average progress for each student group (2002-2004, 2003-2005, 2004-2006), except for the 2004-06 writing results where the school progress was significantly higher than system average progress. However, the reliability of the progress data for Melrose PS is significantly affected by the small number of students who undertook the assessment at Melrose PS in both years.**

Special needs students

36. During the consultation, an important issue raised was the need to ensure the continuity of the current educational model offered to students through the LSUA, which operates at Melrose Primary School. This unit caters for five children. In addition there are three students who receive assistance through the inclusion program. The needs of these students was the major focus of the written correspondence received from parents in response to the proposal as they were concerned that they be consulted about the proposed receiving school. Departmental officers held four meetings with parents to discuss and consider priorities for a prospective receiving school, and parents were given the opportunity to visit alternative school sites.
37. I have considered the views of parents that the educational outcomes of the LSUA and inclusion program were currently meeting the needs of children and should not be changed. The continued provision of mainstreaming opportunities and the inclusion program were also considered by parents to be beneficial. Parents strongly expressed the view that any receiving school should have the same inclusive culture and this was considered by the Department when discussions were held with the prospective receiving schools.
38. An important factor for parents of special needs students was that appropriate facilities be available at the receiving school and that new playground facilities be safe. Facilities Management officers from the Department have conducted two preliminary visits to the Melrose LSUA to examine the specific facility requirements of the special needs students and teaching staff have submitted a list of facilities requirements critical for the continuation of the program. An important element in determining the best receiving school was the degree of facility upgrade required in the new setting and priority was given to student safety. The scope, cost and time necessary to prepare facilities for the proposed relocation was taken into account.
39. **I find that the needs of students, staff and families have been considered to ensure that the learning environment in an alternative setting provides the appropriate facilities. The continued provision of the LSUA program will be achieved, including facilities upgrades, at Hughes PS. Students in the LSUA will have first option of taking up places at Hughes PS. Parents of children in the inclusion program can also choose to enrol their children at Hughes PS. Parents who choose not to enrol their child at Hughes PS will be assisted to apply for an alternative school for their child using the standard placement procedures. Individual transition planning provides an opportunity for parents to discuss specific family needs and Departmental representatives will assist families with school selection.**

Transition of students

40. One of the primary considerations of the Department and parents of students at Melrose PS, particularly those in the LSUA program, was to ensure that there was adequate time for the transition of students to the new facility. In order to achieve this, individual student transition planning meetings for all students in the LSUA programs were held for the purpose of identifying particular transition issues. Representatives from the Department's Special Education and Early Intervention sections and executive staff from the prospective receiving school were present at these meetings.

- 41. I find that transition planning have been made available to each student and their family to support the successful transition of students to the new school.**

Staff continuity

42. Parents considered the issue of staff continuity as vital to the successful relocation of the LSUA to Hughes PS.
- 43. I find that processes supporting staff relocations have been developed by the Department in consultation with the AEU and that staff have been given the opportunity to nominate preferences for transfer. All consideration will be given to staff who wish to transfer with students from the LSUA.**

2 Financial

Cost of operating school

44. The total cost to the Territory of operating Melrose PS in 2004-05 was \$1,401,000. This figure is based on the direct and indirect costs associated with running the school, such as salaries and superannuation, school based management funds, school equity funds and student support funds, as well as school support services which are incurred and controlled centrally but relate directly to the school's operation. The figures for Melrose PS are set out in Attachment B – Financial Data.
45. Currently the average cost of educating a child at Melrose PS is \$18,205 per year as against the ACT average of \$9,570 per student in a primary school. This figure is based on the total expenses divided by the number of students enrolled at the school.
- 46. I find that with 82 students enrolled at Melrose PS, based on the February 2006 census, and with enrolment numbers expected to decline by 2010, it is likely that the cost per student per year will increase. Closure of Melrose PS is anticipated to result in a saving of \$1,517,000 between 2007-2010.**

Capacity

47. Melrose PS has a capacity to take 175 students and currently there are 82 students enrolled at the school (February 2006 School Census). Only 46% of the capacity of Melrose PS is being utilised. School capacity figures reflect the designated teaching areas in the school and are calculated taking into account an extensive range of design factors and specific teaching needs, including rooms available for specialist requirements and special class needs. Principals may request a review of capacity figures at anytime and these are carried out regularly.
- 48. I find that currently Melrose PS is significantly under utilised and currently there is excess capacity within the Woden region. To provide a range of educational settings within the geographic area that will be financially sustainable in the future, Melrose PS will be closed to align the region's capacity with demand.**

