

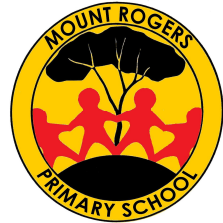


Education and Training

Mount Rogers Primary School

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Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs Inquiry into school closures and reform of the ACT education system

Mount Rogers Primary School Submission

The ACT Government's Towards 2020 policy

Demographic factors

The Mount Rogers Primary School, then known as the Mount Rogers Community School, was one of the primary schools included in the *Towards 2020* proposal for closure in the immediate future. Other schools identified for closure included Melba PreSchool, Flynn Pre School and Flynn Primary School. Within the Melba cluster, the future of Melba High School and Copland College were open to debate as to whether the two schools could be accommodated on the one campus.

Outcomes of *Towards 2020*, though not ideal for the wider North West Belconnen Community, at a minimum allowed for one Primary school and three PreSchools to remain open with Mount Rogers Community School being retained and Flynn preschool being amalgamated as an annexe of Mount Rogers P-6 school along with Melba and Spence Preschools. These schools continue to service the suburbs of Melba, Spence and Flynn, together with the twin campus Melba-Copland secondary School (7-12). Had Mount Rogers closed there would have been no primary school for three adjoining suburbs, four if you include the village of Hall.

Configuration of school environments and educational outcomes.

Positive outcomes for the amalgamation of the Spence, Melba and Flynn preschools with the Mount Rogers Primary School are beginning to be evidenced through increased enrollments in the Preschools and junior school of Mount Rogers Primary School. This has provided development opportunities for preschool staff through increased opportunities for personal development and greater interaction with K-6 teachers and executive staff.

Implications have included increased administrative burdens for staff for financial management, enrollment processes and school maintenance. These extra processes and procedures have been absorbed in current staffing levels without additional resources. Another issue was executive management of four campus at dispersed locations. This has been alleviated through the appointment of a deputy principal in 2008.

Reorganisation of the ACT school system thus far

An educational continuum (P-12) has been preserved in the North Western Belconnen region through the provision of educational services from the preschool years (Spence, Flynn and Melba) through to senior secondary years at the Melba-Copland Secondary (7-12). Support for this is demonstrated through increased enrollments across the preschool, primary and secondary school years

The impact of school consolidation and closures

Community experiences and attitudes

Although Mount Rogers was not closed as per the original *Towards 2020* proposal it continues to suffer the stigma of having been originally announced for closure. This has not been alleviated through the continued availability of the original *Towards 2020* proposal on the ACT Government website. We are aware that several families when exploring enrollment options, have indicated to school staff their discovery of the document and questioned whether the school is sustainable. We are aware of one family that refused to consider enrolling at Mount Rogers because of this. We urge that the original proposal be removed from the website. We believe Mount Rogers would not be the only surviving school experiencing this problem.

After the final school closure announcements were made, PEAs in the North West Belconnen region were redrawn, with a large part of Flynn being included in the Mount Rogers' PEA. In 2006 and 2007 there were negligible enrollments at Mount Rogers from students living in Flynn. There are indications in 2009 of improvement in this situation with a good contingent of Flynn Preschool's 2008 enrollments continuing on to Kindergarten at Mount Rogers Primary.

Student Learning experiences

Due to the short time frame between the announcement of the outcomes of the *Towards 2020* process and the end of the consultation process, limited time was available for schools to develop transition plans for incoming students. This had a bearing on the educational outcomes for transitioning students. We also understand that for professional staff the impact on their educational planning for the year ahead would have been significant.

Financial, social and environmental impacts

In order to facilitate an expected intake on students from Flynn Primary school, the Mount Rogers P&C sought to improve access for Flynn students by successfully requesting a minor variation to ACTION bus route 45 which runs through Flynn to drop-off and pick-up at Mount Rogers. Despite this the level of transference of former Flynn students to Mount Rogers in 2007 and 2008 was very low.

Community responses

Consultation Process

Although, the Mount Rogers community understood the intent of a consultation process, its implementation was highly flawed, resulting in a painful, divisive and protracted process. A six month consultation process was required by the *Education Act* which necessitated an

extremely short time frame between the mandated decision date and the last day of the school year. This was highly unsatisfactory, and did not allow for planning processes for families and staff affected by school closures.

It is not known, and was never made clear, to what extent school and community submissions were considered and incorporated as part of the final reform package.

Education Amendment Bill

Volunteers working on the Mount Rogers submission for the *Towards 2020* proposal and consultation process, were overly extended due to full time work and carer commitments. Therefore, we believe that the extension of any consultative process beyond a six month period would place an extended onerous burden on any school community proposed for closure.

Further, any consultative process requires mutuality, this was not evidenced during the *Towards 2020* process. Due to a number of schools being involved, including those in close proximity to Mount Rogers, we found it difficult to be truly inclusive, as the process was divisive and “pitted school against school”.

Possible reopening of schools

Mount Rogers respects the right of schools to argue for reopening