

General Purpose Standing Committee No 1

Proposed Closure and Restructuring of Government Schools in Inner Sydney

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Terms of Reference

1. That General Purpose Standing Committee No. 1 inquire into and report on the circumstances, processes, effects and short and long term consequences of the proposed closure and restructuring of Government schools in inner Sydney, especially the closure of Hunters Hill High School, and in particular:
 - (a) the validity, relevance and veracity of the demographic and other evidence advanced or used in support of the proposed restructuring,
 - (b) the effectiveness and integrity of the public consultation processes used to develop the plan and to determine the closures of the schools,
 - (c) the accuracy and probity of the asset valuation process and the implications of conducting it before any assessment of educational needs was completed,
 - (d) the role and functioning of the School Closure Committee and the validity of its findings,
 - (e) the risk to the future provision of school education arising from the loss of education sites in inner Sydney area,
 - (f) the impact of State Government funding policies, enrolment policies and investment infrastructure for public school on the attractiveness of public schools,
 - (g) the impacts on availability of local comprehensive public education as an option for residents of inner Sydney,
 - (h) the impacts on the educational and social needs of children and young people with high welfare needs, and
 - (i) the development of appropriate measures to ensure that children forced to move schools are not disadvantaged.
2. That the Committee report by 27 June 2002.

These terms of reference were referred to the Committee by the House on 10 April 2002.

Committee Membership

The Revd the Hon Fred Nile MLC Christian Democratic Party (*Chairman*)

Ms Jan Burnswoods MLC Australian Labor Party (*Deputy Chair*)

The Hon Patricia Forsythe MLC Liberal Party

The Hon Don Harwin MLC Liberal Party

The Hon Peter Primrose MLC Australian Labor Party

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Chairman's Foreword

This inquiry concerns one of the most important public resources provided by Government. A comprehensive and extensive public education system is vital to the provision of a knowledgeable, articulate and productive society. The success of this system relies on the existence of a high quality product which is accessible and available to all. Parents and their children should have the opportunity to choose from different models of schooling, in both the public and the private systems, which suits their needs best. However, the Committee recognises that in trying to provide a high standard of education and opportunities for all parents and students, the Department of Education and Training is constrained by the availability of resources and that this constraint is largely external from the Department itself.

I am concerned that the move away from public education to private education by increasing numbers of students may put further pressure on Governments to allocate resources to the non-Government sector, in turn putting further pressure on the resources available for the public schooling system. Given this context the Committee understands why the Department of Education and Training sought to determine a comprehensive and detailed plan for the inner city where the move towards private education is most pronounced. However, I am concerned that the Department's plan (*Building the Future*) may be creating conflicting outcomes. The creation of selective schools, the provision of different models of schooling (i.e. the collegiate model, single sex schools, etc) and investment in educational infrastructure, will stabilise and hopefully reduce the numbers of students moving to the private sector.

The Committee feels that the closure of some of the schools suggested in *Building the Future* maybe working counter to this outcome. The closure of some schools outlined in *Building the Future* reduces accessibility and choice, thereby increasing the likelihood that parents will be forced to send their child to a non-Government school. Another concern is that the Department may be creating problems for the future provision of public education by divesting itself of land which may be difficult and or expensive to return to public ownership should it be required for schooling purposes in the future.

The closure of Hunters Hill High School in particular is a case in point. I feel that the closure of the school seriously reduces the choices available to students on the lower north. The loss of the site on which the school is placed will have ramifications not only for the provision of education now but also for the future provision of schools. The broader community also, will lose open and accessible public land, on Sydney's Harbour foreshore.

I have similar concerns regarding the closure of Erskineville Public School and Redfern Public School. The closure of Redfern Public School particularly raises important issues about the provision of services to disadvantaged communities and the importance of providing schools linked to their communities.

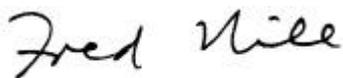
Also of concern to the Committee is that those raising opposition to the closure of Hunters Hill High School, Erskineville Public School and Redfern Public School (in particular) were convinced that the decision to close their schools was made early on in the process and that there was nothing they could do to change it, irrespective of the consultation period and review that occurred. It was for this reason that this inquiry was held – to give an opportunity for those voices to be heard.

The “non negotiable” closure of these schools especially Hunters Hill High School will seriously undermine the morale and future support by parents, teachers and students for the New South Wales public education system.

I would like to thank all who contributed to this inquiry and particularly the members of the Parents and Citizens Associations of Redfern, Hunters Hill and Erskineville for their dedication and tireless efforts to have the closure of the schools reviewed. Special mention also needs to be made of the students of Hunters Hill High School who impressed me with their eloquent and moving arguments for the retention of their school. In mentioning Hunters Hill High, I acknowledged during debate on the reference of this inquiry that I have a conflict of interest, even if it is some way back in time. Four of my children received their high school education at Hunters Hill and benefited greatly from the experience.

Thanks also goes to the Department of Education and Training for their assistance in providing information and generally aiding the Committee in its inquiries.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Committee Members and the Committee secretariat for their intensive and hard work over what was a very tight timeframe. In particular, I would like to thank Director, Steven Reynolds for his timely and accurate procedural advice and Senior Project Officer, Ms Emma Lawson for drafting this comprehensive and balanced report and for organising the Committee’s activities. I am also very appreciative of the work undertaken by Ms Natasha O’Connor, Committee Officer in formatting the report and organising the Committee’s site visits and community consultation session at Hunters Hill Council.



Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC
Chairman

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1 *page 38*

That section 28 of *the Act* be amended so that where a school closure is being reviewed as part of a broader plan of school closures or is linked to multiple school closures then the entire plan would be reviewed.

Recommendation 2 *page 81*

That Hunters Hill High School not be closed.

Recommendation 3 *page 81*

That the provisions required by Hunters Hill High School for a partial specialist focus in areas such as environmental studies and performing arts, film and television, be arranged in close consultation with the school; and further consideration also be given to the establishment of a selective stream.

Recommendation 4 *page 95*

The Committee recommends that Erskineville Public School not be closed.

Recommendation 5 *page 95*

That the Department give full consideration to options for the school including the merger of Newtown Public School with Erskineville Public School and the future needs of Newtown High School of Performing Arts, in consultation with the teachers, students and local communities associated with those schools.

Recommendation 6 *page 110*

The Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project is tasked with finding holistic solutions to disadvantage in the local community. In light of this the Committee recommends that the Government review its decision to close Redfern Public School, pending an evaluation by the Project of the role that school education can play in meeting the Project's objectives of community renewal.

Glossary

Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
BtF	<i>Building the Future</i>
DET	Department of Education and Training
FOI	Freedom of Information
HHHS	Hunters Hill High School
HSC	High School Certificate
LGA	Local Government Area
PE	Physical Education
P&C	Parents and Citizens
SCRC	School Closures Review Committee
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy
SVO	State Valuations Office
<i>the Act</i>	<i>Education Act 1990</i>
UAI	University Admissions Index

Definitions

Co educational school	Schools which accept enrolments of both female and male students.
Collegiate College	The multi-campus collegiate model of which Sydney Secondary College is an example involves cooperative ventures and partnerships among schools and other educational providers, particularly with TAFE NSW and universities, in order to broaden curriculum provision in schools and to use educational resources more effectively. The school-based components involve a range of junior and senior secondary school models as well as links with other providers.
residualisation	The effect created by decreasing enrolments and a narrowing of the curriculum base which ultimately results in poorer results/academic outcomes.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Referral of Inquiry

1.1 On 10 April 2002, the House passed a resolution referring the following terms of reference to General Purpose Standing Committee No 1:

1. *That General Purpose Standing Committee No. 1 inquire into and report on the circumstances, processes, effects and short and long term consequences of the proposed closure and restructuring of Government schools in inner Sydney, especially the closure of Hunters Hill High School, and in particular:*
 - (a) *the validity, relevance and veracity of the demographic and other evidence advanced or used in support of the proposed restructuring,*
 - (b) *the effectiveness and integrity of the public consultation processes used to develop the plan and to determine the closures of the schools,*
 - (c) *the accuracy and probity of the asset valuation process and the implications of conducting it before any assessment of educational needs was completed,*
 - (d) *the role and functioning of the School Closure Committee and the validity of its findings,*
 - (e) *the risk to the future provision of school education arising from the loss of education sites in inner Sydney area,*
 - (f) *the impact of State Government funding policies, enrolment policies and investment infrastructure for public school on the attractiveness of public schools,*
 - (g) *the impacts on availability of local comprehensive public education as an option for residents of inner Sydney,*
 - (h) *the impacts on the educational and social needs of children and young people with high welfare needs, and*
 - (i) *the development of appropriate measures to ensure that children forced to move schools are not disadvantaged.¹*

Conduct of this Inquiry

1.2 Reporting requirements stipulated in the Committee's terms of reference require the provision of a report to be tabled on 27 June 2002. The Chairman moved a motion in the House on 27 June 2002 seeking an extension of the reporting date until Thursday, 4 July 2002.²

¹ *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council No. 9, 10 April 2002, Item No. 21.*

² *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council No. 25, 27 June 2002, Item No. 34.*

- 1.3** The Committee received 114 submissions (see Appendix 4 for a list of submissions). Of the 114 submissions received 33 were from representative organisations and 81 were from individuals. The schools most commonly referred to in the submissions are as follows:

Table 1.1 Submissions

Issue	Number of Submissions
Closure of Hunters Hill High School	60
Closure of Erskineville Public School	30
Closure of Redfern Public School	9
All schools or the <i>Building the Future</i> Plan as a whole	8
Balmain Support Unit	1
Dulwich and Marrickville High Schools	2
Intensive English Learning Centre	1
Maroubra High School	1
Leichhardt, Glebe and Balmain High Schools (Sydney Secondary College)	1

- 1.4** The Committee also received a petition with approximately 400 signatures in relation to the closure of Erskineville Public School. (A list of signatories is attached as part of Appendix 4)
- 1.5** The Committee held three public hearings. A full day of hearings was held on 29 May 2002, in Parliament House. Representatives from the Department of Education and Training, the School Closures Review Committee, the Federation of Parents and Citizens Association, the Teachers Federation and an independent demographer appeared on this day. A full day of hearings and a community consultation session were held on 31 May 2002. A public hearing was held at Hunters Hill where council representatives, the Principal of Hunters Hill, a teacher representative and the President of the P&C discussed their concerns with the Committee. A community consultation session was held at which 13 students and community representatives gave short presentations to the Committee. The Committee conducted site visits at Erskineville, Redfern and Hunters Hill schools. Details of the site visits appear as Appendix 2. In the afternoon of 31 May 2002 the Committee heard evidence from representatives from Erskineville and Redfern Public Schools at a public hearing held at Parliament House. A list of all witnesses appears as Appendix 5.
- 1.6** A final hearing was held at Parliament House on 7 June 2002 at which representatives from the Department of Education and Training and from Erskineville P&C appeared again. The Erskineville representatives appeared following a request by the Erskineville P&C that insufficient time was available at the 31 May hearing to provide expert demographic evidence on behalf of the school.
- 1.7** The Committee met on 27 June 2002 and resolved to adopt this report at its meeting on 3 July 2002. The minutes of these and other proceedings appear as Appendix 3.

Structure of this Report

- 1.8** Given the large number of submissions received from Hunters Hill High, Erskineville Public and Redfern Public, these schools have by and large made up the focus of this inquiry. This is reflected in the structure of this report.
- 1.9** Chapter 2 provides a background of the Departmental proposal for the restructuring of inner city schools and how this proposal particularly relates to Hunters Hill High, Erskineville Public and Redfern Public Schools.
- 1.10** Chapter 3 explores the process undertaken by the Department in determining the restructure and closure of inner city schools. It considers the consultation that took place in the development of the draft plan and also the determination of the final proposal. The processes undertaken by the School Closures Review Committee under the *Education Act 1990* are also explored.
- 1.11** Chapter 4 considers the key issues raised by participants in the inquiry. These issues include:
- The resourcing of public schools in NSW,
 - Competition between schools and particularly between public and private schools,
 - The movement from public to private school education and the opinions why this is occurring, and
 - Variations in the demographic work undertaken.
- 1.12** Chapter 5, 6 and 7 consider issues specific to each of the schools, including Hunters Hill High, Erskineville Public and Redfern Public Schools, respectively.

Chapter 2 Background – the NSW School System

The closure of Erskineville Public, Redfern Public and Hunters Hill High Schools is part of a broader Department of Education and Training plan for the whole of the inner city, from the east coast through to Chatswood in the north, Matraville in the south and Ryde in the west. The closure of the three schools which are the focus of this report needs to be seen within the context of the broader inner city educational plan.

This chapter explores the initial proposal, the final plan and its implementation.

Building the Future – Draft proposal

2.1 A draft proposal outlining the Government’s future directions for public education in inner Sydney suburbs was released by the Department of Education and Training (“the Department”) on 21 March 2001. The proposal was outlined in a report entitled - “*Building the Future – An education plan for inner Sydney*” (*Building the Future*).

2.2 The Department of Education and Training indicated that the plan was developed in order to combat declining enrolments and increasingly limited curriculum in many inner city high schools and primary schools. In addition, there was also a need to improve educational facilities in many schools in the inner Sydney area.³

2.3 In evidence presented to the Committee, Dr Ken Boston, Director General, Department of Education and Training explained the need for the restructuring of Government schools in the inner city. He said:

In the current context there are two drivers that are compelling structural change and curriculum reform in the provision of education in inner Sydney. One is common to the entire State, and indeed the nation, and that is the need for young people these days to have access to a richly expanded curriculum, including specialist subjects in vocational education....

The second driver, while also a national trend, is particularly acute in inner Sydney. Large numbers of students in this part of New South Wales have moved to the private education sector, leaving greatly excess capacity in those schools, and as schools become smaller they are losing rather than growing their curriculum capacity.⁴

2.4 These issues are considered in detail throughout this report. In evidence to the Committee, Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, Department of Education and Training outlined the need for the plan to be comprehensive and undertaken quickly. He said:

It was really about rebuilding public education in the inner city. It was really about making a bold and decisive move, and a quick move, that would rebuild public

³ Department of Education and Training, “*Draft Proposal - Building the Future, An education plan for inner Sydney*”, March 2001, p 3.

⁴ Evidence of Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 3.

education for the community. We could have tinkered on the edges, to be honest, but what we wanted to do, and the Minister at the time wanted to do, was to do something that was decisive.⁵

2.5 *Building the Future* outlines the aims of the plan, broad areas of concern for the inner Sydney area, general solutions and details of how each district within the inner city would be affected.

