

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:

COOK PRIMARY SCHOOL will close at the end of 2007.

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 Cook Primary School (Cook PS) at the end of 2007 as part of the restructure of the Belconnen South East Region. With 136 students (ACT Department of Education and Training February 2006 School Census), Cook PS is one of the smaller schools in the ACT. The cost per student is higher than the ACT average. Closure of Cook PS is anticipated to result in a saving of \$811,000 between 2008-2010. (Derived from ACT Department of Education and Training 2004-2005 audited financial statements - Refer Attachment B)
10. Cook PS attracts 62% (February 2006 School Census) of the students who live in its Priority Enrolment Area (PEA) and attend government schools. Currently there is excess capacity within the Belconnen South East Region and the area requires a range of facilities that will be financially sustainable into the future. Cook PS will be closed to align the region's capacity with demand.
11. 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, Cook PS would be considered a small school. Projections indicate that enrolments will not increase by 2010. (ACT Department of Education and Training Projected Enrolments 2006 to 2010)

12. Students with special needs will be catered for in other schools in the region, such as Macquarie PS, Aranda PS, Weetangera PS or Hawker PS. The Belconnen South East region aims to provide schools that offer a broad range of educational opportunities for all students and that are viable in the long term.
13. Transitional support of \$750 will be offered to each student affected by the closure of Cook PS, who enrolls in a government school, to assist with uniform and transport costs. The Department will work with ACTION buses on any changes to bus routes required after the closure of Cook PS.
14. When Cook 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.
15. 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.

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

FACILITY – COOK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Findings on Material Questions of Fact

16. Cook Primary School is located within the Belconnen South East Region for the purposes of the *Towards 2020* proposal.
17. The educational model proposed for Belconnen South East Region is the provision of seven P-6 schools located at Aranda, Macquarie, Weetangera, Hawker, Giralang, Kaleen and Maribyrnong. Existing high school education will continue to be provided at Canberra, Belconnen, and Kaleen High Schools. Hawker and Lake Ginninderra Colleges will continue to provide college education. The model also envisages the establishment of the Southern Cross Early Childhood School (P-2) and the Hawker Collegiate, and strengthened links between Lake Ginninderra College and both the University of Canberra and the Australian Institute of Sport. Canberra High School will further enhance its provision for gifted and talented students.
18. The model will provide a network of contemporary educational facilities for the Belconnen South East Region aimed at developing every child's potential and maximising their educational achievements.
19. The proposed model for Belconnen South East Region focuses on a regional, rather than a neighbourhood provision of education, more closely reflecting the choices that parents in the Belconnen South East 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.
20. 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 Cook PS have been raised and I have 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

The school's reputation for high quality schooling

21. Parents and community members claim that Cook PS is a model for high quality schooling provision. They comment on the school's well-regarded literacy and ESL programs and on the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into classroom learning. They cite innovative curricular practice, based on Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences. The external validation report for the school review process is referenced in arguments for the continuation of Cook PS.
22. **I find that the programs of Cook PS are well regarded by parents. Nonetheless, I find that there will be a range of educational settings in the Belconnen South East Region that provide similar child-centred learning environments for Cook PS students, enabling students to continue their educational progress. All ACT schools**

will commence trialling the ACT Curriculum Framework, based on Essential Learning Achievements, in 2007. Other regional primary schools, such as Aranda, Weetangera, Hawker and Macquarie have all placed a high priority on the development and implementation of high quality, innovative curricula. These schools enjoy high reputations which reflect parent, student and teacher satisfaction with the quality of educational provision. There are currently no programs offered at Cook PS that are not already available or cannot be accommodated in other schools in the region.

