

Inquiry into school closures and reform of the ACT education system

I offer my considerations to your Review Committee as a resident of Hall, a committee member for the Village of Hall District and Progress Association and retired teacher.

I have actively participated in meetings related to Hall School since the mooting of its closure in 2006 and continue my interest as a member of Hall P&C, that our historic, small rural school will be re-opened. I appeal to your Review Committee to rectify this wrong.

Hall School was always intended as a small, rural school for the district of Hall. For nearly 100 years, children have come from as far away as Murrumbatman to attend this community-based school.

Research into small, rural schools has demonstrated that the long-term costs to society outweigh the mistaken belief that the closure of small schools saves money. The overwhelming evidence underlines the benefits for children attending small schools; lower incidents of bullying, violence, parent & student alienation and vandalism.

From an educational perspective, comprehensive research has shown that children in small schools: are more academically successful and are more likely to participate in extra-curricular activities.

Smaller schools are more welcoming, have greater individualised instruction and encourage positive behaviour. Smaller, composite classes promote personal learning.

Teachers are highly motivated, due to greater morale and good teaching methods are easier to implement.

Parents are more actively involved in their school community, since a small school plays a pivotal role as a community's social and economic hub.

Smaller schools are cost-effective; there are no added tiers of administration, additional maintenance, administration staff or transport costs.

In addition to the educational damage sustained by the school closure, the social and economic costs to Hall are undeniable. Business opportunities have

been lost. Youth involvement in local activities, such as environmental projects (: often initiated by school programmes, for example, tree planting, Landcare , school garden, Waterwatch, Frogwatch), as well as the Hall Rural Fire Service.

Hall Public School was completely embedded in the community. It nurtured connections between teachers, parents, students and community where individuals felt valued. This closeness affects all areas. The 'dismantlement' of our Heritage school has unravelled our Heritage Village, socially and economically and we are now reduced to a dormitory suburb.

We have *not* and *will not* forget the impact of the closure of our school. As one ex-student said to me recently: ' I want to go back to Hall School. I miss my friends and my school.' The children haven't forgotten their School and neither will the Community which it has served for nearly 100 years.

Recommendation:

- 1) Hall PS reopened as a K-6 public primary school, complementing the existing Preschool.**

Alternatives:

- 1) A P-3/4 school**
- 2) The school operating as a campus of the Gold Creek School**
- 3) Combined government/private arrangement with Blue Gum Community School.**

Helen White

30th March 2009.