Aims

2.6 *Building the Future* states that the proposal as a whole is:

...aimed at increasing opportunities and choices in public education.⁶

2.7 In evidence to the Committee, Dr Boston articulated these aims. He said:

...*Building the Future*, ...seeks: to reorganise the provision of schooling into a new landscape of fewer and larger state of the art schools with excellent physical facilities; to offer in those schools choice and diversity with the capacity to specialise, while at the same time providing to all young people what we cannot provide now, and that is the full range of the New South Wales curriculum; thirdly, attract students back from the private sector to the public sector and reverse the trend which has been occurring; and finance all that to the tune of \$100 million or a little more, finance the capital works needed to achieve that by the sale of capital assets in under-utilised properties.⁷

Key issues

2.8 *Building the Future* outlines the broader areas of concern held by the Department regarding the provision of public education in the inner city. The concerns are outlined as follows:

- Overall enrolments in co-educational comprehensive schools in inner Sydney declined by approximately 50% over the past 15 years,
- There are now 750 fewer secondary students in inner Sydney schools than in 1999,
- The students in extremely small classes experience fewer opportunities to debate issues, form strong study groups or choose subjects that fit in with their individual interests, and
- Many parents are by passing their local schools.⁸

⁵ Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 12.

⁶ Department of Education and Training, "*Draft Proposal - Building the Future, An education plan for inner Sydney*", March 2001, p 3.

⁷ Evidence of Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 3.

⁸ Department of Education and Training, "*Draft Proposal - Building the Future, An education plan for inner Sydney*", March 2001, p 6.

Table 2.1: Total Years 7 to 12 Enrolments

	1984	1991	2001
Balmain	631	410	293
Chatswood	812	855	582
Cleveland Street	854	215	109
Dover Heights	811	420	310
Dulwich	867	747	467
Glebe	395	631	295
Hunters Hill	767	786	424
JJ Cahill	965	679	503
Leichhardt	691	351	633
Malvina	917	752	395
Maroubra	708	611	234
Marrickville	1007	793	286
Matraville	575	292	289
South Sydney	951	938	935
Tempe	761	884	486
Vaucluse	655	752	515
Total	12367	10116	6756

Source: *Building the Future*, p 5.

Table 2.2: Enrolments for Redfern, Waterloo, Alexandria and Erskineville Public Schools

	1984	1991	2001
Redfern	439	216	69
Waterloo	82	118	94
Alexandria	207	134	66
Erskineville	122	86	42
Total	850	554	271

Source: *Department of Education and Training*

Bondi district

2.9 Within the Bondi district (and particularly within the eastern suburbs) declining enrolments (resulting in a limited range of subjects) and competition from the private school sector were stated as reasons why a plan for the area was required.

2.10 In particular *Building the Future* highlights:

- A 33% fall in enrolment numbers at Vaucluse High School in the past five years,
- Poor grounds and buildings at Vaucluse High School,
- Less than 30 candidates for the 2000 HSC at Dover Heights High,
- Limited curriculum at both Vaucluse and Dover Heights High Schools,

- Declining numbers (enrolments were only 234 in 2001) at Maroubra High School, resulting in a limited curriculum.⁹

2.11 Despite the fact that the Bondi district was included in *Building the Future*, the Committee does not focus on this area in this report as a consequence of the limited number of submissions from the public regarding the schools involved.

Port Jackson and Ryde High Schools

2.12 According to the Plan, the problems being experienced by the inner city as a whole are also reflected in many of the Department's Port Jackson and Ryde district High Schools.

2.13 In particular *Building the Future* highlights:

- Unmet demand for single sex and selective places,
- Disproportionate numbers of males to females,¹⁰
- Declining enrolments at some schools including Glebe, Balmain, Malvina and Hunters Hill High Schools, (Appendix 8 shows the change in enrolments at these schools)
- Limited curriculum choices for students, and
- A large number of students attending Hunters Hill High school from outside the local area.¹¹

2.14 The plan provided for different solutions for the problems facing the two areas. For the Port Jackson area the proposal states:

Single sex campuses and a new selective stream are two of the key features of the proposed creation of a new Sydney Secondary College, which would link Balmain, Leichhardt and Glebe High School sites as part of a \$21 million reinvestment program.... Sydney Secondary College could offer 50 per cent of places on a selective basis, catering to many talented students who otherwise would be likely not to attend non-Government schools.¹²

⁹ Department of Education and Training, *Draft Proposal - Building the Future, An education plan for inner Sydney*, March 2001, p 13.

¹⁰ The proportion of male students currently enrolled at co-educational comprehensive high schools is much larger than the proportion of female students enrolled at these same schools in the inner city.

¹¹ Department of Education and Training, *Draft Proposal- Building the Future, An education plan for inner Sydney*, March 2001, p 9.

¹² Department of Education and Training, *Draft Proposal- Building the Future, An education plan for inner Sydney*, March 2001, p 9.

2.15 For the Ryde district the plan proposed the following:

Reflecting the growth of Sydney's "Silicon Ridge" ...proposals have an emphasis on access to the latest facilities and teaching methods for information and Communication Technology (ICT). A range of new initiatives would provide additional resources and subjects for students in the Ryde area, particularly in ICT.

2.16 Details of the proposed changes to the Districts included:

- Glebe, Balmain and Leichhardt to become campuses of the Sydney Secondary College,
- The merger of Marrickville and Dulwich High Schools,
- The establishment of co-educational facilities for Years 7 to 12 with a special Aboriginal focus on the site of the present Alexandria Public School – proposed name to be Wingara Campus,
- Cleveland Street High School site to be a new amalgamated primary school-Alexandria Park Public School,
- Cleveland Street Intensive English Campus (IEC) – co-educational campus of Sydney Secondary College for years 7-12,
- Transfer of Wilkins Intensive English Centre to Marrickville High School,
- The amalgamation of students and staff from Hunters Hill High School with the Sydney Secondary College and the sale of the Hunters Hill High School site,
- Malvina to be renamed Ryde Secondary College and given an estimated \$8 million refurbishment to enhance technology studies, sporting facilities and performing arts. The Secondary College would offer academically selective classes within a comprehensive high school,
- That Chatswood High School be relocated,
- An Innovations Centre to be established at Macquarie University, to provide state of the art IT facilities for all Ryde District schools, and
- Riverside Girls High to receive a \$3 million upgrade.¹³

¹³ Department of Education and Training, *"Draft Proposal - Building the Future, An education plan for inner Sydney"*, March 2001, pp 9-15.

Port Jackson Primary Schools

2.17 *Building the Future* also outlined issues facing primary schools in the inner west. The report states:

Sydney's inner city is home to several thriving primary and infant schools offering a wide range of specialist teachers and support staff, individual learning programs and diverse cultural sporting and academic opportunities.

However at Alexandria, Erskineville, Redfern and Waterloo Public Schools extremely low enrolments threaten the quality of education for young children.¹⁴

2.18 To combat the problems being faced by Primary Schools in the inner west the plan proposed the amalgamation of Alexandria, Erskineville, Redfern and Waterloo Public Schools on the Cleveland Street High School site in Alexandria. The new school would be called Alexandria Park Public School.¹⁵

General inner city solutions

2.19 The broad inner city wide solutions offered by the plan included:

- The creation of more single sex and selective places,
- The amalgamation of some schools to give students greater choices of academic subjects, sporting and cultural activities,
- Extensive upgrading and refurbishing of school buildings and facilities,
- Increasing and improving resources in technology,
- Improved links between schools, TAFE, universities and business,
- An initial investment of \$1million in professional development for school staff affected by changes to inner Sydney schools, and
- The provision of Alternative Schools for students who find traditional schooling difficult.¹⁶

¹⁴ Department of Education and Training, *"Draft Proposal - Building the Future, An education plan for inner Sydney"*, March 2001, p 11.

¹⁵ Department of Education and Training, *"Draft Proposal - Building the Future, An education plan for inner Sydney"*, March 2001, p 11.

¹⁶ Department of Education and Training, *"Draft Proposal- Building the Future, An education plan for inner Sydney"*, March 2001, p 6.

Guarantees and Assurances

- 2.20** The plan also made a number of assurances and guarantees regarding the proposal. These included:
- Changes to schools would be planned to avoid disrupting students education,
 - Where necessary public transport arrangements would be made available for student travel,
 - Funding would come from the sale of under-utilised school sites,
 - All proceeds from any assets sold would be reinvested in public schools in the inner Sydney area, and
 - No school sites would be sold to non-Government schools except possibly the French and the German Schools which do not teach in English and hence do not compete with public schools.¹⁷

Revised *Building the Future*

Stage 1 (as at June 2001)

- 2.21** For ten weeks from late March 2001 to May 2001 the Department held a consultation period. During this time meetings were held with the school communities of all schools affected by the changes and the public was invited to make submissions regarding the plan.
- 2.22** After the consultation period a number of changes were made to the detail of the proposed *Building the Future*, these changes included:
- That a P-12 community school be developed on the Cleveland Street High School and Alexandria Public School sites. The amalgamation of Alexandria, Erskineville, Redfern and Waterloo Public Schools to still occur on this site,
 - Erskineville Public and parts of Redfern Public to be sold,
 - Murawina Pre school to be relocated to the Redfern Public School site,
 - The Wilkins Intensive English Language Centre to be located at the Cleveland Street Intensive English Centre which will become the Intensive English High School,¹⁸

¹⁷ Department of Education and Training, "Draft Proposal- Building the Future, An education plan for inner Sydney", March 2001, pp 9-15.

¹⁸ Note: When it was announced that Marrickville and Dulwich High Schools would not merge, it was also announced that the Wilkins Intensive English Language Centre would not be moved from Marrickville High School to Cleveland Street and would remain at Marrickville High.

- Hunters Hill proposed to be closed at the end of 2002. A section of foreshore land, approximately 1.5 ha be set aside for public use. The creation of a new foreshore park will be made a condition of all future development,¹⁹ and
- The decision regarding the merger of Marrickville and Dulwich High Schools was given a 3-month consultation and deliberation period.
- Chatswood High School was not to be relocated and was removed from any further proposal of change.

Stage 2

- 2.23** After the finalisation of the plan in June 2001 and the announcement of the schools that would be closed, parents of the students attending schools proposed for closure had 21 days under the *Education Act 1990* (“the Act”), in which to request in writing that the Minister establish a School Closures Review Committee (SCRC) to provide an independent review of the proposed closures. The SCRC was established to inquire into the closure of Maroubra High, Hunters Hill High, Erskineville Public and Redfern Public Schools (Further details of this process are provided in Chapter 3 of this Report)
- 2.24** It was later announced that the closure of either Marrickville High School or Dulwich High Schools would not proceed and a new plan was announced for the future of each of the schools. Further details regarding this decision are outlined in Chapter 3.

Current status and implementation

- 2.25** The Department’s submission to the inquiry summarised the status of the school closures and the implementation of *Building the Future*. The submission states:

While formal notification of the closure of the six inner city Sydney schools has been issued in accordance with the *Education Act 1990* no formal action has been taken in regard to the disposal of the sites. The Minister has not declared the school sites surplus to educational requirements at this time. Formal approval to dispose of the sites will be required before direct action is taken to investigate town-planning issues or commence action to have the sites rezoned.

Preliminary discussions have taken place with the Department of Public Works and Services and Planning NSW with a view of identifying issues that may need to be investigated as part of a future disposal program.²⁰

- 2.26** The Department’s submission also included a summary of the status of the implementation of the plan as it relates to each school.

¹⁹ Department of Education and Training, *Building the Future – Consultation Report*, June 2001, pp 36-40.

²⁰ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 4.

2.27 The following summarises the status of the schools and districts, which are the focus of this inquiry, as outlined by the Department.

Creation of Alexandria Park Public School and closure of Redfern, Waterloo and Erskineville Public Schools

- A Principal has been appointed to Alexandria Park Public School,
- Community-based steering committees have been established,
- The Department is currently involved in negotiations regarding the relocation of community and other Government support services to the community school site.
- Concept plans have been developed with and endorsed by the school community.
- Development applications have been lodged with the Council, and
- Supports for the closure of Waterloo and Erskineville Schools are being provided.

Sydney Secondary College (SSC)

- The College has been established, and
- A Principal has been appointed.

Glebe High School: Blackwattle Bay Campus (campus of SSC)

- Academically selected cohort in Years 9 and 11 in 2002,²¹
- Concept plans have been developed with the school community and endorsed by them, and
- A development application has been lodged with the Council.

Balmain High School (campus of SSC)

- Academically selected cohort in Year 7 for 2002,
- Concept plans have been developed with the school community and endorsed by them, and
- A development application has been lodged with the Council.

²¹ The term “academically selected cohort” means that a proportion of students in each year are selected through the selective schools test.

Leichhardt High School (campus of SSC)

- Academically selected cohort in Year 7 in 2002,
- Concept plans have been developed with the school community and endorsed by them, and
- Development applications have been lodged with the Council.

Hunters Hill High School

- To close at the end of 2002, and
- No Year 11 intake in 2002.
- Year 7 students discouraged from enrolling. (Note: It was initially decided that there would be no Year 7 intake, this decision was later reversed.)

2.28

In evidence presented to the Committee Dr Boston, indicated that aspects of *Building the Future* were already achieving the Department's desired aims in terms of being attractive to parents and hence increasing enrolment numbers. In respect of Balmain High School (Sydney Secondary College) in particular, Dr Boston said:

All the indications so far are that that is working. Balmain High School, for example, which had last year only 33 students in Year 7, quite insufficient to keep that school going, quite insufficient to lead to a viable Year 12, now has 170 students in the school in Year 7, 60 of them in the selective stream.... We believe that the concept is going to deliver on the objectives we have for top quality education in state of the art facilities.²²

²² Evidence of Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 3.

Chapter 3 The Process - Consultation and Decision Making

The Committee has heard extensive evidence about the process undertaken by the Department and the Government in developing *Building the Future*, the consultation process that occurred between the announcement of the Draft and the determination of the final plan, as well as about the role played by the School Closures Committee. Essentially the Department of Education and Training has argued that it has complied with all its statutory obligations to consult, while other witnesses have argued that the process was inadequate. Opponents of the closure are convinced that the Department used the two-stage process as a method to close the schools, giving lip service to due process. This Chapter explores this evidence.

3.1 The following table provides a summary of the key events in relation to the development of *Building the Future*.

Table 3.1 Time Line of Key Events

Date	Event
2 March 2000	District Superintendents requested to develop their 'vision' for their district.
19 December 2000	Hon John Aquilina MP, Minister for Education meets with senior departmental officers to consider the fall in enrolments in the inner city. Minister requests that a proposal for the future of these schools be developed for his consideration.
Dec 2000 - March 2001	Development of <i>Building the Future</i> internally at DET.
21 March 2001	Launch of proposal by the Minister.
March – May 2001 (Stage 1)	Consultation period on the proposal.
14 June 2001	Minister's <i>Building the Future</i> Plan announced.
14 June 2001	Announced that there would be a three month deliberation regarding the decision to merge Dulwich and Marrickville High Schools.
4 July 2001	School Closures Review Committee formed.
28 September 2001 (Stage 2)	School Closures Review Committee provides final report.
30 September 2001	Minority report to the School Closures Review Committee final report submitted by Ms Maree O'Halloran.
10 April 2002	Legislative Council NSW passes a resolution to investigate school closures and restructuring in the inner city.
1 May 2002	Announcement made by the Hon John Watkins MP, Minister for Education and Training that neither Dulwich nor Marrickville High Schools will close.