Small school

23. Parents have expressed the view that they selected Cook PS for their children because it is a small school with a nurturing and inclusive learning environment. They describe this as meaning that the children all know each other and that the staff know all the children. Parents value the caring and friendly nature of a small school and feel that their children receive more individual attention than in a larger school. Children with special needs are welcomed in the school community and their progress is supported through the school's inclusion policy.
24. Current Australian research by Professor Brian Caldwell (2005) indicates that the appropriate and effective size for a primary school is 300-400 students. 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 a rich curriculum in all key learning areas due to their small size and fewer teachers.
25. **I find that Cook PS with an enrolment of 136 students and with enrolments not projected to increase, would be considered a small school based on the Caldwell study. As such Cook PS may not in the future be able to provide the breadth of curriculum offerings available to students attending one of the larger primary schools remaining in the region. Other schools in the region offer inclusive approaches and value the contribution of each child to the school community. Class sizes are set at 21 students for kindergarten through to Year 3 and the Proposal will not affect this. Students in larger schools have the same opportunities to form quality relationships with their teachers.**

Parental choice

26. Many parents are already choosing to send their children to other schools in or beyond the region. Of the students who live within the PEA for Cook PS and who attend government schools, only 62% attend Cook PS. (February 2006 School Census) However, parents who have chosen Cook PS for their children have expressed their desire to retain this choice.
27. The Government recognises that many parents in the Belconnen South East Region are not choosing the option of public education within their PEA for their children. 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. The proposal is also aimed at ensuring that government schools will be able to meet the educational needs of students through to 2020.

- 28. I find that enrolment figures from the February 2006 School Census show that many parents of children living within the PEA for Cook PS are not choosing the local school. The proposed provision for Belconnen South East will provide parents with a range of educational options.**

Educational outcomes

- 29. 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.**
- 30. I find that the 2002 - 2006 ACTAP results show that average progress from year 3 to year 5 at Cook PS in reading, writing and numeracy was generally similar to the system average progress. Progress in writing from 2004 to 2006 was significantly higher than the system average progress, however, the reliability of the 2004-2006 data is significantly affected by the small numbers of students (reading and numeracy: 6; writing: 7) who undertook the assessment at Cook PS in both 2004 and 2006.**

ICT provision

- 31. Parents particularly value the ICT resources currently available at Cook PS and are concerned that these might be lost or not available at alternative schools.**
- 32. 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 IT 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.**

Providing for students with special needs

- 33. Parents of children with disabilities enrolled in mainstream classes at Cook PS have raised concerns about the continuation of mainstream opportunities for their children. Parents claim that educational progress may be impeded and that social adjustment to a different and particularly a larger environment may be difficult. Parents value the inclusive curriculum offered at Cook and the school's capacity to respond to the complex needs of children.**
- 34. I accept that change can be difficult for some children with disabilities. However, I find that at the end of 2007 it is anticipated that there will be five children at Cook PS supported by the Department's Inclusion Support program. Individual transition plans will be developed during 2007 to assist these students and their families in their move to another school.**
- 35. All ACT government schools have the capacity to fully include students with a disability, and the majority of schools currently do this. No student with a disability**

currently at Cook PS will be forced to move into a special education unit against the wishes of parents. The additional resources provided to a school to support the educational program of a child with a disability will follow the child to the new school.

2 Financial

Cost of operating school

36. The total cost to the Territory of operating Cook PS in 2004-05 was \$1,546,000. 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 Cook PS are set out in Attachment B – Financial Data.
37. Currently the average cost of educating a child at Cook PS is \$10,732 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.
38. **I find that with only 136 students enrolled at Cook PS, (February 2006 School Census), and with enrolments not expected to increase (Projected Enrolments 2006 to 2010), the cost per student per year will remain higher than the ACT average. The closure of Cook PS is anticipated to result in a saving of \$811,000 between 2008-2010.**

Capacity and enrolments

39. School capacity figures reflect the designated teaching areas in the school and are calculated taking into account a range of design factors and specific teaching needs. Principals may request a review of capacity figures at any time and these are carried out regularly.
40. 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.
41. The Cook school community claims that because Cook PS has operated at between 95% and 100% capacity over the past five years and has a stable enrolment pattern, it should remain open.
42. **I find that Cook PS is one of the smaller schools in the ACT system. Currently Cook PS operates at 91% capacity, however, there is no indication that enrolments**

will increase. As a result of low enrolments, seven teaching spaces (classrooms) have been leased to tenants of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS), leaving only five teaching spaces occupied by the school. The school occupies less than 50% of the site's total capacity.