Cost to families

49. The primary cost to families identified by the consultation process was the increased cost of transport to take students to and from school should the neighbourhood school close. There may also be costs associated with purchasing new uniforms.
- 50. Transitional support of \$750 will be offered to each student affected by the closure of Melrose PS, who enrolls in a government school.**

Transport for special needs students

51. Transport for special needs students should Melrose PS close was a concern for parents due to financial and logistical pressures. All parents were contacted by letter on 11 October 2006 and provided with an Application for Special Needs Transport.
- 52. I find that the Department will work closely with families of special needs students to address issues such as transport and that funding may be available to assist in this regard.**

Loss of community facilities

53. A number of correspondents were concerned that closure of the school would lead to a loss of facilities currently used by the community. It was felt that the closure of the school would result in the loss of a community asset which could no longer be used by the community as a whole. Concern was expressed for the existing tenants especially the YMCA and the future of the programs they provide for the broader community.
- 54. I find that when Melrose PS closes the Department will return the facilities to the control of the Property Group of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) for management, in accordance with usual practice.**

3 Social Impacts

Loss of community social networks

55. Some parents expressed concern about the loss of a neighbourhood school leading to a loss of the community social network. There was a concern that students would not be able to move with their friends and therefore existing networks would be affected. This concern was particularly raised in relation to the special needs children. Further that parents' ability to be involved in their school community could be affected.

- 56. Whilst I acknowledge that school closures affect the community which has built up around the school site, evidence from past closures and amalgamations and the establishment of new schools, shows that communities rebuild in new environments and that parents who have been active participants at one school will become active at their new schools. Principals, Board Chairs and P&C Presidents in the Woden region are acutely aware of the need to welcome parents and students from closing schools into their new school communities.**

Loss of neighbourhood school

- 57. Families of students at Melrose PS expressed concern that they would lose the ability to send their children to a neighbourhood school. The neighbourhood school provides easy access, and encourages children to walk or ride to school in a safe environment.**
- 58. I find that based on the percentage of students attending Melrose PS who live within the PEA, many families already travel past the neighbourhood school. Students in the Melrose area will be able to attend the other neighbouring schools of Curtin PS, Farrer PS, Garran PS, Hughes PS, Lyons PS, Mawson PS or Torrens PS, which are within the geographic area. The majority of suburbs are linked by pedestrian walkways and underpasses and communities could consider implementing the concept of a 'bike riding school bus' along the line of the walking school bus.**

After school care and vacation care for special needs students

- 59. The provision of Before and After School care programs and vacation programs at Melrose PS is valued by the parents and they were concerned that these not be lost. In particular parents requested programs suitable for the special needs students be available at the prospective receiving school.**
- 60. After canvassing the views of the families of special needs students who utilise these programs, a letter was sent to parents on 11 October 2006 providing details of the availability of these services at Hughes PS.**

4 Further Issues Considered

- 61. I have considered the issues raised in the submissions of the Chifley Action Group (Melrose PS, S2) and Chifley Preschool Parents Association (Melrose PS, S3) which dealt with Melrose Primary School.**

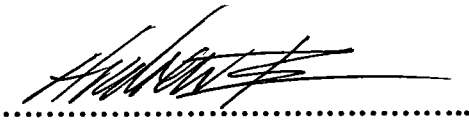
Melrose PS, S2 etc. refers to the folio number of the submission in the Department's records.

- 62. I or my Department have responded to 23 pieces of written correspondence relating to Melrose PS, recorded in Attachment C – Correspondence Schedule. (Copies of these documents are held in the Department.) I have attended one meeting which dealt with issues related to Melrose PS. In addition Departmental representatives attended 17**

meetings with the school or school community. (Records of meetings are held in the Department.)

63. In addition to the issues and impacts referred to above, I have also had regard to and considered the matters set out in Attachment C. The issues described in part 1 of Schedule C relate to Melrose PS specifically. The issues described in part 2 of Schedule C are matters related to the Proposal generally and are not specific to Melrose PS. The Schedule includes telephone calls (P), Departmental records and correspondence (D), school meetings (SM), Ministerial meetings (M), written correspondence and emails (C) and submissions (S). (All records listed are held in the Department.)

