

 A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE	
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3 Wyles Place

Flynn ACT 2615

11.03.09.

The Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs: Inquiry into school closures of the ACT education system.

I enclose a copy of an email sent to Minister Barr on 22.06.06. as part of my submission to the Committee.

In addition:

- The manner in which closures were imposed on the ACT and individual communities was reprehensible. The education department and relevant government departments should first have consulted schools, teachers, parents & students explaining the perceived need for cost-cutting and rationalisation.

- No reasons were given for the closure of specific schools and there was (& still is in some cases) a failure to provide requested information to school communities.

- At gatherings labelled community consultations the answers given to questions rarely went beyond political spin. Where consultants held fora opinions from attendees may have been recorded but the documents produced as a result of the fora showed

that the consultants had preconceived ideas of expected outcomes and that they did not incorporate citizens views regarding potential site usage.

- Statistics gathered by the Flynn Primary School Community showed the presence of young families in the suburb. These statistics were ignored. As in the School Closures round of 1988-1989 statistical evidence relating to "unused" classrooms and space in smaller schools was used to show inefficiencies, waste and poor management rather than to reflect changes in curricular presentation and educational needs.

- Education of children/students is a cost to be borne by all members of communities, of society. The "services" delivered to some students, some schools are bound to be more costly than those in other situations. This does not mean that smaller schools, historic schools such as Tharwa & Hall or provisions for students at risk should be closed or reduced. Marginalised, isolated and under-appreciated people who "ship through the cracks" of education provision generate more expense for other areas of government such as health, employment-training, law & order and welfare services.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment through these submissions.

Rosemary Blemings

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11.03.09.

The Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs: Inquiry into school closures & reform of the AET Education System.

Further comments:

- I would like to see evidence or studies that show that large, multi-campus schools provide appropriate educational experiences for students of all ages and abilities. So they help families raise children who are healthy, responsible, caring and happy members of society?

- There needs to be an overhaul of the education system so that the management of buildings and grounds is centralised. A fast-response team is preferable to the contracted-out system where maintenance of school buildings and facilities is concerned - A fast-response team would be a government agency not a contracted system.

- This would reduce the stress on principals & senior staff who should have a teaching not a managerial background.

Rosemary Blenkins

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Flynn School buildings should be utilised by
Community groups for the foreseeable future.

From: Rosie - Internode
To: committees@parliament.act.gov.au
Sent: Thursday, March 26, 2009 4:56 PM
Subject: School closures

The Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs

Further to my written submission which has already been acknowledged I would like to reiterate that the process through which the primary school at Flynn was closed was flawed and extremely shocking. Even if restructuring of education provision in the ACT was deemed necessary the contempt with which the Flynn community was treated was inexcusable. That communities have seen their local schools closed or radically altered without meaningful consultation smacks of dictatorship and political arrogance. That the Flynn community had to assemble large sums of money before there was even a hope of information being released by the ACT Government shows that the Government and its officers had an inadequate understanding of 'community' and the role of democracy in elected governments.

The buildings which were home to Flynn Primary School students over several decades should be retained for community use. The buildings should be utilised to satisfy the local need for additional child-care places and headquarters/facilities for a range of community groups if Governments persist in their ignoring of the need for a primary school in the suburb. The building has heritage significance and local people do not want to see it fall into further disrepair through neglect and prevarication by the authorities.

Rosemary Blemings, resident and parent of two Flynn students (1979---)

28/04/2009

FLYNN A.C.T. 2615

Rosemary Blemings

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From: "Rosemary Blemings" <roseble@tpg.com.au>
To: <barr@act.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 22 June 2006 5:41 PM
Subject: SCHOOLS CLOSURES PROPOSALS

The ACT Minister for Education

I have several points I wish to bring to your attention:

I would question whether it is ethical to try to achieve economies of scale through the changing of the education patterns and lifestyles of children & students through school closures. Changing service delivery methods is likely to cause stresses which will increase the cost of other services such as health programs.

Has any independent research been conducted to show that students who graduate from larger campus-schools are better fitted for life, secondary education challenges and pleasanter people than those who have had the benefit of studying in a smaller school?

Current children & students spend far less of their time being in the presence of adults who have the skills to mentor & appropriately guide them. The reduction of class sizes over recent years is highly commendable. Additionally the presence of teachers' assistants in many classrooms is highly desirable. Both measures suitably increase the contact children have with positively influential adults. I would suggest that if children are moved to larger schools there would be considerable negation of these applaudable trends: they would feel swamped by the sheers numbers present on campus.

Many of the proposed-closure schools are in suburbs that are in the process of urban renewal. Younger families are moving in. It would seem that the natural & actual demographics of such processes have not been adequately researched using up-to-date figures or statistics from real estate companies. The fallacy of seeing 'empty classrooms' as being unused has been noticed during other 'school closure' proposals. Rooms are used differently for excellent outcomes that are not readily counted like rows of desks.

It is distressing, to the point of contributing to the exit of experienced teachers from the system, to continually see governments avoiding consulting with or listening-to **grass-roots** teachers before making decisions. Costly batteries of tests to gather data & statistics have been instituted in recent years. Teachers who work with children & students are aware of & report individuals' needs long before such tests reveal 'outcomes'.

I believe one of the 'selling-points' of the proposals is that millions of dollars are to be spent on IT. Is there an educational basis for placing even more emphasis on 'screens' in this way. Surely this proposal indicates that machines are more important than well-trained teachers?

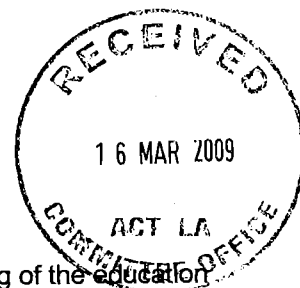
The timeline of the closures proposals is insulting. Schools have not been told why they are targeted for closure. There should be at least a year after submissions are required before any closures take effect. Parents & students do not need the end-of-year-uncertainty your proposals have generated. In our (Flynn) area there would not be enough places for educational refugees to move to given the number of proposed closes/changes around this area.

The ACT Government makes much of 'building community' & stages much vaunted events to this effect. The first community & one that bonds & lasts is that surrounding local schools. People need each other locally & need local spaces (especially in the unique 'Bush capital'). To have school ovals targetted for development destroys these amenities & essentials. We are asked to walk for our health & not to contribute to greenhouse gases by using cars. Removing neighbourhood schools shows Government policies to be hypocritical.

Has the Government done any surveys to establish why parents move their children to private schools?

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22/08/2006