43. I also find that currently there is excess capacity within the Belconnen South East Region. To provide a range of financially sustainable educational settings in modern facilities within the geographic area, Cook PS will be closed to align the region's capacity with the demand.

Costs to families

44. The primary cost to families identified by the consultation process has been the increased cost of transporting children to school should the neighbourhood school close. Additional costs involving new uniforms have also been raised.
45. Transitional support of \$750 will be offered to each student affected by the closure of Cook PS, who enrolls in a government school.

Future use of facilities

46. The school community has expressed concern over the future use of the site should Cook PS close. The school community has also expressed concern over the loss of facilities, such as playing fields, that are currently seen as assets to be used by all of the Cook community.
47. When Cook 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.

3 Social Impacts

Loss of the neighbourhood school

48. The Cook PS community claims that it has maintained its strong support for Cook as a neighbourhood school, which they value because it enables children to walk or cycle to school and enables students and their families to establish and maintain social networks.
49. I acknowledge that in relation to the closure of Cook PS some families with young children will need to make new transport arrangements. Typically this would require students to be accompanied to school in the nearest suburb. I find that considering Cook's location a significant proportion of the students currently enrolled at Cook PS will be able to access the schools at nearby Aranda, Macquarie and Weetangera. A significant proportion of the students will be able to access alternative schools through the use of pedestrian pathways and underpasses and other students will be supported by bus travel to their new schools. I find that many Cook families already choose to send their children to other schools in or beyond the region.

Loss of before and after school care programs

50. The community has also claimed that there could be a negative impact on playgroups and community organisations that currently or potentially use buildings on the Cook site. Cook PS currently hosts before and after school care. The vacation care program is used by students outside the Cook PS community.
- 51. I find that before and after school care programs can be accessed at other regional primary schools, including Macquarie, Aranda, Weetangera and Hawker. Following closure of the school the school facility and tenants will become the responsibility of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS).**

Impacts on other schools

52. The educational, financial and social impacts on other schools in the region were raised in the consultation on the proposal to close Cook PS.
53. Currently there is an excess capacity in the Belconnen South East region. The closure of Cook PS will support the alignment of regional capacity with current demand trends.
- 54. The *Towards 2020* package provides \$90 million for school infrastructure upgrades. Schools in the Belconnen South East Region will be enhanced to cater for the needs of new enrolments.**

4 Further Issues Considered

55. I have considered the issues raised in the submissions (held in the Department and published on the Department's website) received regarding Cook Primary School from:

Cook Parents & Citizens Association and Board and Cook Preschool Parents Association – Cook PS, S5

Cate Aitken – Cook PS, S20 (not published on website)

Peter Blackwell – Cook PS, S18

Sophie Brissenden – Cook PS, S11

Peter Campbell and Sue Martin – Cook PS, S8

Jodie Evans – Cook PS, S15

Helen Kinmonth – Cook PS, S6

Ciaran Lane – Cook PS, S17

Heather Lane – Cook PS, S19

Riley Lane – Cook PS, S16

Justine McNamara – Cook PS, S13(not published on website)

Wayde Margetts – Cook PS, S24

David Meggs – Cook PS, S9

Annika Morling – Cook PS, S10

Brendan Morling – Cook PS, S25

Rebecca Morling – Cook PS, S12

Debbie Newton – Cook PS, S1 (not published on website)

Sue Piper – Cook PS, S23 (not published on website)
Lisa Stephan – Cook PS, S4 (not published on website)
Margaret Tregurtha – Cook PS, S26
Evan Tully – Cook PS, S22
Ellen Unruh – Cook PS, S2 (not published on website)
Ellen Unruh – Cook PS, S3 (not published on website)
Willa Whitewolf – Cook PS, S21
Susan and Steven Willemse – Cook PS, S14


Also issues raised regarding Cook PS in the following general submission:

Kerry Keneally – General, S48

Cook PS, S1 etc. refers to the folio number of the submission in the Department's records.