Signed:



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Andrew Barr, MLA
Minister for Education and Training

CONSULTATION STRATEGY Attachment A

The consultation process

The ACT community consistently demonstrates the value it places on public education and its desire to have input into decision-making on issues that affect the education of children and young people. The Government also has statutory obligations under Section 20(5) of the *Education Act 2004* that require that the Minister for Education and Training engage in a consultation period of at least six months before closing or amalgamating a government school.

Accordingly, at the time of the announcement, the Government advised that a comprehensive community consultation process would be implemented between 6 June and 6 December 2006, in accordance with the *ACT Government Community Engagement Service Charter*¹ and *Community Engagement Manual*².

On 6 June 2006, briefings were provided for government school principals, representatives from the Australian Education Union, the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, the Community and Public Sector Union, the Canberra Preschool Society and the non-government education sector. In the days following the announcement, School Board Chairs were invited to consult with the principal and the region's Schools Director about the proposal.

Meetings with major stakeholder groups continued throughout the consultation period. A *Towards 2020* project team was established within the Department of Education and Training to manage the consultation process.

Consultation publications

Eight four-page publications entitled *Towards 2020: Renewing Our Schools* were distributed to school communities, key stakeholder groups and members of the broader community. These set out the current educational provision and the Government's proposal for each of the educational regions of Canberra: Gunghalin, Belconnen North West, Belconnen South East, North Canberra, South Canberra, Weston Creek, Woden and Tuggeranong.

These documents contained relevant data relating to government schools and preschools. School information covered current enrolment numbers, projected enrolments at 2010 (based on current sites), the enrolment capacity of the school, the percentage of the school utilised, the percentage of students enrolled at each school coming from out of

¹ ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (2005), *ACT Government Community Engagement Service Charter*, Canberra

² ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (2005), *Your Guide to Engaging with the Community*, Canberra

area and the percentage of government school students living in the school's priority enrolment area (PEA) who attended the school.

In addition, information was provided on the proposed regional school provision, including projected student enrolments at 2010 for each school under the proposed arrangements. Also included were details of the date and venue of community forums scheduled for each region, notification of the *Towards 2020* website address and telephone inquiry hotline number and information about how the community could seek clarification on the proposal and provide feedback.

Copies of *Towards 2020* publications were made available at ACT Government Shopfronts and the Gungahlin Library. A leaflet was also distributed to all households in the ACT providing the details of community forums and contact details. An open letter from the Minister to parents and carers in affected schools was included in school newsletters. Letters were also sent to families of students with special needs to invite them to meet with school and special education staff to discuss the particular transitional support needs of their children should the proposal proceed.

Consultation website

The Department of Education and Training's *Towards 2020: Renewing Our Schools* website was activated immediately following the announcement. It contained the same information as the printed publications, as well as a page for each school which gave parents and carers and community members access to information concerning the possible effects on their school community.

Papers on the education models proposed were available for reference and Frequently Asked Questions were updated regularly in response to common questions. Additional statistical and financial information was also posted on the site. The website detailed the avenues available to the community to provide feedback and seek further information.

Community consultation forums

Ten community forums were offered to the public. An evening public forum was held in each of the eight regions during June and July 2006. The Minister for Education and Training outlined the educational, demographic, social and financial criteria drawn upon in developing the proposal and, along with Departmental representatives, answered questions from the floor.

In October, Departmental officers and Ministerial staff attended a community forum for parents and carers of students with special needs. The Minister also attended a *Youth InterACT* forum which was also held to discuss the *Towards 2020* proposal with school age young people and representatives of the Ministerial Youth Council.

Between August and October 2006 a series of six education seminars was held, focusing on the new curriculum framework, early years of schooling, emerging technologies and special education. Over 600 people attended these seminars.

In addition, the Chief Executive and/or Departmental officers attended meetings of the Canberra Preschool Society to discuss preschool issues and of the Indigenous Education Consultative Body to discuss issues for Indigenous students and their families.

Consultation correspondence

The ACT Chief Minister, the Minister for Education and Training and the Department of Education and Training provided over 1650 responses to correspondence received regarding the *Towards 2020* proposal during the consultation period. This included responses to emails, letters and submissions.

Consultation submissions

Over 350 submissions were received on the proposal. Submissions were called for by Friday 3 November 2006 but were accepted until the end of the consultation period on 6 December 2006.

Some communities developed a collaborative approach to preparing submissions. This involved school governance groups, school staff, parents and carers and community members. Consolidated submissions of this kind enabled communities to put forward their views in a coherent and cogent way.