Source: Department of Education and Training, Submission No 91.

Consultation in the development of the Draft *Building the Future*

Departmental Process

3.2 An issue of major concern to many participants, raised with the Committee during the inquiry, has been the level of consultation by the Department in the development of *Building the Future*

3.3 In its submission to the Committee the Department states that it is under no legislative obligation to consult the community in the developmental stages of planning.

While it is common and good practice for Government agencies to consult widely prior to making major policy decisions, there are no legislative requirements on the Department to consult prior to recommending to the Minister the closure of a school.²³

3.4 It is in this context that the Department provides an outline of the lead up to and development of *Building the Future*

3.5 According to the Department's submission a number of seminars were run across NSW during 2000 as district or inter-district meetings of Principals. At these meetings consideration was given to the impact of non-Government schools on secondary enrolments.²⁴ The Department states in its submission that these meetings were broadly in relation to the movement of students from the Government to the non-Government sector and that no specific plans were presented. The submission states:

In these seminars local market share and specific school enrolments were tabled but plans for specific areas were not proposed.²⁵

3.6 Prior to the meetings the Director-General had requested District Superintendents to develop a 'vision' for their own area. However the Department notes that these plans were not accessed in the development of *Building the Future*.

3.7 According to the submission *Building the Future* was developed mainly in the Department's central office:

The proposal was developed internally by Department of Education and Training personnel from the Schools Portfolio, Properties Directorate and District Offices. District superintendents were, however, involved later in the development process to put their own specific points of view²⁶

²³ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 26.

²⁴ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 27.

²⁵ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 28.

²⁶ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 29.

Stakeholder Concerns

3.8 Many participants in this inquiry have raised concerns that the proposal was developed internally with no consultation with the public, key stakeholder groups or school staff and little consultation outside the Departmental head office.

3.9 In her evidence to the Committee Ms Bev Baker, President of the NSW Parents and Citizens Association, said:

We heard and knew nothing of this proposal until I was summonsed to a meeting at five o'clock, I think it was on a Tuesday afternoon, for the launch of the document the next day. I put my head on the table and begged them not to do it. And I was told by a person on that Committee that, "If you want change, if we gave people time to think about this they would react against it" ...²⁷

3.10 In her evidence to the Committee Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation also stated that no consultation had occurred with the Federation prior to the announcement:

We had no input to the *Building the Future* proposal. We had two sessions where the department put to us the demographic changes in the inner city and the need for a plan, but we had no input into the proposals, and, indeed, we would not have because they are flawed.²⁸

3.11 In her evidence to the Committee Ms Jenny Munro, President, Redfern P&C, expressed concerns about the transparency of the process. She said:

I am a fairly involved member of the Aboriginal community and most people in the Aboriginal community did not know of the concept until after it had been presented to us in the form of the *Building the Future* documents that Minister Aquilina had presented. We believe that there has been a cover-up of the move, of the discussion between Ministers and the department in relation to the move by Murawina. I think it has been on foot for a number of years and I think those Ministers in some of those departments have been pulling more than strings to make it happen.²⁹

3.12 In specific reference to Hunters Hill, Councillor Susan Hoopman, Municipality of Hunters Hill, said:

Council first heard about the closure announcement from the newspapers. Following inquiries at Hunters Hill High School, it was confirmed that there had been no consultation or communication between the school, P & C and the Department of Education on any part of the proposal prior to the announcement in the Sydney Morning Herald.³⁰

²⁷ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of NSW Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 54.

²⁸ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 61.

²⁹ Evidence of Ms Jenny Munro, Student, 31 May 2002, p 22.

³⁰ Evidence of Councillor Susan Hoopman, Chair of the Defenders of Hunters Hill High Committee, 31 May 2002, p 5.

3.13 The NSW Secondary Principals Council also indicated that it had not been consulted and that the Department's plan may have benefited from the expertise of school principals if consultation had occurred. Their submission states:

There was no real consultation with principals or with the NSW Secondary Principals Council. The reference group was only informed after the plan was announced, but some conversations had been held with principals without DET being overt about their intentions. There has been little consultation since the plan was announced and the opinions of the reference group have not been sought. DET could have benefited by consulting the collective intelligence of many school principals through the Principals Council. The process used with regard to principals was certainly not consultation, either in developing the plan or in making decisions about closures.³¹

3.14 This view is expanded (within a broader context) in the Council's submission to the inquiry currently being conducted by Dr Tony Vinson. They state:

The council recognises the need for appropriate, research based restructuring of Government schools, using evidence-based decisions and involving all stakeholders. We do not believe that these processes have played a sufficiently demonstrable part in the decisions made about the reconfiguration of public education since 1988. Some changes have been made in response to the need to address the unintended outcomes of previous decisions.... Initiatives to restructure schools need to be subject to the test of whether they enhance opportunities for all students, including those who remain in the majority of 7-12 comprehensive schools.³²

3.15 In their submission to the Committee the Hunters Hill P&C draws comparisons between the consultation undertaken in developing the McGaw Report, which looked into the restructure of the HSC, and the consultation that occurred in the development of *Building the Future* proposal.³³ The submission states that in formulating the Green Paper Professor Barry McGaw³⁴ of the Australian Council of Education held 38 public meetings in 24 locations:

Compare this with the *Building the Future* (BtF) plan, which implements a series of reforms as great as McGaw's – replacing comprehensive schools wholesale with a collegiate system. The BtF proposal was released before any community consultation took place.³⁵

³¹ *Submission No 38*, Mr Jim McAlpine, NSW Secondary Principals Council, p 1.

³² NSW Secondary Principals Council, *Submission to the Inquiry into the provision of public education in New South Wales*, p3.

³³ *Submission No 92*, Hunters Hill P&C, p 9.

³⁴ Professor Barry McGaw was commissioned by the Minister for Education to consider options for reform to the High School Certificate in NSW. Three papers were written on this issue by Prof McGaw; an options paper, a paper containing recommendations and a Government White Paper.

³⁵ *Submission No 92*, Hunters Hill P&C, p 9.

Department's Response

3.16 The Department indicated in its submission that consultation had not occurred prior to the release of the draft proposal because of the impact that it may have had on enrolments. It states:

This proposal was to be decisive and bold. It had to be implemented quickly to overcome the debilitating level of enrolments in many schools.³⁶

and

An extensive public process to develop a proposal would have further destabilised those schools already in a precarious position.... Thus consultation was to occur after the release of the proposal which could be adjusted at that point.³⁷

Consultation on the Final Proposal

3.17 After the announcement of *Building the Future* on 21 March 2001, the Hon John Aquilina MP announced that there would be a 10-week consultation period during which people could make submissions to the Department about the plan. The Department has highlighted in its submission to this Committee that this consultation was not required under the legislation. The submission states:

...while there is no legal requirement on the Department to consult with local communities in relation to its recommendation to close schools, the Department's practice is to consult widely on all issues of public policy. In this instance the length of the consultation period was determined by the Minister to be 10 weeks approximately.³⁸

3.18 After the launch of the proposal copies of the report were distributed to all students attending public schools (excluding selective high schools) in the educational districts of Bondi, Port Jackson and lower Ryde. Copies were also provided to the key stakeholder groups including the NSW Teachers Federation, the Federation of P&C's and to local Members of Parliament.³⁹

3.19 The Department received 1801 items of correspondence in relation to the draft proposal. 1021 of these were correspondence referring to issues in particular schools or precincts and 780 items were more general. The Department states in its submission that:

Submissions were defined as proposals for the schools affected and were listed in Appendix 1 of the consultation report. 183 submissions were received and analysed and the content referred to in the text of the consultation report.⁴⁰

³⁶ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 29.

³⁷ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 29.

³⁸ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 27.

³⁹ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 31.

⁴⁰ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 31.

3.20 There is some controversy about the way the Department classified the “submissions”. The Department informed the Committee that submissions were not accepted if they maintained schools as they were:

Specific proposals were evaluated on the extent to which they addressed the major issues that had led to the development of the draft plan (demographic change and loss of enrolment share) and the extent to which the proposals were feasible and could be implemented. Proposals which maintained all schools as they were, in competition with one another were not accepted. Proposals or elements of proposals which addressed underlying issues and were feasible were incorporated in the Minister’s plan...⁴¹

3.21 Ms Mary Pipes, HHHS P&C representative raised concerns about the Departments admission that some submissions were not accepted. In her evidence to the Committee she said:

The department at no time told anybody - they told us we could make submissions to *Building the Future* - at no time, as far as I am aware, did they say that there were any criteria that those submissions should follow... I put in what I thought was a submission. I put in reasons why I thought the school was successful. I put in reasons why I thought the school could go forward. I put in suggestions. I wasn't on that list in the appendix (BtF Consultation Report Appendix) and I was a bit puzzled about it but I just didn't follow it up. ...So how many submissions that people in good faith put in as a submission were not accepted because they did not provide another source of funds?⁴²

3.22 Ms Kathy Prokhovnik, President, HHHS P&C also reiterated this concern in her evidence to the Committee. She said:

Individual schools were encouraged to make submissions, yet the Department of Education would not consider those submissions because they were not addressing the entire system as *Building the Future* did.⁴³

3.23 The Committee notes that the *Building the Future* document itself, as circulated to the key stakeholders and the school community, does not give guidance as to what sort of submissions would be accepted.⁴⁴ The Committee has not received any documentation suggesting that guidelines regarding submissions were provided elsewhere or in another format.

Conclusion

The Committee believes that in considering the submissions and correspondence that the Department should have made known and publicised their definition of what constituted a valid submission.

⁴¹ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 35.

⁴² Evidence of Ms Mary Pipes, Mother of Hunters Hill High Student, 31 May 2002, pp 21-22.

⁴³ Evidence of Ms Kathy Prokhovnik, Vice President, Hunters Hill High P&C, 31 May 2002, p 10.

⁴⁴ Department of Education and Training, “*Draft Proposal- Building the Future, An education plan for inner Sydney*”, March 2001.

Consultation a “fait accompli”?

3.24 Concerns were also raised about the legitimacy of the consultation, with many witnesses indicating that they felt like the decision had already been made.

3.25 In his evidence to the Committee Rev McIntyre said:

The original announcement was made as a fait accompli. Within Redfern school we were not even properly made aware of the right of appeal in relation to that announcement.... Now how open a process is that in terms of due process? When we went to meet with the Minister we were told, “No way, this school has been closed. The decision will not be changed.” That is not what I call consultation; that is not what I call due process.⁴⁵

3.26 These concerns seem to have been heightened by reports in the media that the Hon John Aquilina MP, Minister for Education had said that the school closures and *Building the Future* was non-negotiable.

3.27 On 11 May 2001, the Hon John Della Bosca, Minister for Industrial Relations responded to a question from Ms Lee Rhiannon regarding the public school site sales on behalf of the Minister of Education and Training. He said:

What is not negotiable, however is which schools are closed? These have been chosen for sound educational reasons and are essential to the success of the whole draft proposal. The Government is genuinely considering alternatives being put forward in consultation. But that should not lead to false hopes or expectations of avoiding the difficult decisions.⁴⁶

3.28 On 12 May 2001, the *Sydney Morning Herald* featured an article regarding *Building the Future*. The article stated:

On at least two occasions, including once in Parliament, Mr Aquilina has insisted that plan is “non negotiable”.⁴⁷

3.29 Ms Baker highlighted the concerns held by many about the statement made by the Minister. She said:

The Minister had said that these things are discussion points only. Within 24 hours the media was reporting, with a microphone under his mouth, the Minister saying they are not negotiable. “Not negotiable” means they are not discussion documents, they are set in concrete, and those parents must have been absolutely furious at that and, as I said, felt absolutely betrayed. You cannot have a discussion document that is not negotiable. That is an oxymoron, I believe, it cannot be contained in the one sentence, it is contradictory in view, and that is exactly what happened.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Evidence of Rev John McIntyre, Redfern P&C, 31 May 2002, p 16.

⁴⁶ The Hon John Della Bosca MLC, Legislative Council Hansard, 11 May 2001, p 13565.

⁴⁷ Mr Gerard Noonan, “Schools win reprieve as Aquilina backs off”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 May 2001, p 3.

⁴⁸ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of NSW Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 56.

3.30 Ms Prokhovnik indicated that they were getting mixed messages from the Department and the Minister, she said:

We have the Department of Education saying it conducted a proper consultation period and yet it was sprung on this school, and all other schools, contrary to their own closure policy. The department insists it was a consultation period, yet the Minister was saying it was not negotiable and now the Director-General is saying "the die was cast".⁴⁹

3.31 In their submission to the inquiry the Hunters Hill P&C states:

For HHHS, not only was the Minister undermining the school by saying that the decision was 'non-negotiable', but every reference to the school by the DET was negative.⁵⁰

3.32 In her evidence to the Committee, Hunters Hill High School teacher, Ms Ros Jenner said:

So it was taken on board, but nothing changed. It was in the context of - yes, you can have your say, but this is what needs to happen. We didn't feel that anything was actually taken seriously.⁵¹

3.33 Witnesses representing other schools also raised concerns about the legitimacy of the consultation process. Ms Fioni Stavert, Union Organiser, NSW Teachers Federation, raised specific concerns in relation to how well the consultation process had been undertaken with the Redfern Public School community. She said:

I think the key thing that the federation and the Inner City Teachers Association want to say is that community consultation in this process, and really unpicking how the communities work, was never really adequately done.⁵²

3.34 However, in correspondence to the Committee Mr Terry Denzil, Committee Member, Alexandria Park Community School Steering Committee, indicates that the consultative process that occurred with the Redfern Community regarding *Building the Future* and the development of the Alexandria Park P-12 concept was comprehensive. He writes:

Many thousands of hours have been spent of real community consultation, and hundreds of people, individual organisations and groups to bring about a proposal based on sound and thorough research unfortunately this has not been recognised or acknowledged by representation by individuals to your enquiry.⁵³

⁴⁹ Evidence of Ms Kathy Prokhovnik, Vice President, Hunters Hill High P&C, 31 May 2002, p 10.

⁵⁰ *Submission No 92*, Hunters Hill High School P&C, p 10.

⁵¹ Evidence of Ms Roslyn Jenner, Teacher, Hunters Hill High School, 31 May 2002, p 14.

⁵² Evidence of Ms Fioni Stavert, Union Organiser, NSW Teachers Federation, 31 May 2002, p 19.

⁵³ Correspondence from Mr Terry Denzil, Committee Member, Alexandria Park Community School Steering Committee, received 7 June 2002.

