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From: wayde margetts

Sent: Monday, 30 March 2009 9:22 PM

To: Committees

Subject: Submission - Committee on School Closures

The Secretary

Standing/Select Committee on School Closure and Reform of the ACT
Education System

I am a parent who had a child at Cook Primary School during the decision making process on school closures. I wish to make the following points. I also refer to the Submission prepared by the Cook Primary P and C and Preschool Association as part of the Towards 2020 process which I believe will be attached to other submissions. I still support the statements and evidence supplied in that document as a basis why Cook primary should not have been closed and should be reopened. I would like that document incorporated as part of my submission and would be happy to provide a copy if the Committee does not receive one.

The argument as I understand it was that the ACT government's objective in closing schools was to improve overall quality. The fact it seemed to ignore the quality of education being received at the relevant schools makes one rather cynical in relation to this point. While our current school has been very welcoming, we have not seen any great leap in the quality of teaching, variety of educational programs or pastoral care. In some cases the outcome in these areas is for the worse.

We have also failed to see the supposed costs savings materialise as improvements in the funding level available to the school. Indeed our current school has seen its level of funding actually decrease this year leading to the inability to fund an important reading program for Year 1 students.

The loss of a local school community has and continues to be devastating.

The community consultation process was a depressing and demoralising sham. There did not seem to be any logical reason why some schools were closed and some were not. This greatly undermines the credibility of the consultation process. The way in which the government was able to present a list of sites as an ambit claim and then school communities were forced to defend their schools was absurd. Rather than the experts presenting the evidence and allowing informed debate on the facts, school communities were forced to gather and analyse information in order to present an argument against vague criteria. This was always going to be an uphill battle.

As if this wasn't enough we then had to go through two more consultation processes about use of the site. Even after decisions have been made the site lies under utilized.

It is shameful that a purpose built early childhood facility has been empty for almost eighteen months while playschools and playgroups are crying out for suitable space. Given the importance of early childhood education the failure to make this space available, even on a temporary basis while decision were made, seems a gross waste of community resources.

Margaret Tregurtha