Submissions for which permission was given for publication will be available on the *Towards 2020* website³ from 13 December 2006.

Consultation meetings

Over 700 meetings were held by the Minister, Ministerial staff and Departmental officers during the six-month consultation period. These included group and individual meetings with parents and carers, school communities, members of school boards, Parents and Citizens Councils, Preschool Parents Associations, community members, business groups and other stakeholders.

The Minister visited, or met with representatives of every school proposed for closure and in a number of cases followed up with further meetings with school communities. He met with representatives of school boards, parents' associations, the ACT Government School Education Council and community groups. These meetings provided the opportunity for the Minister to hear the views of the community and to consider issues over the length of the consultation period.

³ *Towards 2020*, <http://www.det.act.gov.au/2020/index.htm>

FINANCIAL DATA

Attachment B

<p>School: Melrose Primary School – Proposed for closure 2006</p> <p>Financial (all figures in this section relate to 2004-05 unless otherwise indicated)</p> <p>Average cost to educate a student: \$18,205 (ACT average \$9,570 per student in a primary school)</p> <p>Operational Costs</p> <p>Direct employee expenses: \$0.855m</p> <p>Direct SBM payments: \$0.160m</p> <p>Depreciation: \$0.171m</p> <p>Other in school expenses: \$0.006m</p> <p>Educational & corporate support costs: \$0.209m</p> <p>Total cost to operate the school: \$1.401m</p>

Savings from Closure			
	SBM	Salary	Total
	\$m	\$m	\$m
2006-07	0.077	0.131	0.208
2007-08	0.156	0.268	0.424
2008-09	0.160	0.277	0.437
2009-10	0.164	0.284	0.448
Total	0.557	0.960	1.517

Notes:

1. Employee expenses include salary and superannuation costs for all teachers and administrative staff at the school during the year. This includes centrally funded relief.
2. School Based Management (SBM) payments are made to schools for site running costs such as cleaning, minor maintenance and utilities. 2004-05 amounts include 2 quarterly payments in 2004 and 2 in 2005.
3. Other in school expenses include Australian Government specific purpose funding and other general expenses incurred in providing educational programs in schools.
4. Depreciation includes depreciation on buildings and plant and equipment.
5. Educational and corporate support costs are the sum of costs which are centrally funded such as curriculum, and other corporate costs such as finance and human resources.

Source: ACT Department of Education and Training, derived from 2004-2005 audited financial statements.

CORRESPONDENCE SCHEDULE

Attachment C

Part 1 Melrose Primary School

Concern / Issue raised	Correspondence schedule numbers
<i>Educational issues raised</i>	
Schools proposed for closure	
Current enrolments make school viable	C4
Loss of enrolments due to proposal	C18/19
Loss of good facilities	C7, M2
Transfer of assets	D2
Timeframe of transitions	D5
<i>Questions about data</i>	
Capacity: have tenanted buildings been counted?	C15, C16
Projected enrolments: demographic data claimed to be flawed	C6/8, C10, C11/13, C16, C18/9 C22, S2
Projected enrolments: claimed have not taken account of school 'turning around' and attracting future enrolments	C22
Claimed that population data in accurate	D1
Equity concerns	
Inequitable impact on Indigenous students and families	S2
Inequitable impact on low SES students and families	S2
Inequitable impact on non-English speaking families (especially new arrivals)	S2
Parental choice	
Loss of choice within region	C4
PEAS	
What will new PEA be?	P1, C3, C11, D8

How to get into specific school?	C21, D2
Other PEA questions	D2
Value of small schools	
Caring & friendly	S2
Inclusive, multicultural	S2
Models	
Models will support 'seamless pathways'	S2 (amalgamate PS and Chifley Preschool)
Some students will need to move multiple times because of 2007 closure	C7, C18/19
Early years	
Positive response to focus on early years	S2
Positive response to integration of Preschools with primary schools	S2
What is P-3? Explain	C18/19
Students with particular needs	
Impact on:	
Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder	C10, C11/13, C16, C18/19, C20, S2
Concerns about:	
Students coping with change	D3
Need for northside Autism unit	C20, D18, D21
Students remaining as a unit, including teachers and STAs	D1, D2, D3, D5, D7, D10
Appropriate LSU facilities	D1, D2, D7 (equivalent or better than current facilities) D11
Access to extra curricular activities	D2
Integrated learning program required	D2, D7
Location of unit	D3
An out of hours school care provision	D5, D15, D23 (transport to programs if not on site), D25, D31

