

To The Secretary
Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs
Towards 2020 Renewing Our Schools, policy enquiry into school closures and reform of the ACT Education System

Submission in Favour of the Re Opening of Hall Primary School

Impact of school consolidation and closures

Before Hall Primary School was closed, Hall village, which is the service centre for the district, most of which falls within NSW, could not be imagined without its school. Hall School transcended the border between the ACT and NSW and that had been its charm for nearly 100 years. It embraced both town and country and provided quality education. It was the focal point for the village for those who lived in Hall and for the extended NSW community. A black line on a map meant nothing to NSW residents who looked to Hall and Canberra for schooling, work and shopping. Village and school went hand in hand. Remove one and the other would suffer. The closure of the primary school removed the heart of Hall and the flow on effect saw local businesses undergo a recession and financial hardship. Hardship also hit local ACT and NSW families, with primary aged children, as they then had to travel much further to find a school. The closure clearly identified to the residents of NSW that the black line was indeed firmly etched between the ACT and NSW.

The School, together with the School Museum situated in the original school house, linked heritage and education. The importance of this for Hall's community cannot be quantified. As has been said before, to know from where we come, shows us the way forward. Closing the school effectively shut the door on the past. Many pioneer families of the district had children in attendance at the school when it closed and they and all in the community could not understand that they were expected to fight to retain something that was rightfully theirs and of such importance to all in the region.

Our three children attended Hall through from preschool to primary. They all achieved highly and are well adjusted full members of society. We believe this is largely due to the quality of both academic and social education they received at Hall. The well patronised school gave each child a strong feel for community, the environment and sense of place in society. Not every educational establishment can achieve this, Hall excelled at it. There is no reason to believe that this would not be replicated once Hall was reopened for a further generation of children lucky enough to call Hall Primary their school.

Hall Primary School should be reopened to service both the residents of Hall and those who live just over the border in NSW. It should never have been considered for closure and that this was done was a complete dereliction and abrogation of the duty of governance by the ACT Government. It was achieved by ignoring valid reasoned arguments put forward by both residents of Hall and the surrounding district and was hastily acted upon without clearly exhausting all avenues possible for keeping it open.

It would be negligent of the enquiry if they propose the school remain closed and it could be argued that those who still advocate closure are morally bankrupt. If they succeed and it remains shut, it would be educational and heritage vandalism of the highest order and future generations of Canberrans will wonder at the ACT government's total lack of values and vision.

Hall is one of only two pioneer villages in the ACT and this fact alone means it is a place of significance and this should be nurtured. The School was an integral part of Hall's community and should be reopened for the schooling of future generations of the district of Hall and for the ACT's sense of heritage as a whole.

L and J Morris