

Submission to the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs: Inquiry into school closures and reform of the ACT education system

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. My submission falls primarily within Terms of Reference 3.

3. Community responses, including;

- ***Review of the consultation process, including how public submissions were considered and incorporated into the final reform package***

I do not believe that my submission to Towards 2020 received any consideration by the Government, as its content was not even represented within the consultation report.

My submission focussed on the major discrepancies in the projected enrolment figures generated internally within the Towards 2020 document. I expected that the identification of such a large mathematical error/discrepancy would have been of concern to the Government, especially given that these statistics formed the basis of the 2020 proposal. I was most disappointed to see the issue completely ignored in the consultation and reporting process.

The issue I raised was not recorded within the summary of feedback from the community (page 18), where I would have expected to see it, nor was it mentioned elsewhere. In the section of the report dealing with financial issues (page 11), there is a reference to concerns raised in submissions about the accuracy and validity of data used, and this is explained to include costs per student and school capacity figures, and demographic data. But still the issue of the significant discrepancies in the Government's own statistics within the 2020 document is never mentioned. As far as I am aware, no rationale for, or even acknowledgment of these discrepancies has ever been given.

I remain concerned about the soundness of the policy and the adequacy of planning for the future, given the statistical errors that the Towards 2020 policy was founded upon.

I would still very much like to know how the Government intends to create the additional 969 to 1319 students it has promised as a result of closing schools.

Diana McGrath
Murrumbateman

Submission to Towards 2020

The ACT Government should not implement Towards 2020 because the data reported in the proposal is either incorrect or deceptive, raising serious concerns about the soundness of the proposal and of the consultation process.

A serious problem is the major discrepancies in numbers generated internally within the document. In 7 of the 8 regions, the Government's projections under proposed models vary significantly to those that it projects under the current model (see table below).

Region	Projected enrolments for 2010 <i>(does not include preschools)</i>		Difference for each region
	Current model	Proposed model	
Gungahlin	3205	3445	240
Belconnen South East	5155	5525	370
Tuggeranong	7535	7758	223
Woden	4058	3954	-104
Weston Creek	1495	1645	150
South Canberra	2980	2980	0
North Canberra	4094	3730	-364
Belconnen North West	3287	Option 1	Option 2
		3991–4091	3741–3841
			704–804 454–554
Total	31809	33028–33128	32778–32878
Difference		1219–1319	969–1069

The discrepancies are greatest in NW Belconnen, where projected student numbers swing by up to 800 students—from 3287 under the current model to 3741–3841 under option 2 and 3991–4091 under Option 1.

The Government is suggesting that its proposal will create between 969 and 1319 additional students across Canberra compared to the current model, but does not explain how an increase of this magnitude will occur and provides no evidence for justification or community analysis.

Of even greater concern is the possibility that the Government has made a significant error in its calculations of enrolments for 2010 under the current model. This would obviously invalidate the entire proposal.

We have been provided with data that is misleading, and thus inadequate in enabling us to compare the Government's proposal with the current educational model. The integrity of the consultation process has been compromised by this lack of transparency.

Any planning for the future educational needs of our children needs to be based on clear and accurate information that is evidence based and that can be examined by the community. As this has not been provided, the Government should not proceed with its plans to implement Towards 2020.

Diana McGrath
Dunlop