Toilet access	D11, D13, D25, D26
Direct access to secure outdoor areas	D25
Financial issues raised	
Questions about costs data	
Claimed that Proposal does not take a cost-benefit approach (including costs to families and community)	C1/2, c9
Request data on budgets, savings, enrolments, demographic trends	C23
Claimed that figures about cost per student are inaccurate	M2
Costs to families	
Transport	C4, S2, D2
Transport for students with special needs	S2, D2, D3, D21, D25
Low SES families unable to manage additional costs	S2
Advice on Transition funding (eg when known; how much)	C1/2
Costs of changing schools eg uniforms	D2
Indigenous and multicultural support	D2
Costs to communities	
Loss of community resources eg sporting fields	C9, C10
What will land be used for?	C1/2, C18/19
Tenants	
Relocation site and availability	S2
Access for future tenants	S2, D2
What about current users of YMCA, church?	C1/2, C5, C7, C10, C11/13, C14, D2
Social issues raised	
General	
Loss of neighbourhood school (community social networks)	C9, C14, C18, C19

Loss of school as 'heart of community'	C1, C2, C5, S2, D8
Loss of before and after school care (& holiday programs)	S2
Stress for students with special needs	S2
Co-located community programs eg YMCA	S2
Potential for co-location with childcare – 'one stop shop' for families	S2
Childcare support to preschool	D8
Transport	
Transport difficulties due to changes (eg no car/one car)	S2
Length of bus travelling time	C4,
Student health concerns as no longer walking to school	C9, C16
Agrees Government needs to review and renew schooling provision	C9, C6/8
Timeframe too short for 2007 implementation	C11/13
Government should have consulted before developing proposal	C18/9
Criteria for proposed closure of particular schools not explicit	C10
Unclear whether outcomes data (eg ACTAP) were used to inform proposal	C6/8
Lack of information	C22

Summary of proposal	Schedule number
<p>Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Retain Melrose PS; incorporate Chifley Preschool & Lyons PS (not supported by Lyons community) ○ Strengthen cluster arrangements to increase efficiencies ○ Potential for co-location with childcare – 'one stop shop' for families ○ Potential to emphasise health benefits in a community precinct ○ Promote Melrose PS through a marketing campaign 	S2
Find speciality programs/teachers in order to improve enrolments, Marketing push Community group expansion	M2

Part 2 Correspondence - General

Concern / Issue raised	Correspondence schedule numbers
<i>Educational issues raised</i>	
Schools proposed for closure	
<i>General:</i>	
Current enrolments make school viable	C17
Loss of specific curricula	C239
Loss of extra curricula programs	C238, S15 (requests protection) P34,
Schools achieving good educational outcomes - no need for change	C170
Loss of good facilities	C9, C17, C43, C51, S20
Protection, storage or new location for school assets, memorabilia etc	C9, C43, C231
Concerns about students coping with change and moving to new schools	C118
Questions of educational, social, and financial impact on students	C128, C134
General opposition	C19, C35, C37, C43, C58, C79, C85, C92, C93, C102, C103, C179, C180, C228, C323, C250, C225, C266, S33
General support	C28, C29, C39, C40, C54, C56, C63, C67, C90, C101, C112, C116, C135, C136, C141, C171/176, C172, C173/174, C175, 198, C208, S27
Concerns about the rights of Yass Valley students	C151
Concerns standard of education is decreasing	C206
Suggested ways to improve education in the ACT	C214
Closures should result in better educational outcomes for students	S21
General lack of educational rationale behind proposal	S26, C247 (requests evidence of educational advantages of new models)
Claimed that there is a lack of resources to implement set schedule	S26
Negative impact of closures to outcomes of students	S30

