

Ms Sandra Liburn
Secretary
Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs
ACT Legislative Assembly
Via email to: committees@parliament.act.gov.au

Inquiry into school closures and reform of the ACT education system.

Please see my comments below with regard to what I believe to be some of the critical issues associated with the closure of Hall Primary School

The ACT Governments Towards 2020 Policy

The village of Hall was originally in the state of NSW and since 1911 the Primary School served its local communities. With the coming of self government our village was in essence taken away from its community in surrounding NSW. Until the recent school closures children from NSW were able to enroll in both the Primary school and the pre-school. This not only enabled them to receive their education at a local facility, but the school also provided a focus for many of the village's community and social activities. It provided a support network for many of the outlying families who otherwise would have been very isolated. My understanding is that the NSW government paid a some of money to the ACT education system for each and every child attending an ACT government facility. Now that the school is closed the vast majority of these children are now being bussed into other ACT government facilities. This adds to the overall cost associated with their education taking into account all the additional transport issues. For families with younger children, too young to travel alone on bus transport, this can sometimes mean many trips in and out of Canberra each day which must be adding significantly to the environmental costs.

The Towards 2020 policy seems to be ignoring these issues.

Impact of School Consolidation and Closures

My family moved to the Hall district in 1980. We bought a small farm about 10 kilometers from the Village of Hall. Having two young children, the reason we chose Hall was because of the facilities available in the Village ie. Pre School, Primary School, General Store, Service Station and Rural Stores. The Village was a thriving little metropolis that welcomed newcomers. Since the school closure the heart and soul of the village has been destroyed and the local businesses are struggling to survive. Our family is still in touch with other local families we met through the Hall pre school and primary school. Informal baby sitting and before and after school arrangements were able to be made with other local families. The school provided before and after school care for children attending the Primary School enabling them to remain apart of their special local community. My children knew all the local shopkeepers and I felt secure with the knowledge that these local people would look out for my children should they need help or assistance while in the Village. It was a secure place for them to be. My son was married a few years ago and his best man had been a friend since pre-school days in Hall. Unfortunately the children growing up in Hall and district now are being

deprived of these opportunities along with the rich and nurturing environment that prevailed.

Having witnessed the impact that the school closure has had on the Village of Hall, I urge you to consider its re-opening. I believe Hall should be given special consideration because of

- Its long and proud history,
- The impact its closure has had on the families, not only those living in Hall but particularly those living in adjacent NSW
- The destruction of the social support networks the school provided
- The downturn of business in the Hall Village
- The environmental impact caused by increased travel by the children and the families

I can understand some attitudes with regard to the cost associated with the educating of NSW children in the ACT Education system. What I think people fail to understand or consider is the huge financial contribution these NSW families make to the economic prosperity of the ACT. The vast majority of people living in surrounding rural NSW complete most of their business transactions in the ACT. We buy our petrol, groceries, clothing, furniture, electrical goods etc. We buy our motor vehicles and white goods in the ACT. Many of us also work in the ACT. We provide professional services into the ACT and pay our income tax in the ACT... money which eventually finds its way back into the ACT coffers. I do not believe we are asking for much to have our children educated at a local school which prior to the establishment of the ACT was part of our local NSW community. The ACT stole our village and now you are determined to deprive us of our local school.

I urge you to reconsider, listen to the arguments put up by the local residents and community groups and **re-open Hall Primary School.**

Judith Roberts