3.35 In correspondence to the Committee the Redfern P&C refutes the statement that there was real community consultation. They wrote:

Dr Boston ... argued that there has been extensive community consultation regarding the development of the Alexandria Park Community School. However he admitted that there was no group representing Redfern Public School at these meetings.... The person that 'took the leadership role' in his words was Terry Denzel, the president of the school council at Cleveland Street Public School - indicative of the fact that although the community close to Alexandria Park was represented in the consultation process, the Redfern community was not. Waterloo Public School and Cleveland Street High School made a decision for Redfern and Erskineville Public Schools that neither Redfern nor Erskineville participated in.... This lack of consultation is evidenced by the absence of signatures of community representatives from Redfern and of any representatives from Erskineville.⁵⁴

3.36 The Redfern P&C also indicated that they supported the establishment of the new school. They wrote:

The Redfern P&C supports the establishment of the new school, but opposes the closure of Redfern Public.⁵⁵

3.37 In reference to the consultation that occurred regarding Erskineville Public School in particular, the submission from Erskineville Public P&C states that:

...there were no consultation meetings instigated by the Department with the parents or community members during the period between the Minister's "preliminary announcement" that the school would close on March 20 and final announcement in June. This was despite the claims by the Minister in his media statements that "hundreds of consultation meetings" had been held with regards to the *Building the Future* plan. All communication between parents and the Department that took place after the announcement occurred was at the instigation of parents. The Minister refused to attend the Public Meeting convened by Erskineville Public School Council, the only Departmental representative was a relatively junior member of the Department.⁵⁶

Conclusion

The Department in providing a 10-week consultation process after the release of *Building the Future* exceeded its statutory requirements. However, many of those who participated in the process did not believe that their views were intended to make any difference to the final decision.

⁵⁴ Correspondence from Ms Jenny Munro, Redfern P&C, received 20 June 2002.

⁵⁵ Correspondence from Ms Jenny Munro, Redfern P&C, received 20 June 2002.

⁵⁶ *Submission No 35*, Erskineville P&C, p 9.

The School Closures Review Committee

3.38 Following the consultation period and the announcement of the final Plan, the Minister instigated processes set out under Section 28 of the *Education Act 1990*.

3.39 The intention of Section 28 is to ensure that the community has an opportunity to comment and or object to the closure of a school.

3.40 Section 28 outlines the process for closing schools once an announcement has been made by the Minister that a school will close. Section 28 states:

(3) *Within 21 days of any such announcement, the Minister is to establish a School Closures Review Committee and notify in writing the Principal and President of the legally constituted parents organisation of each school concerned of that decision.*

(4) *The School Closures Review Committee is to review and make recommendations to the Minister concerning the closure of a school if the majority of the parents of the children attending the school have, within 21 days of an announcement under subsection (2), submitted a request in writing to the Minister that a review of its closure be undertaken.*

3.41 In relation to subsection 4 of the section, the Department's submission states:

In relation to four schools: Erskineville Public School, Hunters Hill High School, Maroubra High School and Redfern Public School the Minister received requests in writing that a review of its closure be undertaken. Although technically the Minister had not received requests in writing from a majority of parents of children attending two of the schools (Redfern and Maroubra), it was assumed that the criteria in section 28 (4) had been met...⁵⁷

3.42 The *Act* also outlines who the participants must be on the Review Committee and how the review must be conducted. Subsections 5 to 9 of *the Act* state:

(5) *The School Closures Review Committee is to comprise:*

(a) *an independent person appointed by the Minister, who is to chair the Committee,*

(b) *the Director-General of School Education or nominee of that Director-General,*

(c) *a nominee of the Local Government Association of New South Wales,*

(d) *a nominee of the Federation of Parents' and Citizens Associations,*

(e) *an Assistant Director-General of School Education nominated by the Director-General,*

(f) *a nominee of the New South Wales Teachers Federation, and*

(g) *a nominee of the Minister.*

⁵⁷ *Submission No 91, DET, p 41.*

- (6) *In conducting a review, the Committee:*
- (a) *is to call for submissions and seek expert demographic and educational advice for both the present and future use of the school, and*
 - (b) *is to seek out and have regard to the views of teachers, local communities and parents of the children attending the schools whose proposed closure is being reviewed, and*
 - (c) *is required to meet with representatives of those teachers, local communities and parents.*
- (7) *In making any recommendations concerning the closure of a school, the Committee is to have regard primarily to the educational needs of the local community concerned and of the State.*
- (8) *The Committee is to report to the Minister by 30 September of the year in which it is established.*
- (9) *If the Minister does not accept any recommendation of the Committee, the Minister is to make public within 21 days the reasons for the decision.*
- (10) *The procedure outlined in this section for the closure of a school does not apply:*
- (a) *in the case of a one-teacher school, or*
 - (b) *if the majority of the parents of children attending the school approve of the closure, or*
 - (c) *if the Minister is satisfied that there are exceptional or emergency circumstances which require an earlier closure of the school.*

3.43 The Department's submission states that in relation to Section 28 of *the Act*:

The School Closures Review Committee met each of these criteria.⁵⁸

3.44 On behalf of the School Closures Review Committee (SCRC) arrangements were made for an advertisement concerning the school closures to be placed in the Sydney Morning Herald and the Daily Telegraph on 28 July 2001. Documents were prepared for each member of the Committee by the Department outlining details of *Building the Future*. The Committee visited each of the schools concerned and met with teachers, parents, students, P&C representatives and ancillary staff. In his letter to the Minister containing the recommendations for the SCRC, Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, SCRC, writes:

A conscious and collective decision was taken by the Committee to conduct reviews at the schools proposed for closure. This was to maximise the opportunity for all concerned to have access to the Committee and allow a first hand understanding of the issues and the local environment.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Submission No 91, DET, p 26.*

⁵⁹ Mr Vernon Dalton, *School Closures Review Committee Report*, 30 September 2001, p 2.

- 3.45** The SCRC also visited some of the schools likely to be impacted on by the closures, including Malvina High, Balmain High, Glebe High, Cleveland St High, Randwick Girls, Randwick Boys and Matraville High. The SCRC met with the authors of the demographic studies including Yusuf/Caspersonn (who completed an independent demographic study for the SCRC) and Nicholas Parr who completed a study for the Hunters Hill High School P&C.⁶⁰
- 3.46** The SCRC received 214 letters and submissions; 3 for Redfern, 35 for Erskineville Public and 176 for Hunters Hill High School.⁶¹
- 3.47** Meetings were held on 7 and 26 September 2001 to see and hear presentations and submissions from the Department.
- 3.48** Although the recommendations of the SCRC were that the closure of all the schools should go ahead, the Committee members were split on the decision 3 vs 4. A minority report was submitted by Ms Maree O'Halloran, Senior Vice President NSW Teachers Federation.⁶²
- 3.49** The SCRC submitted its report along with the dissenting report to the Minister on 30 September 2001.
- 3.50** Evidence from Mr Dalton indicated that the SCRC had fulfilled all its obligations under *the Act*. Mr Dalton highlighted that hearings were held at all the schools up for review and that he personally ensured that at the end of the hearings all in attendance felt that they had been given sufficient opportunity to state their cases. He also said that he ensured that all correspondence was made available to every member of the Committee.⁶³ He said:
- There was good opportunity provided at those public consultations, there was good opportunity for written and other submissions and I believe that the Committee in the end did a good job of trying to objectively and in a balanced way present to the Minister all of the information that it had received during those deliberations.⁶⁴
- 3.51** In her evidence Ms O'Halloran indicated that the intent of all members of the Committee was to do the best job they could. She said:
- I think that you could say that every member of the Schools Closure Review Committee was a sincere person who wanted to do the best job that they could do...⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Mr Vernon Dalton, *School Closures Review Committee Report*, 30 September 2001, p 3.

⁶¹ Mr Vernon Dalton, *School Closures Review Committee Report*, 30 September 2001, p 4.

⁶² Ms Maree O'Halloran, *SCRC Dissenting Report to the Minister*, 30 September 2001.

⁶³ Evidence of Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, School Closures Review Committee, 29 May 2002, p 27.

⁶⁴ Evidence of Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, School Closures Review Committee, 29 May 2002, p 25-26.

⁶⁵ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 62.

3.52 However, some concerns were raised during this parliamentary inquiry about the availability of information for the Committee, its terms of reference, the membership and external factors which undermined the legitimacy of the Committee's work. These are discussed below.

Information availability

3.53 In her evidence to the Committee Ms Baker indicated that she thought there was information which was not made available to the Committee and that access to this information at the time may have changed the minds of some panel members. She said:

...until the end basically I felt that the review panel had access to everything that it asked for. It was after the fact I felt that didn't happen.⁶⁶

...I understand that there was evidence withheld or not made available that may well have changed the way that other members of the Committee viewed it. I thought the evidence was absolutely clear. I thought that the evidence supported the community in not wanting to see their schools close. I thought that the evidence demonstrated that there was a need in those areas for those sites to be preserved for prosperity and for re-growth and growth.⁶⁷

3.54 This view was also expressed by the Local Government Association of NSW who state in their submission:

Cr Wheatley has expressed concern that not all information relevant to the issue was placed before the Committee.... I understand that not all relevant information was placed before the Committee and that further relevant material came to light following a freedom of information request. By this time, the Committee had completed its work. In my view, it is an important principle that if a Committee is to be established to review a decision of Government, then all relevant matters must be placed before the members so they can objectively come to a view. In the case of the School Closures Review Committee, this did not happen. The decision making process was therefore flawed.⁶⁸

Membership

3.55 A number of participants in the inquiry indicated that they thought that the SCRC may be biased towards the Department as a consequence of its membership. The Committee was made up of the following representatives:

- Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair,
- Ms Robyn McKierhan, District Superintendent Dubbo,

⁶⁶ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of New South Wales Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 57.

⁶⁷ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of New South Wales Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 53.

⁶⁸ *Submission No 101*, Office of the President, Local Government Association of NSW, p 1.

- Councillor Joyce Wheatley, Local Government Association,
- Ms Bev Baker, Federation of NSW Parents and Citizens Associations,
- Mr John Sutton, Assistant Director General Primary Education
- Ms Maree O'Halloran, NSW Teachers Federation
- Mr Gareth McCray, journalist and broadcaster.

3.56 Of particular concern was that the Chair had been appointed by the Department of Education and Training.

3.57 This concern was reflected in the evidence given by Rev John McIntyre, Redfern P&C representative, during his evidence to the Committee. He said:

The review Committee, we know it was a split decision, three/three, with a casting decision made by somebody paid as a consultant by the Department of Education. Now how open a process is that in terms of due process?⁶⁹

3.58 In response to a question from the Committee regarding the perception that the School Closures Review Committee was biased because the Department appointed three persons and the Minister appointed the Chair, Mr Dalton said:

I guess there could be that perception, in the same way that there could be the perception that if you have got people with vested interests on the other side, the same would apply I guess.⁷⁰

Conclusion

The Committee believes that the School Closures Review Committee was validly constituted under the *Education Act* and does not see any failure of process with regard to its membership, which is established by legislation. However, there has been a perception from some sections of the local community that the process is only a rubber stamp for policy.

SCRC terms of reference

3.59 An issue raised by all three of the School Closures Review Committee members who appeared before the Committee was that of the terms of reference for the closure review.

3.60 As stated above, subsections 6 and 7 outline the information/circumstances that the Committee is required to take into account in making its decision. These sub-sections state:

(6) *In conducting a review, the Committee:*

⁶⁹ Evidence of Rev John McIntyre, Redfern P&C, 31 May 2002, p 17.

⁷⁰ Evidence of Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, School Closures Review Committee, 29 May 2002, p 27.

- (a) *is to call for submissions and seek expert demographic and educational advice for both the present and future use of the school, and*
 - (b) *is to seek out and have regard to the views of teachers, local communities and parents of the children attending the schools whose proposed closure is being reviewed, and*
 - (c) *is required to meet with representatives of those teachers, local communities and parents.*
- (7) *In making any recommendations concerning the closure of a school, the Committee is to have regard primarily to the educational needs of the local community concerned and of the State.*

3.61 The concerns raised about the terms of reference relate to two main aspects:

- Subsection 6 (a) - *“for both the present and future use of the school”*, and
- Subsection 7 – *“Committee is to have regard primarily to the educational needs of the local community concerned and of the State”*.

Terms of Reference: “for both the present and future use of the school”

3.62 In her evidence to the Committee Ms Baker raised some concerns about the interpretation of the term *“future use of the school”* for the purposes of the SCRC. She indicated that although the Committee was allowed to look at the future use of the schools in their current form they were not allowed to consider different models.

3.63 In response to a question from the Committee regarding whether the SCRC was allowed to consider the options for Hunters Hill High School, Ms Baker said:

No.... I had the Hunters Hill plan because Hunters Hill had a huge public meeting in which they launched the plan.⁷¹

and

We were allowed to discuss none of the alternatives because they were not the reasons for the closures. We were only allowed to look at, according to *the Act*, the merit of the Government's decision on the closure and that was frustrating because the closure came about so fast there was no opportunity for you to have a look at alternative structures. I mean we had places like Ryde and Peter Boyd. They amalgamated.⁷²

⁷¹ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of New South Wales Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 55.

⁷² Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of New South Wales Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 55.

3.64 Ms Baker provided an explanation as to why the SCRC had interpreted *the Act* in this way. She said:

It came from the chairperson and because most of us had been on review panels before and that is the way that we had interpreted it before. We did want to look at proposals, alternative proposals, but the view was that that is not what we were there to do. We were to look at the closure of this school as a school, as it currently runs and running as a school in the future, as an isolated instance, as a unit in itself, not as part of a bigger picture.⁷³

Terms of Reference: “Committee is to have regard primarily to the educational needs of the local community concerned and of the State”

3.65 In evidence to the Committee, Mr Dalton explained the role that the Committee had under Subsection 7 of *the Act*. He said:

The other charter that the Committee had too of course was that it did not have the liberty of looking in isolation at those schools. It is charged, according to the legislation, with having an interest in those individual schools, as well as the interests of education in the State generally....⁷⁴

3.66 Committee members of the SCRC indicated that tensions existed between the educational needs of the local community and the needs of the State and that indeed, in this situation, it was not possible to have regard for both. In her evidence Ms O’Halloran said:

I believe the argument that was put was that the educational needs of students across the State, and that is in *the Act*, equated to funding for public education. So I think that well-meaning people on the Committee accepted the view that in order, for example, for Malvina to be refurbished and be a very successful school, some other schools had to close. So they operated in a cross neutral model, because that was the proposition put to them by the department, and that was that tension between the educational needs of the community versus the educational needs of the State.⁷⁵

3.67 Ms O’Halloran also said that the Committee had been led towards putting the interests of the State ahead of the interests of the local community. In her evidence she said:

The Committee was led to that conclusion by the way it undertook its work. It began its work - we were put on a mini bus and taken to a whole range of schools as I described earlier that were going to be refurbished as a result of the plan. That seems to me to be completely outside of the terms of reference of the Schools....⁷⁶

⁷³ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of New South Wales Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 57.

⁷⁴ Evidence of Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, School Closures Review Committee, 29 May 2002, p 24.

⁷⁵ Evidence of Ms Maree O’Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 68.

⁷⁶ Evidence of Ms Maree O’Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 69.