Educational quality is not related to number of empty places at a school	S37
Questions about data	
Capacity: are demountables counted?	C51, C115, C135, C157, P3
Capacity: modern education requires additional space	S8, S34
Projected enrolments: claimed that demographic data flawed	C33, C72, C75, C77, C100, C119, C167, C242, C243, S30, S33
Claimed that current enrolment figures incorrect	C91, S3
More detail of criteria required	C4, C21, C49, C57, C71, C74, C81, C109, C121
Claimed that capacity figures in accurate	C25, C52, C75, C77, C87, C91, C100, C132, C135, C166, C170, C243, S24, S37, S44, D3
quest data about public attending local schools	C147
Why are some schools with a lower percentage capacity rate staying open?	C157
Enrolments are already decreasing because of proposed closures	C167, C230, C264, C265, S4,
Equity concerns	
Claimed that inequitable impact on indigenous students and families	C43, C240, C255, S30,
Claimed that inequitable impact on low SES students and families	S18, S24, S30, S34, S42
Government must protect the rights of all students	S21
Dealing with equity in 2020	P13
Parental choice	
Claimed that will result in loss of choice across the ACT	C26, C131, C170, S24, S34
Range of models not available in all regions	S34, S36, S44
Larger schools offer more choice	S1, S43
Small schools will no longer be available	S20, S30, S34
Loss of choice within region	S34
Range of models not available in region	C130
Loss of choice locally	C121, S6

Parents don't want their children leaving permanent buildings to go into demountables	C146, S34
PEAS	
PEA system operates against choice (eg some specialist programs only available in one region)	
Enforce student attendance within PEA only	S34
PEAS – timeline for new areas	P31
Lack of information about PEAS	C109
Choice of school - rights	C3, C76, C223, S36
Negative effect on hopeful out of area enrolments	C6, C76, S34
Should address why people don't go to school	C6
Government deciding what schools will close, then thinking of PEAS – should be the other way around	C202
How are the NSW students being considered?	C236
Students not attending local schools because of lack of educational value	S3
Review of PEAS is complicating matters	S34
Out of area priority	P7
Request for info about PEAS	P23
Value of small schools	
Individual attention	C26, C37, C44, C82, C115, C209
Caring & friendly	C197, C238, C239
Suggestions about improved outcomes at small schools	C221
Cost effectiveness	C62
Teach children valuable life skills	C102
General value	C140, C160, C165, S30, S34, D3
Behaviour problems are better dealt with	C238, S3
Small schools assists sense of community	S8

Inconsistent attitude towards small schools (still supporting them in the private sector)	S31
Models	
General	
Too many models	S4
Models will support 'seamless pathways'	S7
Some models will mean too many transition points through schooling	C205
Some students will need to move multiple times because of 2007 closure	C15
Support for models	C15
Requests for evidence of advantages of and disadvantages of models and larger schools	C119, C120, S34
Concerned about disadvantages of larger schools	C154, C160, C221, C237, C264, S17, S24 (provides examples), S29, S30, S39, S39, S42
Criteria for deciding on particular models of schooling	C124, C138
Public needs to be made more aware of educational advantages of new models	C141
No consistency within regions	C146, S7
Expected educational outcomes for new models	C146, S30 (no evidence to suggest improved educational results) S44 (similar outcomes as current model)
Cost of adapting existing schools to cater for the new grades the school will have	C218
Will current programs be lost?	C224
Concerns about lack of choice of particular models	C224, S34 (retain use of larger and smaller schools)
Capacity issues will force students into particular schools	S36
Provide counselling to improve behaviour	S41
Research that supports putting year 6 into high schools	P10
Early years	
Specialist early childhood schools should be P-2, not P-3	C204, S7, S20, S43
Importance of early learning, thus importance of trained staff	S20
Middle Schooling	

Positive response to middle schooling	C238
Model unproved	C48, C218
Loss of Y6 leadership in primary schools	S36, C266
More information about what middle schooling involves	C109
Will students be forced to do year 6 at HS?	C18, C266
Doesn't believe students will attend Stromlo in year 6	C238
Interested in middle schooling, but believes it won't suit all students	S36
7-12 schools	
Loss of successful college model	S11
Less curriculum choice than colleges	S11
Loss of young adult environment	S11
Where did the demand come from?	C144
Existing 11-12 model would be weakened by integrating other years	C149, C167, S11, S29, S34 (support for 11-12), C244, C262 (requests evidence to support 7-12)
ACT schools will miss out on grants if all other states have 11-12	S23
Students with particular needs	
Impact on:	
Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder	C150
Students with disabilities	C210
Concerns about:	
Appropriate facilities and resources	C1, S43, S46
Students coping with change	C235, C245, S36, S42
Unit cohorts remaining together	C1
Continued provision of mainstreaming opportunities	C189, S46
The detrimental effect large schools will have on students with special needs	S34