56. I or my Department have responded to 40 pieces of written correspondence relating to Cook PS, recorded in Attachment C – Correspondence Schedule. (Copies of these documents are held in the Department.) I have attended four meetings which dealt with issues related to Cook PS and the Chief Minister has attended one meeting. Departmental representatives have attended 12 meetings with the school and school community. (Records of meetings are held in the Department.)
57. 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 Cook PS specifically. The issues described in part 2 of Schedule C are matters related to the Proposal generally and not specific to Cook 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

School: Cook Primary School – Proposed for closure 2007	
Financial (all figures in this section relate to 2004-05 unless otherwise indicated)	
Average cost to educate a student: \$10,732 (ACT average \$9,570 per student in a primary school)	
Operational Costs	
Direct employee expenses: \$0.962m	
Direct SBM payments: \$0.165m	
Depreciation: \$0.118m	
Other in school expenses: \$0.073m	
Educational & corporate support costs: \$0.228m	
Total cost to operate the school: \$1.546m	

Savings from Closure			
	SBM	Salary	Total
	\$m	\$m	\$m
2006-07	0.000	0.000	0.000
2007-08	0.075	0.084	0.159
2008-09	0.151	0.171	0.322
2009-10	0.155	0.175	0.330
Total	0.381	0.430	0.811

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 Cook Primary School

Concern / Issue raised	Correspondence schedule numbers
<i>Educational issues raised</i>	
Schools proposed for closure	
Current enrolments make school viable	C3, C9, C12, C13, S5, S7, S23
Loss of specific curricula	C3, C12, S5 & S25 (particularly strong in literacy & IT), S8 & S21 (Multiple Intelligences), S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19, S23 ("broad curriculum")
Loss of extra curricula programs	S5 & S25 (wide range of social & sporting opportunities), S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19
Experienced, excellent and friendly staff	C14, C37, S5, S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19, S14, S15, S23
Claims that school achieving good educational outcomes -no need for change	C3, C8, C12 (literacy award), C13, C34, S5 (cites External Validation report & strong ACTAP results), S8, S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19, S13, C37, D1
School has nurturing, respectful, inclusive environment that supports learning for all	C35, S5, S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19, S13, S14, S18, S23, S25
School has responded to educational and social needs	S1
Loss of good facilities	C9, C13, C35 (IT), S5, S8, S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19, S23
Will there be room at other schools?	C18, C19
Strong transition to public schools	C37
<i>Questions about data</i>	
Capacity: modern education requires additional space	S5
Projected enrolments: demographic data claimed to be flawed	C4 (Molonglo residents?), C16 & S25 (suburb regenerating), C18 (Molonglo), S5, S15 (Molonglo)
Parental choice	
Fewer schools means less choice	C23
Small schools will no longer be available choice	C10, C14, C22, S13

Loss of choice within region	C12, C36
Loss of choice locally	S8, S13
Loss of neighbourhood school	S5, S8, S18,
Value of small schools	C18, S18
Individual attention	C6, C8, C13, C14, S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19, S18
Caring & friendly	C6, C8, C12, S8, S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19
Research evidence suggests improved outcomes for 'at risk' and special needs students	C8, S6
Curriculum provision meets parent expectations	S8
Acceptance of diversity (larger schools may find it more difficult to address student management issues)	S5, S8, S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19, S13
Models	
Too many models	C17, C28
Models will support 'seamless pathways'	S5, S13 & S23 (Cook supports pathways through public schooling), S18
Early years	
Positive response to integration of preschools with primary schools	C40, S5, S23 (already close relationships at Cook)
P-10 schools	
Negative response to P-10 schools	C16 ('super schools'), S18
Lack of individual attention	S18
Student management issues	S5, S18
Students with particular needs	
Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder	C8, C33, S2, D3
Student requiring learning support	S5, S13, S14
Other (special needs generally)	C6, C18, C35 (notes Cook serves these students well), S5, S6, S23 ("special children cherished")
Concerns about appropriate facilities and resources	S5
Concerns about students coping with change	S5, D2, D3