3.68 Mr Dalton also alluded to the importance that having regard to the needs of the State played in the SCRC's decision, in his covering letter to the Minister. He wrote:

As required, the Committee has been guided by Section 28 of the *Education Act 1990*. Had it not been for Section 28 (7), which states: "in making any recommendations concerning the closure of a school, the Committee is to have regard primarily to the educational needs of the local community concerned and **of the State**"⁷⁷ the task may have been less difficult.⁷⁸

3.69 In their submission to the inquiry the Hunters Hill High School P&C comments on the statement made by Mr Dalton in his letter to the Minister. They wrote:

...the Dissenting Report shows that this 'difficulty' led to an interpretation of *the Act* which was based on financial rather than educational need- an interpretation with which the Dissenting report – makers do not agree.⁷⁹

3.70 In her evidence to the Committee Ms O'Halloran indicated that this situation meant that those arguing that the schools should remain open were at a disadvantage. She said:

What happened was that each school was left to argue by themselves in isolation for whether that school should remain open, but they were faced with the *Building the Future* proposal in its entirety from the department. So every time that school argued one of the reasons they should stay open, for example Erskineville had a number of reasons, the response would be, "But if you stay open, Alexandria Park Community School cannot be successful". So the difficulty was the Schools Closure Review Committee looking at the *Building the Future* proposal in its entirety or was it only looking at each school that was closing, and what seemed to happen was that the department had it both ways. They got to argue the whole *Building the Future* proposal against each and every school, but when the Schools Closure Review Committee wanted to put up alternative structures that could be good for public education, we were not allowed to do so because we were only empowered to look at the schools that were closing.⁸⁰

3.71 Mr Dalton indicated:

...but against that was this strong and detailed information that the department persisted with which was to do with the wider *Building the Future*, the wider issues so far as local or nearby school facilities, the drift away from public education and what they were trying to do about reversing that, but demonstrating that in terms of Hunters Hill it was a rational and reasonable decision, so that is what we were faced with.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Author's (Mr Vernon Dalton's) own emphasis.

⁷⁸ Mr Vernon Dalton, *School Closures Review Committee: Maroubra High, Hunters Hill High, Erskineville Public and Redfern Public*, 30 September 2001.

⁷⁹ Submission No 9, Hunters Hill P&C, p 14.

⁸⁰ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 62.

⁸¹ Evidence of Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, School Closures Review Committee, 29 May 2002, p 26.

3.72 Mr Dalton indicated that the SCRC's inability to consider *Building the Future* as a whole and alternatives to the closure of the school was a frustration to some. He said:

The difficulty that some members of the Committee had was that they would have (a) liked to have had the charter of reviewing the whole of the *Building the Future* plan, which the Committee did not have, or, alternatively, looking at what schools might have been able to have been closed instead of the schools that were recommended for closure. Again, the Committee did not have the charter to do that.⁸²

3.73 This situation was reflected in Mr Dalton's letter to the Minister concerning the findings of the Review Committee. He wrote:

Councillor J Wheatley asked that you be advised that she thought this process was incomplete. She believed that the SCRC should have reviewed the entire *Building the Future* proposals and not have been restricted to those schools that sought review. Other Committee members suggested that separate School Closures Review Committee's be established for individual schools if the need arises in the future.⁸³

3.74 In her evidence to the Committee Ms O'Halloran indicated that she thought *the Act* was set up to analyse one school closing, she said:

It would seem to me by reading *the Act* that it is actually set up for an examination of one school closing. What happened here was there was a whole plan for restructuring and four schools closing, and I do not think any of them could get a fair hearing in that circumstance.⁸⁴

3.75 In their submission to the inquiry, the Department disagreed with Ms O'Halloran's view. They wrote:

It should be noted that section 28 (3) says:

"...the Minister is to establish **a** School Closures Review Committee..."
(Emphasis added)

Firstly, the word "a" suggests that, in any particular year, the Minister is to establish one SCRC. Thereafter, in the rest of section 28, there is reference to "the" SCRC and "the Committee, which again suggest a single SCRC. Secondly, the use of the plural "Closures", rather than the singular, is consistent with the view that the SCRC will deal with more than one closure.⁸⁵

3.76 Ms O'Halloran argued:

...sometimes a school has to close, but firstly a school should be looked at alone. It should not be looked at in the context of fighting against other schools for

⁸² Evidence of Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, School Closures Review Committee, 29 May 2002, p 24.

⁸³ Mr Vernon Dalton, *School Closures Review Committee: Maroubra High, Hunters Hill High, Erskineville Public and Redfern Public*, 30 September 2001.

⁸⁴ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 62.

⁸⁵ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 40.

money. So *the Act* should be that if a school is going to close, that school should get its own review Committee. We actually tried to argue that way, but we were told that under *the Act* that cannot be. That was the first thing. The second thing is, as I suppose you have heard previously from another person giving evidence, it would be important that the chairperson has a set of guidelines for how to operate the Committee and what happens when there is a three all vote, how they cast their vote.⁸⁶

Conclusion

In order to enable an individual school closure to be reviewed in context, the Committee believes that there is a need to review Section 28 of *the Act* in relation to the terms of reference for School Closures Review Committees. A recommendation regarding this issue is made at the end of this Chapter.

Was the result of the SCRC Review predetermined?

- 3.77** As discussed earlier in this report a number of participants to the inquiry raised concerns about the legitimacy of the consultation process in light of alleged statements that the plan was 'non negotiable'. Similarly, concerns have also been raised about the ability of the SCRC to impact on the decision given statements by the Minister about *Building the Future* being final before the SCRC had made its recommendation.
- 3.78** In their submission to the Committee, the Redfern P&C indicates that the Redfern school community already felt disenfranchised by the time the SCRC was formed. They wrote:
- Although ultimately Redfern P&C was formed and the School Closures Review Committee was established to consider the closure of Redfern Primary School, much of the community already felt disenfranchised and that the closure was a foregone conclusion...⁸⁷
- 3.79** Ms O'Halloran also indicated that there were signs that a final decision had been made prior to the School Closures Review Committee making its recommendations. She said:
- Even in the session that we had before the release of the *Building the Future*, each overhead that was shown had the amount of money in the bottom corner that they expected to realise by the assets. So certainly, even at that point in time, they had that in mind, and my recollection of the Schools Closure Review Committee was that one of the departmental officers indeed said that the department had already begun to draw down from Treasury on the basis of those asset sales.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 74.

⁸⁷ *Submission No 78*, Redfern P&C, p5.

⁸⁸ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 69.

- 3.80** In their submission to the inquiry South Sydney Council raised a number of concerns about the role of the SCRC. In conclusion they state:

...the role of the Committee was extremely limited, and the Committee process in fact operated as an active barrier to having the full concerns of all the affected communities considered.⁸⁹

Marrickville and Dulwich High Schools

- 3.81** Under *Building the Future* it was intended that either Marrickville or Dulwich High School would be closed and that the decision on which one would be deferred. However, in June 2001 it was decided that there would be a three-month consultation period. On 1 May 2002, the Education Minister, John Watkins MP announced that both of the schools would remain open.

- 3.82** The Minister is reported as providing the following explanation for changing the decision to close one of the schools:

After receiving the proposals, the department put to me a different future that hadn't been considered before and I responded, I told the communities I would listen to them.⁹⁰

- 3.83** In his evidence to the Committee Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, also indicated that local community support had influenced the decision not to close the school, he said:

In the case of Marrickville and Dulwich (Hill), there were some compounding issues. You had a stronger support from the local community, from the local schools in that area; you also had an intensive English centre there which was able to provide a number of students and which was not at any of the other schools.⁹¹

- 3.84** In their evidence to the Committee both Dr Laughlin and Dr Boston indicated that it was a Ministerial decision not to close Marrickville and or Dulwich High.⁹²

- 3.85** In evidence to the Committee Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, said:

The original draft proposal recommendation is in the notice paper and that is that there would be a proposed amalgamation. A decision was made on that which was of a different order. I am charged with responsibility for seeing that decision implemented and I believe, in the light of everything that was considered by Government, that is the proper decision to make at this time and I am not resiling in any way from commitment to that decision. This is the essence of public service.

⁸⁹ Submission No 94, South Sydney Council, p 8.

⁹⁰ Ms Kathy Lipari, "Schools not out for inner-city education", *The Daily Telegraph*, May 2 2002, p 4.

⁹¹ Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 9.

⁹² Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, and Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 9.

3.86 Dr Laughlin provided the Committee with reasons for the change. He said:

...it is because those schools are going to be reconfigured in a different way and it was thought that they could in fact attract students back from their local schools. They had a quite reasonable take-up rate from their local schools which was promising and, as I said, the IEC is being kept there, whereas at one stage we were talking about moving it across to Cleveland Street. The IEC will stay and that will give them a flow-through of students.⁹³

3.87 Many participants in the inquiry have raised concerns about the consistency of the decision on Marrickville and Dulwich High compared to the other public school closures.

3.88 In their submission to the inquiry the Local Government Association states:

I note that in the case of two schools – Dulwich Hill High School and Marrickville the Government has decided that it will reverse its original decision. I am disappointed that this did not happen in the case of Hunters Hill High School, which Cr Wheatley advises me had an equally compelling case.⁹⁴

Record Keeping and Freedom of Information

3.89 During the course of the campaigns by Erskineville Public, and Hunters Hill High School to keep their respective schools open, the P&Cs for the schools have made numerous requests of the Department for information pertaining to the decision to close the schools.

3.90 During the course of this inquiry the Committee has heard evidence pertaining to this issue from both sides. In essence the P&C bodies have argued that they have requested information that either has not been provided or has been provided after an extensive period and that there is information which they have requested that the Department has indicated does not exist. The Department has argued that they have met all their legal responsibilities to provide information.

3.91 In response to a question regarding whether all documentation had now been made available to the P&C's for all three schools, Mr Michael Waterhouse, Director of Legal Services, DET replied:

To the best of my knowledge, yes, other than those that are claimed by the department to be exempt. For example, there has been a request for the valuations and, for the same reason that the valuations are being provided in camera, they have been exempt under FOI because that could destroy the value of the property. I should say that the third FOI I referred to is still in process and the department has been communicating with the Hunters Hill people with the assistance of the Ombudsman to work through a process of providing documents in relation to that request....⁹⁵

⁹³ Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 10.

⁹⁴ *Submission No 101*, Office of the President, Local Government Association of NSW, p 2.

⁹⁵ Evidence of Mr Michael Waterhouse, Director of Legal Services, DET, 29 May 2002, p 20.

3.92 Mr Michael Waterhouse, also pointed out a mistake that the Department had made regarding the provision of material concerning the initial request by Hunters Hill High P&C. He said:

The first two requests were, respectively, in March 2001 and, from recollection, June or July 2001. The documents were not provided at that time, and they should have been. That was an error. The documents were provided when they were discovered. The reason they were not discovered was that they were searched for by the district superintendent of the Ryde district, the author of the document, and he was unable to locate them and he did not believe he had them in his office.⁹⁶

3.93 Ms De Brierley Newton, of the HHHS P&C indicated in her evidence that they had not received all the information requested from the Department. She said:

The department has consistently blocked our efforts for information.⁹⁷

3.94 Ms Newton also gave evidence regarding the P&C's latest attempt to gain information and the difficulties in getting the Department to provide the information. She indicated that she had asked for the records of meetings held regarding the closure of the school but was told there were no minutes kept.⁹⁸

3.95 Dr Brendan Stewart and Ms Kerry Stewart, parents of Hunters Hill High School students, state in their submission to the inquiry:

The second way that DET was unprepared was in its blatant failure to be honest with the students, the P&C and the teaching staff. The Ombudsman's investigation believes that DET has a case to answer regarding its refusal to give Hunters Hill High P&C relevant information. This denial of freedom of information has seriously undercut the school community's case before the School Closure Committee meetings.⁹⁹

3.96 The Committee understands that the Ombudsman has not yet finished his investigation of the disputed documents.¹⁰⁰

3.97 In her evidence to the Committee Ms Jeni Mulvey indicated that the Erskineville P&C had experienced similar problems, and went further to say that the Department actually hadn't met its obligations under the *Freedom of Information Act*. She said:

We would also challenge whether they have fulfilled their obligations under the *Freedom of Information Act* and the *State Records Act*.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Evidence of Mr Michael Waterhouse, Director of Legal Services, DET, 29 May 2002, p 20.

⁹⁷ Evidence of Ms De Brierly Newton, Representative HHHS P&C, 31 May 2002, p 25.

⁹⁸ Evidence of Ms De Brierly Newton, Representative HHHS P&C, 31 May 2002, p 25.

⁹⁹ *Submission No 15*, Brendan and Kerry Stewart, p 2.

¹⁰⁰ Inquiry by GPSC No. 1, Secretariat with the Office of the Ombudsman, 27 June 2002.

¹⁰¹ Evidence of Ms Jeni Mulvey, President Erskineville P&C, 31 May 2002, p 3.

- 3.98** The Committee has been informed by the Department that all items requested by the Erskineville P&C have been provided except a list of names and addresses of individuals who had made submissions to the Department, which were exempt under privacy provisions.

Conclusion

The Committee feels that the issue of access to information through FOI is separate to, and not necessarily relevant to the decision to close the schools in question, but the alleged obstructions compound the apprehension felt by the P&C groups.

The Committee is not able to determine from the evidence presented whether the Department has met with its legal requirements under FOI.

The impact of rumour

- 3.99** The Committee also received evidence suggesting that the school enrolments had been undermined by the failure to promote and support schools in the past.

- 3.100** In reference to the Redfern Public School in particular, the Redfern P&C submission states:

The effectiveness and integrity of the public consultation process were also tainted by the failure to adequately support and promote Redfern Primary School for many years prior to its selection for closure. In this sense, the Redfern P&C feels that the school was “set up to fail” for many years. It lacked permanent staff and most importantly a permanent Principal. There were consistent rumours over the period three years prior to the 15 June 2001 announcement that it was going to be closed and the issue of contamination of the site was regularly raised but never addressed leaving further concern and hesitation amongst residents. These factors lead many parents to withdraw their children or to enrol their children at other schools without even considering Redfern as an option.¹⁰²

- 3.101** Ms O’Halloran also indicated in her evidence that there was a sense in many inner city schools that closure may be imminent for some years as a result of the lack of maintenance expenditure:

Teachers in the whole of the inner city area and surrounding areas have for years felt as though the sword of Damocles was hanging over them when nothing was happening in terms of maintenance and so forth. They knew that falling enrolments was an issue and that some of them were under threat of closure and that went on for some years. So, yes, there was a deliberate running down of some of the schools.¹⁰³

¹⁰² *Submission No 78, Redfern P&C, p 7.*

¹⁰³ Evidence of Ms Maree O’Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 67.