Availability of schools in their area with special needs unit	C210, S46
Government "targeting" students with special needs	C232
The closing of schools with LSU	C235
Early childhood schools will mean additional transition for students with special needs	S46
Stress for families	S46
Need more time for planning and transition	C246, C259, D1
Heard rumours of special ed funding reduction	P9
Heard point system to change – harder for students to get into units	P9
Staff matters	
Loss of staffing positions, including executive opportunities	C52, C161
Teacher stress	S9, S34
Bigger classes	C185
Timing of transfer outcomes	C230
Effect on school staff	C104
Concerns about future working conditions	C137
Request for funding to go towards teachers and assistants	S13 (not technology), S19
Concern that teachers not involved in the development of proposals	S13
Concern that professional development opportunities will be lost	S20
Concern that staff will not have early childhood training	S20
Government needs to address the lack of social recognition teachers have in the community	S21
Provide a career path for gifted teachers	S41
Provision for minimum number of teachers	S43
How many staff at schools will be affected	P2
Preschools	

Desirability of childcare and long day care programs associated with preschools	C13, C234, S6, S28
Criteria not clear	C108
Integration with PS needs to ensure appropriate structures take place	S6
Government doesn't have a commitment to early childhood education	S20
All viable preschools should remain open, even if their primary school closes	S120
All students should have the right to government preschool	S20
Preschool registration should be earlier	P8
Financial issues raised	
Questions of costs data	
Schools proposed for closure	C108, S6, S30
Claims that DET school costs figures inaccurate	S30, S37
Proposal does not take a cost-benefit approach (including costs to families and community)	C264, S26
Issues with cost analysis	C128, C129, C211, S3, S34, S44
Put more money into schools	C103
Don't close schools to make money for dragway	C132
Closure of preschools results in small savings	S7
Cost per student doesn't reflect special needs provision	S9
School configuration based on economic factors	S19
Requests more money spent on upgrading existing schools	S24, S41
Waste of public resources	S31, P12 (who is paying for ads?)
Costs to families	
Transport	C239, C256, C258, S13, S14, S18, S20, S30
Costs of changing schools eg uniforms	C148, P4 (heard "rumour" about support)
Advice on Transition funding (eg when known; how much)	C115, C126, C150, S18, P10

Ask parents to pay more taxes to save schools	C73
Increased costs may result in more truancy amongst disadvantaged students	S18
Costs to communities	
Loss of community resources eg sporting fields	C119, C168, C206, S37, S48
Loss of school impact on house prices	S14, S30, S44, P7
Effects on business re loss of local shops	C153, C213, C264, S30, S48
Proposal really about land sales	C33, C47
How will vacated land be used? (may provide suggestion)	C207, C234, C248 (request for childcare use), C249, C253, C257, S2 (use for cheap accommodation for needy), S22, S30 (suggest ideas), S34, S44, P10 (vandalism concerns), P21, P32,
Employment effects	S30, P2 (contractors)
Questions about what is going to happen to P&C funds, excess uniforms, etc.	C260
Tenants	
Building used as a homeless shelter	C114
Social issues raised	
General	
Loss of neighbourhood school (community social networks)	C5, C30, C86, C98, C147, C264, S16, S30, S44
Students will lose friends	C27, C86, C115
Loss of school as 'heart of community'	C9, C27, C30, C98, C100, C105, C130, S16
Stress for students with special needs	C7, C9, C270
Loss of parental involvement	S20
Community support for schools to remain open	C131, S16
School closures will effect community and parents generally	C166, S24
Stress for parents and community	C169, C212
Request for social impact assessment	C226