Concerns about continued provision of mainstreaming opportunities	S5, D2
Concerns about student management issues	C6, S5
Concerns about leaving a small, caring atmosphere	C33, C37, S5, D2, D3
Concerns about familiar aspects to be maintained, eg. same STA	D2
Financial issues raised	
Cook should be judged on its educational merits, not on what it costs	S9
Questions the government spending priorities	S21
Questions about costs data	C23 (general questions about cost calculations)
NET expected savings figures claimed to be inaccurate or overstated	S18
Schools proposed for closure	C18, S5 & S8 (costs not high) – also note impact of tenanted building on Cook's running costs
Concerns current investments in schools will be wasted	C13 (IT), S2/3, S5, S23
Concerns Federal Government grants to schools will be wasted	C26, S15
Figures claimed not to reflect transition and implementation costs	S25
Proposal does not take account of costs for receiving schools	S5, S25
Proposal does not take a cost- benefit approach (including costs to families and community)	C18, C30, S5
Cook has sound financial management	S5, S23
Costs to families	C18 (generally higher costs), C30
Transport	C18, S8
Advice on Transition funding (eg when known; how much)	D4
Costs to communities	C22 (have community costs been taken into account)
Loss of community resources eg sporting fields	C10, S5, S8, S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19
Loss of school impact on house prices	C10
Effects on business and loss of local shops	C38, S5, S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19, S20
What will happen to land after school closes?	C18

Costs to DET	
Costs of proposal	S5
Need for facilities upgrades to integrate preschools with primary schools	S5
Tenants	
General	C18, C35, S5
Relocation site and availability	C11, S5 (especially Ballet School)
Access for future tenants	C11
Social issues raised	
General	
Loss of neighbourhood school (community social networks)	C3, C6, C19, S1, S8
Students will lose friends	C5, C19, S5, S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19
Students fearful of moving to a different school	S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19
Loss of school as 'heart of community'	C30, C39, S5, S8
Local school is good for the environment	C30, S20
Loss of before and after school care (& holiday programs)	C13, C18, S5
High level of parent and community involvement in school	C9, C37, C39, S5 (notes volunteer support), S20, S23, S25
Loss of community facilities	S5, S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19
General impact on community	D1
Previous strong support to keep school open and support will continue	C39
Transport	
Transport difficulties due to changes (eg no car/one car)	C18, S2/3
Environmental impact of families needing to use transport	C38, S8, S20
Student health concerns as no longer walking to school	C10, C19, S2/3, S5, S8, S10, S11, S12, S16, S17, S19, S20
Safety concerns (eg parking, road crossings, bicycle paths, traffic lights)	C18, C23, C29, S18, S20, S21

Geographic location is convenient	S23
General issues raised	
Government should have consulted before developing proposal	C18, C39, S18, D2
Critical of consultation process	S15, D2
Initial consultation poorly managed	C32, S18
Criteria for proposed closure of particular schools not explicit	C11, C12, C16, C18, C32 (limited information) D1
Claims that flawed data undermines whole proposal and consultation process	S9
Will encourage drift to non-government sector	C17, S6
Wants to see projections as to how proposal will increase number of students in government schools	S6
Need to promote public schools more effectively	C18
Use of information from previous school closures to monitor and inform this process	C18
Claims proposal driven by money, not educational need	C28
Government has no mandate for these actions	C28
Previous ALP commitment to re-open Cook PS and keep it open	C34

Summary of proposal	Schedule number
Need to bring all the local schools together to work out cluster arrangement that will produce savings required.	C33
Keep Cook open but additionally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • integrate preschool • share resources with Macquarie PS & other local schools to achieve savings • establish Cook as a 'demonstrator' school especially in IT • grow enrolments through a Community Liaison officer • incorporate a long day child care centre on Cook educational site 	S5

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
Request 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 (suggests 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
<i>Social issues raised</i>	
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	
neframe 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 3 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
Requires 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.