3.102 Ms Baker said that the impact of rumours about school closures is alarming. She said:

The impact is short and it is alarming. We have had some discussion around the closure of Chatswood High School. Rumour would tell us that as soon as that discussion was on foot, which was to move the campus to another place, parents immediately went up the road to the non-Government school and enrolled their children, put their kids down for enrolment.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

The Committee acknowledges that school closures are traumatic and the Department's actions and process will usually be the subject of debate. It appears to the Committee that the process has followed statutory requirements. However, the statutory requirements, in relation to the School Closures Review Committee appear to focus on the proposed closure of a particular school rather than the current context where a comprehensive plan is presented affecting numerous schools in a region. The Committee believes the process does not afford affected schools adequate opportunity to argue alternative plans to the closure of their school during the process undertaken. This is not the result of the School Closures Review Committee, but rather the statutory limitations on their terms of reference. For that reason the Committee believes S28 (7) of the *Education Act* should be amended to allow future closure reviews to consider alternatives to closure within their area.

Recommendation 1

That section 28 of *the Act* be amended so that where a school closure is being reviewed as part of a broader plan of school closures or is linked to multiple school closures then the entire plan would be reviewed.

¹⁰⁴ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of New South Wales Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 49.

Chapter 4 Issues and implications

During the inquiry the Committee has received extensive evidence regarding a wide range of issues concerning the closure and restructuring of schools in the inner city. The issues raised ranged from the broader issues associated with the Department's plan to very specific issues affecting particular schools.

Concerns were raised about the statewide resourcing of education and the perceived competition that exists between public and private schools. Issues more specific to the Department's planned restructuring and closure of schools focused on the legitimacy of the method chosen for achieving the aims of the *Building the Future* and the legitimacy of the demographic work undertaken under Section 28 of the Act.

These issues and concerns are outlined in detail in this Chapter.

Resourcing

4.1 One of the main reasons given for the development of the *Building the Future* was that the Department has limited resources which it needs to allocate to those in need. In particular the argument was made that the Department does not have enough money to keep small under-utilised schools in the inner city open while there are crowded and under-resourced schools in the western suburbs and on the outskirts of the city.

4.2 While discussing the need for resourcing western suburbs schools, Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, stated:

It is very hard for the Department of Education or Government to take money away from these schools, if they need refurbishing and redevelopment, into these schools (inner city schools), when frankly it appears to us on the figures that the general population is moving away from them. That is a very stark problem for anyone in the public sector or certainly Government to consider. How do you invest your dollars best?¹⁰⁵

4.3 Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, reiterated Dr Laughlin's comments regarding the financial decisions facing the Department:

...there are great inequities between schools across the system which need to be addressed. If we are successful in getting more money for education, for capital works for education, in addition to the \$476 million boost we have had in the last budget, then it clearly has to go to those schools that are bursting at the seams and which have very large classes and, in comparison with other schools, quite unsatisfactory facilities.... Looking at the total resource which we are managing, it is clear that we have an obligation to say that in this part of the State.... If there is funding that can be put into maintaining all the schools in the inner city area, that would be fine, but the reality is there is not.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 4.

¹⁰⁶ Evidence of Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 12.

- 4.4** Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, SCRC also highlighted that it was important that the Department consider the needs of schools around the State when making decisions about particular schools. In evidence to the Committee he said:

It would be a contradiction if you said that if any school for its own sake wanted to continue, that you would use scarce resources to allow that to happen when you could perhaps use those resources more optimally for the benefit of the State, and that is the other dilemma that the Committee constantly faced.¹⁰⁷

- 4.5** Mr Dalton also indicated that based on the information presented to the Review Committee that it was apparent to him that perhaps the Department really needed to go further in term of rationalising its assets. He said:

I do not think the department, in terms of the data and information that I saw in respect of all of those schools and relative to those areas, is really going far enough and I suspect it is going to be faced in the future with still having far too many places and problems in rationalising its resources.¹⁰⁸

Government and non-Government schools

- 4.6** The Committee received extensive evidence regarding the move from public to private schools.

- 4.7** The Department presented evidence to the Committee that there has been a move generally around the State from public schooling to private education. This movement is particularly stark with regards to high school students in the inner city.

- 4.8** In his evidence to the Committee, Dr Laughlin stated:

...when you get into secondary education, you get this extraordinary flip. So people are in fact turning away from Government schools, tending to, and going into the non-Government sector. The non-Government sectors in fact are above the Government, and the Government sector is beginning to fall.

Frankly, that is a pretty stark illustration of the kind of problems we are confronted with in the inner city, and what happens when you have these falling numbers and when you do have the tendency of the population, because of a whole range of reasons, moving off to other schools, it impacts on the curriculum and it impacts on teacher numbers.¹⁰⁹

- 4.9** The statewide change can be seen in statistics regarding the proportions of students attending Government and non-Government schools in New South Wales. The following table shows the statewide change in school enrolments since 1970.

¹⁰⁷ Evidence of Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, School Closures Review Committee, 29 May 2002, p 29.

¹⁰⁸ Evidence of Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, School Closures Review Committee, 29 May 2002, p 26.

¹⁰⁹ Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 4.

Table 4.1 Enrolment percentages in NSW Government and Non- Government Schools, 1970, 1985, 2000.

	1970	1985	2000
Primary			
Government	78.7	75.68	72.49
Non-Government	21.3	24.32	27.51
Secondary			
Government	75.1	72.16	65.26
Non-Government	24.9	27.84	34.74
Total			
Government	77.4	74.22	69.42
Non-Government	22.6	25.78	30.58

Source: Review of Non-Government Schools in NSW: Report 1, March 2002, p 27.

Table 4.2 Number and proportion of all students attending Government schools across five LGA's

LGA	Total 1986	Percent in Government schools	Total 1996	Percent in Government schools
Hunters Hill	894	35.9	682	36.2
Lane Cove	1,940	45.3	1,700	41.9
Ryde	5,654	59.9	5,536	55.9
Drummoyne	1,872	53.2	1,346	39.1
Leichhardt	2,515	60.7	2,213	54.5
Total	12,875	55.2	11,477	50.5
Metropolitan Sydney	261,575	66.2	260,839	61.4

Source: Submission No 91, p 19.

4.10 Between 1970 and 2002 the total number of students attending Government schools across the State decreased by almost 8%. The number of students attending Government high schools fell by almost 10% and for primary schools the proportion attending Government institutions decreased by just over 6%.

4.11 This trend is also reflected in the inner city area. From 1986 to 1996 the combined enrolments at both primary and secondary schools in the Hunters Hill, Lane Cove, Ryde, Drummoyne and Leichhardt areas fell by just under 5%. The Local Government Area with the greatest change was Drummoyne which experienced a fall in Government school enrolments of 14.1%. The only Local Government Area listed going against the trend was Hunters Hill which experienced a minor increase in the proportion of students attending Government schools of .3%.¹¹⁰ Given the little change between 1986 and 1996 in the proportion of students from Hunters Hill attending non-Government schools during a

¹¹⁰ However, it should be noted that the percentage of students from Hunters Hill attending Government schools is very low and much lower than surrounding districts.

time of change in other districts it could be that the proportions of students attending Government schools from that area have stabilised.

4.12 It is also worth noting the change in the number of students (both Government and non-Government) across the Local Government Areas (LGA) between 1986 and 1996. Hunters Hill and Drummoyne experienced the greatest fall in student numbers, of 24% and 28% respectively. Ryde experienced the smallest reduction with only 2%. These figures compare starkly with the Metropolitan Sydney rate which fell by just 0.3%. (Note: Appendix 8 contains the change in enrolment figures at Hunters Hill High School since 1984)

4.13 The Committee received extensive information regarding the factors effecting the drift from Government to non-Government education. These reasons included:

- Federal and State Government policies,
- Uncertainty,
- Loss of choice,
- Maintenance and aged infrastructure in public schools.

Federal and State Government policies

4.14 Mr Boston explained to the Committee that Federal Government policies have had an impact on the choices being made by parents regarding school choices. He said:

The reality also is that the funding policies of the current Federal Government are exacerbating the drift to the non-Government sector, accelerating it very rapidly.¹¹¹

4.15 However, the Committee also received submissions claiming that the blame for the movement of public students to the private sector may also in part rest with State Government policies. In their submission to the inquiry the NSW Teachers Federation states:

State Government funding policies are partially responsible for driving the flight to private schools. The Government is prepared to continue to finance an exponential growth in per capita grants to private schools via the “25% rule” in the *Education Act*, via interest subsidies on loans for capital development, via continued support for free transport to distant private schools and via iniquitous subsidies such as secondary textbook grants.¹¹²

4.16 The NSW Teachers Federation also raised concerns about the continued provision of funding to private schools in the same areas where at the same time the closure of public schools was being considered.¹¹³ The Federation provided a summary of the funding provided to private schools in the areas where public schools were being closed.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Evidence of Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 13.

¹¹² *Submission No 43*, Teachers Federation, p 9.

¹¹³ *Submission No 43*, Teachers Federation, p 10.

Table 4.3 Summarised Version of NSW Teachers Federation Funding Chart

Public School affected by plan	Private School	1998/1999 Interest subsidy from the State Govt	1999/2000 Interest subsidy from the State Govt
Maroubra HS and Vaucluse HS	Claremont College, Randwick	\$18,193.26	\$16,606.73
Glebe HS, Balmain HS, Dulwich HS, Marrickville HS, Leichhardt HS.	St Scholastica's College	\$23,396.91	\$15,318.88
Dulwich HS	Trinity Grammar School, Summer Hill	\$205,865.86	\$250,945.23
Hunters Hill HS	Riverview College Foundation (St Ignatius) Lane Cove	\$144,706.02	\$153,231.80

Source: Submission No 43, p 10.

4.17 Ms O'Halloran reiterated the Federation's view in her oral evidence to the Committee. She said:

...in fact with some of the schools that were marked to close there were other schools funded by the Government in the area that happened to be in the private system that had perhaps the same number of students and yet they were not earmarked in the same way. In other words, there was funding to another system, the private school system, to keep open schools with the same or similar numbers of students and yet there was no money for the public education system.¹¹⁵

4.18 In her submission to the inquiry, Dr Genevieve Kang, (PhD in Education) indicates that the problems being faced by inner city schools are as a result of both Commonwealth and State Government funding. She writes:

It would be unfair to isolate the impact of State Government funding policies without looking at the impact of Commonwealth funding. Public schools are under funded by both State and Federal Governments, impacting on the attractiveness of public schools.¹¹⁶

Uncertainty

4.19 Ms Baker presented another perspective on the movement from Government to non-Government, to the Committee. In response to a question asking for her opinion on whether the closure of the schools under *Building the Future* would contribute to the drift of students from public to private schools, Ms Baker replied:

¹¹⁴ Submission No 43, Teachers Federation, p 10.

¹¹⁵ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 63.

¹¹⁶ Submission No 86, Dr Genevieve Kang, parent, p 2.

I think the evidence is already in on that. We have just had the statistics on the inner west and the number of students returning to public schools in that area and the numbers are dropping. Parents want their kids safe. They want to know that they are going to that school and they are going to be there for the time that they want them to be there. It is a very clear message to those people. It says that public education is transient and the private school system is building in bricks and mortar to stay forever. Those messages go to the heart of parents.¹¹⁷

4.20 This view was also expressed by Ms Sally Gaunt who states in her submission:

Already enormous damage has been done to the public perception of state-run education. How can parents have confidence in the ability of the system to provide a stable environment and quality education for their children when it is turned into a political football...? I can only sympathise when parents decide the private school system is a safer bet.¹¹⁸

Maintenance and Infrastructure

4.21 The issue of maintenance and the provision of facilities was a reason used to explain why parents may be opting for non-Government schools over Government ones. Parents of a Hunters Hill student, S and C McTaggart state in their submission:

The funding policies adopted by the current State Government in recent years has resulted in public schools in this State becoming run down and poorly maintained. The neglected physical appearance of these schools acts as a deterrent to potential enrolments as does the lack of investment in new infrastructure.¹¹⁹

4.22 The staff of Hunters Hill High School state in their submission:

It has been acknowledged that people in the local area have been increasingly sending their children to private schools. This could be seen as being an understandable choice given the contrast in facilities available.¹²⁰

4.23 The issue of investment in infrastructure was also raised by the NSW Teachers Federation in their submission. They state:

Many schools appear run down. There was a severe cutback in levels of capital funding for infrastructure and maintenance in a succession of State budgets.... The State Government has acknowledged this, but see the only solution as "robbing Peter" (closing schools) to "pay Paul" (refurbish other schools). This is not the case with private schools, many of which have been busy building new facilities, with the support of Commonwealth grants and State interest subsidies.... Public schools have been left at a disadvantage.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of New South Wales Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 49.

¹¹⁸ *Submission No 36*, Ms Sally Gaunt, p 3.

¹¹⁹ *Submission No 41*, p 3.

¹²⁰ *Submission No 42*, Staff of Hunters Hill High School, p 10.

¹²¹ *Submission No 43*, NSW Teachers Federation, p 12.

4.24 The Chairman of the School Closures Review Committee also commented on the maintenance issues being faced by the schools in his report to the Minister. He says:

A number of disconcerting aspects arose from the review including:

- Each school, with perhaps the exception of Erskineville Public School, had suffered from inadequate building maintenance and had been allowed to deteriorate to an unacceptable level, and
- Community perceptions that schools nominated for closure have been deliberately run down so as to achieve their closure in a de facto way...¹²²

Choice

4.25 Some participants in the inquiry indicated that the closure of public schools is reducing the options and choices available to parents in the public system so they are reverting to the private sector instead. Mr Stephen and Ms Susan Guy state in their submission:

It is often a lack of choice which forces parents to move their children into private education, therefore reducing choice can only risk the future of public education. Allowing Government schools to differentiate, compete with each other and provide options for parents is major way of enabling public schools to compete with private schools, and slow the drift away from public education.¹²³

4.26 Ms Elizabeth and Mr Peter Colthorpe state in their submission to the inquiry:

If the stated aim is really to arrest the drift to private schooling then ignoring the student's choice is unlikely to be effective.¹²⁴

4.27 This view is also reiterated by Ms Dione Barrett, who states:

We are prepared to support the system, but it is a little difficult when they are taking away our nearest school. ...we will either have to leave the area, spend our time driving into the neighbouring suburbs or enter the private school system. At a time when there is a Government funded campaign to support public schools we are being drawn towards the private school system as the Government looks to limit alternatives to young families...¹²⁵

4.28 The issue of the existence of competition between private and public schools and the impact that the closure of inner city schools would have on this was a common theme articulated throughout the inquiry.

4.29 In her evidence to the Committee, Ms Baker discussed the competition that exists between public and private schools:

¹²² Mr Vernon Dalton, *School Closures Review Committee: Maroubra High, Hunters Hill High, Erskineville Public and Redfern Public*, 30 September 2001.

¹²³ *Submission No 21*, p 4.

¹²⁴ *Submission No 25*, p 11.

¹²⁵ *Submission No 63*, p 2.