Schools in each suburb not necessary – community is broader	S1
Co-location of early childhood services in proposal	S5
Community contribution for fundraising	S20
Transition support requested	S30, S40, S43, P3
Transport	
Transport difficulties due to changes (eg no car/one car)	C148
Environmental impact of families needing to use transport	C262, S30
Student health concerns as no longer walking to school	C30, C43, C82, C239, C262, C264, S16, S20, S34,
Safety concerns (eg parking, road crossings, bicycle paths, traffic lights)	C43, C197, C238, S14, S16, S17, S24 (requests upgrades), S30
Inadequacy of school bus services	C109, C183
Wanting free bus transport	C30
What provision will be made to ensure travel arrangements will not be a burden	C151
Travel on public transport isn't safe	C151, S16
General transport issues with increased traffic	S9, S24
School bus scheme	P13
General issues raised	
Timeline too short for 2007 implementation	C5, C8, C42, C45, C80, C81, C89, C95, C97, C119, C125, C169, C197, C230, C238, C245, C259, C262, S6, S20, S29, S34, S37, S46
Government should have consulted before developing proposal	C45, C203, C262, C264, S13, S42, S48
Individuals or groups did not have their views heard	C12 (old tech process)
Decisions were already made (consultation not genuine)	C130, C143, C158, C225, C237, S8, S26, S29, S34, S37, S38
Criteria for proposed closure of particular schools not explicit	C3, C138, C216 (requests statement of reasons), C262, S13, S17, S30, S34
Unclear whether outcomes data (eg ACTAP) were used to inform proposal	C10, C70, C170
DET using data not available to public to inform recommendations	C193, C245, S9, S19, S42, S44
Requests for information	C2, C11, C16, C22, C32, C35, C38, C46, C49, C60, C61, C68, C69, C83, C94, C108, C110,

	C117, C121, C126, C127, C128, C129, C134, C155, C157, C159, C161, C182, C188, C191, C204, C211, C216, C219, C255, S34, P24
Against sale to private schools	C31, C33, C36, C115, C215
Lack of an experienced minister	C104
Need for objective report/study	C64, S48
Towards 2020 – anti live in Canberra campaign	C86, C185, S16, S37
Consultation period not long enough	C117, C125, C143, C170 (bad timing), C212, C262, S34, S42
Request evidence of consultation- believes there is a lack of consultation	C117, C146
Requests support with submissions	C139
Government needs to do more planning	C144, C200, C259
How government determines funding for non-government schools	C142, C176
Honesty with community required	C146, C207, C264, S31 (explain terminology) C57 (suggests FAQ's)
Requests sensitivity for dates and method of announcement of the final decision	C201, S38 (inconsiderate)
Losing people to non-government schools	C203, C261, S4, S34, S36, S37, D3
Requests information on who and how the submissions would be analysed	C217 (requests independent party) C219
Close schools sooner rather than later	S1
Concerns over language of proposal	S7
Questions priority of government	S17
Offers suggestions to reverse decline in government school enrolments	S23
Suggested ways to improve demographics of areas with closing schools	S23
Question relationship between Towards 2020 and territory plan	S26
Should have undertaken risk analysis	C 240, C255, S34
Requests government to conduct surveys to gain information from parents, students, and staff	S40
Suggests DET discuss school closures with other organisations	S40
Family moving to ACT- needs to know what's happening	P5

Issues with savings as costs	D1
West Belconnen only open P-6 in 2009 – Request for P-10 “as promised”	P19
“Schools Location Bill”	C263
Request for compensation for schools that were proposed to close but didn’t	C265

Summary of proposal	Schedule number
Review assistance schemes to minimise effects of school closures on disadvantaged and homeless students	S18
Delay decision till 08 to allow full public enquiry and time to manage change	S18
Leave Narrabundah, Charnwood & Southern Cross as P 6 schools	S18
Establish a revitalised school on the Holder site (instead of Duffy)	S18
Intergenerational facility on site possibly including ‘independent government school’	S22
Use excess space more productively to support community benefit	S30
Strengthen public education through development of community schools	S30
Use submissions as starting point for extended process to support more informed decisions: no closure of amalgamations until 2007	S34
One-stop-shop sites for families incorporating infant and day care, preschool to Year 5 and before and after school care.	S34
A strategy that includes smaller and larger schools.	S34
Development of guidelines for future proposed closures and amalgamations.	S34
Triggers a revisit of the strategy in 2020 as a matter of urgency	S44
Suggests that different aspects of education system be considered within a hierarchical framework – at a local, subdistrict, district or metropolitan level	S44

The correspondence schedule numbers refer to correspondence and briefings for Ministerial meetings on the Proposal, held in the ACT Department of Education and Training. Correspondence is coded as follows:

- P Telephone calls
- D Departmental correspondence
- M Ministerial meetings
- C Written correspondence and emails
- S Submissions

P1 etc. refers to the folio number of the record of the telephone call held in the Department’s records. D1 etc. refers to the folio number of Departmental records and correspondence.

SM1 etc. refers to the folio number of records for school meetings

M1 etc. refers to the folio number of records for Ministerial meetings.

C1 etc. refers to the folio number of written correspondence or emails held in the Department's records.

S1 etc refers to the folio number of the submission held in the Department's records.