Those schools were working together to come up with something that would preserve public education in that area and be dynamic and alive and a true competitor for the non-Government sector in a market sense. Public schools should never compete with the private sector, they are a different animal, but if you are being forced into that sector, that is what you have to do.¹²⁶

4.30 Dr Boston indicated in his evidence to the Committee that the trend towards non-Government schools could be alleviated in the inner city in particular by the implementation of the Plan's proposals. He said:

The Federal Government at the moment is supporting private education as a proportion of its total funding to a greater level than it is supporting our 38 public universities. We are not on a level playing field with this, and the whole basis of our *Building the Future* proposal is to give the inner suburban kids of Sydney a fair go, a top quality curriculum, in state of the art facilities, which this State can afford through asset realisation. It is perfectly feasible, perfectly achievable and it will halt the drift to the non-Government sector in this part of Sydney. It has already arrested the drift in one year.¹²⁷

4.31 The Committee notes that the Grimshaw Review has highlighted the issue of Government and non-Government school funding:

...the notions of co-operation and collaboration that have underpinned the harmonious operation of the Government and non-Government school sectors over the past forty years are under real pressure. Factors such as the increased level of Commonwealth funding to non-Government schools and the enrolment trend away from the Government to the non-Government sector are converging to disturb the equilibrium.¹²⁸

They referred to the climate of animosity which is emerging in relationships between teachers across the sectors, between educational authorities and even within some communities, and the extent to which this is working against the best interests of students in all schools.¹²⁹

The Review sees the present difficulties and tensions around the expansion of the non-Government sector becoming more pronounced in future if current arrangements remain unchanged. State and Commonwealth Governments need to reach agreement on the future development of the school sector and on how it will be resourced as a whole.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of New South Wales Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 52.

¹²⁷ Evidence of Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 15.

¹²⁸ Warren A Grimshaw, *Review of Non-Government Schools in NSW: Report 1*, March 2002, p 13.

¹²⁹ Warren A Grimshaw, *Review of Non-Government Schools in NSW: Report 1*, March 2002, p 15.

¹³⁰ Warren A Grimshaw, *Review of Non-Government Schools in NSW: Report 1*, March 2002, p 16.

Choices made in *Building the Future*

4.32 The Committee received no evidence criticising the Department's stated core aim for the *Building the Future* – that of increasing opportunities and choices in public education, however the Committee received extensive evidence regarding the means/methods being employed by the Department to achieve this aim.

4.33 In her evidence to the Committee, Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation raised her concerns about the methods being employed by the Department in the *Building the Future*. She said:

What we saw in front of us with the *Building the Future* proposal was a defeatist plan for public education, a plan that said that you had to close some schools, cannibalise them in order to make sure that the infrastructure of other schools was sufficient to go forward. We thought that it was a defeatist plan. We felt that it conflated educational needs with asset realisation, so that the funding of the schools became the priority, rather than the educational needs for the community.

That was our general view, and we also felt that the *Building the Future* proposal could not be viewed in isolation from the public education system as a whole and that piecemeal changes to the system obviously affected one school after another. That was a general view that we took. ... We felt that the document *Building the Future* is built on public policy failures of the past. What the federation wanted was an optimistic and expansionist plan for the public education system and a view as well that small did not necessarily mean not successful.¹³¹

4.34 In response to a question from the Committee regarding the need for the Department to take action to combat falling enrolments in the inner city, Ms O'Halloran indicated that she thought there was need but that it should have been done by addressing the reason why enrolments were falling. She said:

Well, one of the things that could be looked at is, first of all, why are the falling enrolments happening in some schools and not others?

4.35 Using Maroubra High School as an example, Ms O'Halloran explained why she thought some schools were failing. She also outlined alternatives to the proposals in the *Building the Future*. She said that Maroubra had become a "deselected school" because of long term public policies which promoted competition between schools.¹³²

There should have been a plan to make that school successful and one of the things that was put forward by the federation and other bodies was, for example, a P-12 school at Maroubra High School, an alternative school for students with special needs, behaviour disorder students, or what has been successfully done at some other areas, which was placing a selective cap on Maroubra High School to bring back a more comprehensive profile in the school. All of those things were put forward by the federation and other bodies. ...there were solutions other than just closing the door on that particular school.

¹³¹ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, pp 60-61.

¹³² Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 63.

- 4.36** Concerns were also raised by the Redfern P&C about the need to analyse why enrolment numbers were falling. Their submission states:

In developing the plan no attempts were made to investigate or explain the complex reasons for falling enrolments, attendance figures and why school aged children and young people in Redfern are not accessing the school. The reasons why some schools have thrived and others have not also needs to be addressed.¹³³

Demographics

Yusuf/Caspersonn Study

- 4.37** Under Section 28 of *the Act* the School Closures Review Committee has to seek demographic advice for the present and future use of the school. The *Act* states:

(6) *In conducting a review, the Committee:*

- a) *is to call for submissions and seek expert demographic and educational advice for both the present and future use of the school, ...*

- 4.38** As previously noted the Department of Public Works commissioned three demographic reports in relation to Maroubra High School, Hunters Hill High School, and the South Sydney District (for Erskineville, Redfern, Waterloo and Alexandria Primary schools) for the School Closures Review Committee. The work was undertaken by Farhat Yusuf and Peter Caspersonn from Macquarie Research Limited in August 2001.

- 4.39** The work was to provide an independent and rigorous analysis of past and projected demographic trends in the designated intake area served by each school, the wider surrounding local Government areas in which the schools are located and their wider area of influence. In addition the work was to review the impact of the proposed school closures on surrounding remaining schools given existing and proposed facilities.¹³⁴

- 4.40** The key findings of the demographic work undertaken by Yusuf/Caspersonn are as follows:

Hunters Hill High School

- Method 1 – based on the assumption that the loss to non-Government schools between Year 6 and 7 continues at current rates, enrolments will continue to decline over the next 20 years.
- Method 2 – based on the assumption of a return to lower loss rates, based on attracting students to enhanced Government schools, will see enrolments stabilise at current levels.

¹³³ *Submission No 78, Redfern P&C, p 7.*

¹³⁴ Yusuf and Caspersonn, *Demographic Analysis of the intake area of Hunters High School and Adjacent Government Areas*, 28 August 2001, p iii.

- If Hunters Hill High School is closed, classroom accommodation at Government high schools in the five selected LGA's and surrounding areas will be able to accommodate the higher projection.¹³⁵

South Sydney Council area – Erskineville, Redfern and Alexandria

- The study identified that the resident primary school age population of the designated area was higher than the number of children attending schools in the area and that the discrepancy is due to children attending schools in the Newtown area.
- The study found that under a high growth scenario there would be the need for 650 places for primary school students in the designated area and under the low growth scenario 550 places would be needed.¹³⁶ (*Note: Departmental figures indicate that Alexandria Park School will have a maximum primary school capacity of 800. This issue is discussed in more depth in Chapter 6.*)¹³⁷

4.41 However, the work undertaken by Yusuf and Caspersonn has come under criticism in the Committee's inquiry. These criticisms included:

- The range of assumptions/scenarios provided,
- A failure to acknowledge uncertainties,
- The age and type of data used,
- The level of market share between public and private schools, and
- The utilisation of Pymont/Ultimo to determine likely % of population in age bracket.

Hunters Hill High School – Dr Nicholas Parr

4.42 At the same time as Yusuf and Caspersonn were undertaking their work for the School Closures Review Committee, Dr Nick Parr and Ms Linda Owens (Parr/Owens) from Macquarie University also undertook an analysis of the demographics in the Hunters Hill area for the Hunters Hill P&C.

4.43 Unlike the work undertaken by Yusuf/Caspersonn, the Parr/Owens study did not look at the specific impact of population projections on the expected enrolments at Hunters Hill. The study instead focused on the likely changes in the numbers of students in the district over the next 20 years.

¹³⁵ Yusuf and Caspersonn, *Demographic Analysis of the intake area of Hunters High School and Adjacent Government Areas*, 28 August 2001, p 77.

¹³⁶ Yusuf and Caspersonn, *Demographic Analysis of South Sydney and Intake Area of Selected Primary Schools*, 6 September 2001, p 65.

¹³⁷ Evidence of Mr John Burkhardt, General Manager (Properties), 29 May 2002, p 14.

4.44 Key points made by the Parr/Owens study include:

- Projections of the number of 12-17 year olds for the combined Local Government Areas of Canada Bay, Hunters Hill, Lane Cove, Leichhardt, and Ryde show that a significant increase in the secondary school age population is likely to occur over the next 20 years in the catchment area of Hunters Hill High School,
- Best estimate is that the number of 12-17 year olds in the area will be about 12.4% larger in 2020 than in 2000. The size of this age group is projected to increase throughout the projection period with the rate of growth being most rapid between 2000-2005 and 2010-2015,¹³⁸ and
- Australian Bureau of Statistics population estimates show that there has been significant growth in the 0-11 and 12-17 age ranges in the area in recent years.¹³⁹

4.45 In his evidence to the Committee Professor Burnley, Professor in Geography, University of NSW indicated that the work undertaken by Parr/Owens had been influenced by the data used. He said:

It estimated resident populations which are available by local Government area right up to 2000. These certainly show in metropolitan Sydney quite an upswing, suggesting fewer people are leaving, and I think that has affected the data of the report I have just mentioned to a fair extent and it is legitimate to use the data to an extent in so far as they are officially published data from the ABS.¹⁴⁰

4.46 Prof Burnley indicated that this may have made the figures look slightly more favourable. He said:

Therefore the higher estimate of the second report for the Hunters Hill area, although I have to say I think it is slighted a bit favourably towards Hunters Hill High School, but it is a scientific piece of work. I think that the estimates are up partly for our data factual reasons but they may be reflecting a turnaround with the outflow from Sydney compared to what has been going on hitherto.¹⁴¹

4.47 Prof Burnley also raised similar concerns about the Parr/Owens report that he had about the Yusuf/Caspersonn Report, these included:

- That the analysis did not use the usual resident population figures, and
- That a range of scenarios were not provided.

¹³⁸ Dr Nicholas Parr and Mrs Linda Owens, *Demographic Report to the Parents and Citizens Association of Hunters Hill High School*, 10 August 2001, p 10.

¹³⁹ Dr Nicholas Parr and Mrs Linda Owens, *Demographic Report to the Parents and Citizens Association of Hunters Hill High School*, 10 August 2001, p 1.

¹⁴⁰ Evidence of Prof Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, p 38.

¹⁴¹ Evidence of Prof Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, p 39.

- 4.48** Despite these concerns Professor Burnley indicated that both the Parr/Owens and the Yusuf/Caspersonn studies were scientific pieces of work.¹⁴²

The range of assumptions and scenarios provided

- 4.49** A general critique made about the work undertaken by Yusuf and Caspersonn was that it provided a limited range of scenarios.¹⁴³ In his evidence to the Committee, Prof Burnley said:

A general critique I would have of all the work, though there is a variation on the amount of residential redevelopment going on, that urban consolidation, I think I would have liked to have seen a low, medium and higher estimation in the total population profile.¹⁴⁴

- 4.50** Dr Peter Phibbs from Sydney University reviewed the work undertaken by Yusuf/Caspersonn for Erskineville Public P&C. He also raised similar concerns. He states:

Forecasters usually try to minimise this risk by preparing a number of scenarios – involving different assumptions for key parameters in the forecasting models. This has only been done to a limited extent and as a result I think it conveys to the reader an impression of preciseness or a level of accuracy that is not realistic. When academics are using this approach to develop new approaches to forecasting it might be appropriate but I would not use the results as a basis for making major public investments.¹⁴⁵

- 4.51** Prof Burnley also held concerns about the assumption regarding the fertility rate. In his evidence he said:

Also another general critique is fixing fertility, which is taking the general rate at 1.7 and holding it constant I think if I were doing it, I would have had a higher fertility assumption, maybe about 1.9 for most of the areas. You must remember of course, and the point is made clear I think in both reports, that a lot of the young children have already been born and then we are talking about them surviving through up to 2016 and so on and so forth.¹⁴⁶

Methodological issues

- 4.52** In his submission to the Committee, Dr Phibbs writes:

Whilst the report is in generally well researched and presented, in my view the report fails to acknowledge the very real risks associated with forecasting in small dynamic urban areas.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Evidence of Prof. Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, p 39.

¹⁴³ Note: It should be noted that this criticism was also made of the work undertaken by Dr Nick Parr.

¹⁴⁴ Evidence of Prof. Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, p 39.

¹⁴⁵ *Submission No 39*, Dr Peter Phibbs, University of Sydney, p 1.

¹⁴⁶ Evidence of Prof. Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, p 39.

¹⁴⁷ *Submission No 39*, Dr Peter Phibbs, University of Sydney, p 3.

4.53 The extent of the differences between the demographic work undertaken by independent professional demographers raised concerns in the Committee about the certainty of population projections. The Committee also heard from professional demographers about the need to understand the uncertainties inherent in demographic projections.

4.54 In particular, Prof Burnley highlighted to the Committee the issue of uncertainty, in his opening statement to the Committee. He said:

Fifteen to sixteen years, which the population reports are dealing with, is a medium to long range projection period by any standard in which some variation from eventual reality is inevitable effectively. An uncertainty which is quite clear in all the reports is the amount of medium density development to occur in school catchment areas and an uncertainty about the demographic characteristics of those who live in medium density housing, and various reports have dealt with that, one a bit more than others. There is considerable uncertainty about the future demand for private secondary school education in the inner city and I think everybody is aware of the trend of many people, quite happy, preferring to send their children to public primary schools, but there are strong attitudes crystallising and that have been going on for some time towards getting children going to private schools, more particularly among the middle income people whom I think we would assume, and the evidence in the reports presents, are going to be living in the inner city areas more and more, so there is considerable uncertainty there.¹⁴⁸

4.55 Prof Burnley also indicated that the term ‘projection’ implies more precision than is actually possible:

Population projection is not prediction ... I would prefer the term “estimation” particularly for parts of cities and for established areas of cities such as what we are dealing with here.¹⁴⁹

4.56 Prof Burnley also provided examples of the reasons why the work is so uncertain. He said:

There is uncertainty as to the extent that urban consolidation will change population characteristics, particularly if there are seven, ten or higher storey developments, as we know there are on the upper end of that range in Pymont-Ultimo which has been discussed in some of the work, or in the area near Green Park station, the area in south Sydney. We do not have hard evidence in the Australian social science literature that I am aware of that there has been a significant preference change. In fact, from a personal point of view, I do not think that these big developments in the inner and middle ring suburbs will significantly slow the outer suburban expansion which parents with children type families prefer, in fact a lot of my own research can indicate that.¹⁵⁰

Price changes going on in the inner city housing market, which various reports have referred to, may mean that the current preferences for families for separate dwellings may be mediated by price pressures. Now that is a possibility.... As price pressures increase in the inner areas, people's preferences for accessibility to the city centre may outweigh their desire for more outdoor private space. That is a

¹⁴⁸ Evidence of Prof Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, p 37.

¹⁴⁹ Evidence of Prof. Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, p 37.

¹⁵⁰ Evidence of Prof. Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, p 37.

possibility, particularly with low fertility and the fact of movement more towards one child families, which is quite common, although there is some uncertainty about that.¹⁵¹

4.57 Similarly, Dr Phibbs also highlights in his submission to the Committee that demographic analysis in the context of this work is particularly uncertain, he wrote:

The risks involved in forecasting in these areas are very high because of the uncertainty about two issues: the net rate of new construction and the uncertainties around who will move into new dwellings.¹⁵²

and

The risks associated with forecasting total populations are bad enough but when an age specific forecast is required as well as projected school enrolments, the risks increase considerably. Given that the area under consideration is going to the location of the largest urban regeneration project in the history of the nation, the logic of committing funds to a reconfiguration of schools when the likely school numbers in the year 2015 is at best likely to be an educated guess, does not strike me as prudent planning.¹⁵³

4.58 In part because of the uncertainties involved in population projections, participants in the inquiry have raised concerns about projections being utilised as a reason to close schools.

4.59 Prof Burnley suggested that closing the schools may be a mistake, especially if the land was sold. He said:

I would just answer the question that I think more immigrants, including skilled immigrants, could go to those inner city areas. I agree the overall population pressures are on the outer areas, but I think to rationalise school enrolments or schools too far in the inner city could be a disadvantage, just as I would argue that if you go too far with hospital closures in the inner city there is a disadvantage.¹⁵⁴

4.60 However, in their evidence to the Committee Department representatives highlighted that enrolment trends, more so than demographic trends, were influencing the decision to close schools. In evidence to the Committee, Mr Burkhardt said:

...trends in school enrolments are the most important demographic analysis in terms of predicting school enrolments. Much has been said about broader demographic projections, but I would stress that the Department of Education has the capacity to produce enrolment projections on all of its 2,200 schools each year. We draw on data for high school projections from the enrolments in our primary schools and this, of course, is the best indicator for predicting enrolment demand.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ Evidence of Prof. Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, p 37.

¹⁵² *Submission No 39*, Dr Peter Phibbs, Sydney University, p 1.

¹⁵³ *Submission No 39*, Dr Peter Phibbs, University of Sydney, p 3.

¹⁵⁴ Evidence of Prof. Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, p 39.

¹⁵⁵ Evidence of Mr John Burkhardt, General Manager Properties, DET, 29 May 2002, p 6.

4.61 This position was reiterated in the Department's submission, it states:

The issue of demography was secondary to market share.¹⁵⁶

The main issue was that if people wouldn't come to our schools, there was little point in conducting detailed independent research into the numbers of students in the area. The overriding issue was to consider current enrolments, including enrolments in Government primary schools and to rebuild community confidence. Analysis of demographic evidence alone would not solve this compelling and more immediate problem.¹⁵⁷

4.62 The age and type of the data used by Yusuf and Casperonn in undertaking their work was of concern to many.¹⁵⁸ Professor Burnley indicated that none of the reports had used the usual resident population and that this would be most appropriate – instead all reports had utilised the commonly available counted population on census. He said:

...whereas the population count was 3.7 million for metropolitan Sydney, the estimated resident population was 150,000 more when that was disaggregated over time. The count is just where people are on census night with some allowance for tourists and people in hotels. Ideally a proper analysis of change over time would use ...the usual resident populations from each census which comes out sometime after the count data.¹⁵⁹

4.63 Concerns were raised that the demographers were only able to utilise out of date data from the 1996 census and that it may have been better if the Department had waited until the 2001 ABS data was published before making a decision on the closure of the schools. In her evidence Ms O'Halloran said:

...but waiting for the census data might have been a better move in terms of public perceptions about what was happening.¹⁶⁰

4.64 This point was also made by Prof Burnley. In response to a question from the Chairman about whether decisions on the closure of the schools should be delayed to the 2001 census could be analysed Prof Burnley said:

Yes, I would argue that from the census...¹⁶¹

4.65 Some witnesses believed that the demographers could have utilised more local specific data in undertaking the projections. In his submission Dr Peter Phibbs states:

The report appears to be based largely on desk research. Perhaps this is a symptom of time constraints but it would appear to be unreasonable for such a study to engage with some local information.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 29.

¹⁵⁷ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 29.

¹⁵⁸ Note: this criticism was also made of the work undertaken by Dr Nick Parr for Hunters Hill High P&C.

¹⁵⁹ Evidence of Prof Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, p 38.

¹⁶⁰ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 66.

¹⁶¹ Evidence of Prof Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, p 47.

4.66 Ms Baker in her evidence to the Committee said:

...all of the preschools and child care centres are full with waiting lists, so the demography might show that people are not breeding, but somebody is, and obviously they are busing their kids in. They are busing their kids in from other areas obviously, because all of the child care centres are full. Now what are child care centres full of? Not workers, they are full of kids.¹⁶³

Level of market share

4.67 Concerns were also raised that no increase in market share from non-Government to Government was built into the assumptions. In her evidence to the Committee, Ms O'Halloran stated:

...it was predicated on a market share for public education, in the department's terms, not growing, so that first of all if you had a plan for public education that looked at it growing then you would need surplus capacity. The demographic analysis was also, to my mind, not clear that there would be a drop and there was census data coming, very close, and yet they would not wait for that.¹⁶⁴

Utilisation of Pymont/Ultimo

4.68 Yusuf/Caspersonn estimated the percentage of children likely to live in the new high density developments in the Erskineville/Redfern area (including Green Square and the Meriton development "Tiara") by looking at the percentage of children in the age group living in Pymont-Ultimo. In the Yusuf/Caspersonn report for the South Sydney area it states:

An adjustment will therefore be required to the growth component of the designated area, whereby the new dwellings will be assumed to have 3.0 percent of the population aged from 5 to 11. The value of 3 percent has been chosen representing the figure from the Ultimo Pymont study and being close to the figure for the Newtown area in 1996.¹⁶⁵

4.69 The legitimacy of utilising the figure from Pymont-Ultimo was questioned by a number of participants. In particular, Dr Phibbs states:

The major problem I see with the study is the use of the assumption that the new dwellings will be assumed to have 3.0% of the population aged 5 to 11. I would seriously question the reliability of using a survey of Ultimo Pymont in 2000 as a basis for projections out to 2015.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² *Submission No 39*, Dr Peter Phibbs, University of Sydney, p 2.

¹⁶³ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of New South Wales Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 56.

¹⁶⁴ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 66.

¹⁶⁵ Yusuf and Caspersonn, *Demographic Analysis of South Sydney and Intake Area of Selected Primary Schools*, 6 September 2001, p 50.

¹⁶⁶ *Submission No 39*, Dr Peter Phibbs, University of Sydney, p 1.

4.70 Prof Burnley in his evidence to the Committee explained why the percentage of school age students in Pymont-Ultimo was not the most appropriate figure to use. He said:

...first of all while some of the price range is similar, it is a bit more up-market at Pymont/Ultimo. It is certainly a development which has put itself forward as being for inner city life-styles. We know there is a lot of single and unattached people living there.... There isn't a great deal of evidence though of it being family centred, and there are a lot of reasons traditionally from a planning perspective, as well as social demographic reasons, why many people with families and mothers and children will not settle in high rise apartments because there is not anywhere for them to play or the children cannot be seen by the parents when they are playing, and many body corporates have restrictions on children playing in stairwells.... Pymont/Ultimo has got an indoor swimming pool and so on, but it is not oriented towards families, having visited it. I think there are dangers certainly in extrapolating from the Pymont-Ultimo development, say, to the other big ones that are going on in the inner city.¹⁶⁷

4.71 In response to questioning from the Committee, Dr Phibbs indicated that although most of the apartments in the new developments (eg Green Square) were one bedroom, that there were also a large number of two bedroom apartments. He said that given the average size of a family is between 1-2 children that it was feasible that a family could choose to live in the developments, especially given the higher cost of other lower density accommodation in the area.¹⁶⁸ In response to a question from the Committee about the cost of two bedroom apartment accommodation in South Sydney, Dr Phibbs said:

It varies, but you might be paying in the 300s.

4.72 Then in response to the proposition from the Committee that there would not be very many children in two bedroom units costing \$300,000, Dr Phibbs replied:

Well, if you are looking at the alternative of buying a small terrace for \$500,000, the saving actually will help. The point I am trying to make is that, as Sydney becomes basically more choked up with people, people are expressing a preference for access and we have seen that.¹⁶⁹

Conclusion

The conflicting analyses of the demographers made it difficult for the affected communities to accept a compelling case for closure.

¹⁶⁷ Evidence of Prof Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, pp 42-43.

¹⁶⁸ Evidence of Dr Peter Phibbs, Sydney University, 7 June 2002, pp 7-8.

¹⁶⁹ Evidence of Dr Peter Phibbs, Sydney University 7 June 2002, pp7-8.

Land Availability

4.73 The issue of land availability for public schools into the future, should the land from Erskineville, Redfern and Hunters Hill schools be sold off, was raised by a large number of participants in the inquiry. The following statements were made regarding this issue:

4.74 The NSW Teachers Federation states in its submission:

...the Federation remains extremely concerned that the Department and Government were willing to embark on a program of reckless endangerment for public education in the inner Sydney area. Having "sold off the farm" there would be no foreseeable possibility of "buying it back" in the future.¹⁷⁰

4.75 Parents of Hunters Hill High School students, S and C McTaggart state in their submission

Any sale of education sites in inner Sydney would be a short-term gain but a long-term loss. If any sites are sold, they will be irreplaceable.¹⁷¹

4.76 In relation to Hunters Hill High School, parents S&S Guy state:

The site of the school is a unique resource, providing a wonderful learning environment for our children. If the school is closed it will be lost forever. There is no more space in the area to build another school when it is needed in the future.¹⁷²

4.77 The Redfern P&C wrote:

The Redfern P&C is concerned that the Department of Education will not be able to afford to purchase adequate space to accommodate the number of students requiring a public education in the future should Alexandria Park Community School not be able to accommodate them all. This could result in the students being housed in inadequate facilities, with limited grounds or having to travel unacceptable distances to attend their school leading to further decline of public education in the inner Sydney area.¹⁷³

4.78 In her evidence to the Committee, Ms Baker said:

Once the land has gone, you will never get it back. If you try and buy land in the inner city you are paying a king's ransom for it.¹⁷⁴

4.79 South Sydney Council also raised concerns specifically in relation to the Redfern and Erskineville sites. They state in their submission:

¹⁷⁰ *Submission No 43*, NSW Teachers Federation, p 9.

¹⁷¹ *Submission No 41*, p 3.

¹⁷² *Submission No 21*, p 4.

¹⁷³ *Submission No 78*, Redfern P&C, p 9.

¹⁷⁴ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of New South Wales Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 52.

If the Government plans to sell off the Redfern and Erskineville Primary Schools to finance other areas of the proposal, this will not only be strongly resisted by the Council and the local community, but the opportunity to reuse these sites in the future if necessary would be lost, as they would no longer be Government assets. Once sold, they would probably be redeveloped as residential units, creating even more demand for public education services.¹⁷⁵

4.80 Prof Ian Burnley indicated that land availability for future schooling was a reason why the school sites should not be sold. He said:

I can understand the Government's point of view, wanting to rationalise, and obviously in that south Sydney area there is going to be rationalisation, big development, I think before probably coming together to be one large community school at the primary level and so forth, but I would be reluctant to sell off that kind of real estate myself because you would never be able to afford to buy it back in.¹⁷⁶

Conclusion

Many issues have been raised with the Committee and the demographic projections in particular, have been the subject of extensive debate. The Committee believes there are arguments on both sides. The Committee's focus is on the specific decisions made to close Erskineville Public, Redfern Public and Hunters Hill High, and whether the Department thoroughly considered the alternatives.

¹⁷⁵ *Submission No 94*, South Sydney Council, p 6.

¹⁷⁶ Evidence of Prof. Ian Burnley, University of NSW, 29 May 2002, p 42.

Chapter 5 Hunters Hill High School

A number of issues were raised by participants in the inquiry in relation to the closure and sale of Hunters Hill High School. These issues can be summarised as follows:

- Enrolments, Curriculum and Academic Achievement,
- Choice, Availability and Accessibility,
- The value of the School site,
- Options for the Future.

Curriculum, Academic Achievement and Enrolments

Enrolments

5.1 The following table shows the enrolments at Hunters Hill High School since 1991.

Table 5.1 Annual enrolments by school year: Hunters Hill High School

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Total
1991	134	133	148	112	140	119	786
1992	139	136	135	144	109	116	779
1993	148	142	142	132	147	100	811
1994	112	145	132	136	114	124	763
1995	119	114	145	149	115	89	731
1996	89	111	114	147	130	91	682
1997	88	83	120	112	145	109	657
1998	71	83	86	133	114	108	595
1999	82	72	94	88	121	92	549
2000	50	76	90	94	83	106	499
2001	61	48	80	93	84	58	425
2002	14**	51	31	65	0*	63	224

* No Year 11 enrolments were accepted for 2002.

** It was originally intended that there would be no enrolments for Year 7, however this decision was reversed.

Source: Department of Education and Training.

5.2 The following graph shows the percentage change in enrolments since 1991.

Table 5.2 Percentage change in enrolment numbers since 1991

Year	% change from previous year in enrolment numbers
1991	-
1992	-0.9%
1993	+4.0%
1994	-6.0%
1995	-4.0%
1996	-7.0%
1997	-4.0%
1998	-9.0%
1999	-8.0%
2000	-9.0%
2001	-15.0%

Source: Derived from Submission 91, Department of Education and Training, p 18.

5.3 Table 5.1 shows that between 1991 and 1994 the enrolments at Hunters Hill High School were relatively stable. However, from 1994 and 2001 there was a 44% decrease in enrolment numbers. In 2002 (after the announcement of the school closure and the announcement of the SCRC recommendations and the closing off of enrolments for Year 11's) the enrolments understandably plummeted. However, surprisingly given the announcement of the school's intended closure, there was an in take of Year 7 students in 2002.

5.4 The Department's contention that a small school will keep getting smaller under the residualisation model was questioned by a number of participants in the inquiry in relation to Hunters Hill.

5.5 The Department of Education indicated that there was no net gain to public education in the increase of students attending Hunters Hill High at Year 7 (2001) in a document tabled with the Committee on 7 June 2002. They state:

...while Year 7 at Hunters Hill High School may have increased by 11 the total school enrolments declined by 75 students. It should also be noted that this increase in enrolments came substantially out of the Balmain area with the attendant drop in year 7 (2001) in that school - what had been achieved for public education?¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ Department of Education and Training, Tabled document, 7 June 2002.

- 5.6** In their submission Hunters Hill parents, Mr Daunt and Ms Child question the belief that the school has unsustainable levels of enrolments. They state:

Interestingly, there were about 100 year 10 students at HHHS last year, who were forced, with almost no notice, to leave the school. How a school with 100 year 10 students can be called 'unsustainable' is astounding and an insult to HHHS and most of the other school in our area had many less students in year 10. Those schools include Malvina, Glebe, Balmain and numerous private schools that receive public funding.¹⁷⁸

- 5.7** In her evidence to the Committee of Ms Kathy Prokhovnik, President, HHHS P&C, highlighted the enrolments at Year 7 across the district and compared them to the assumptions made by Yusuf and Caspersonn in their report to the SCRC. She said:

...the 2002 enrolments into Year 7 ... are excellent. They show a strong increase in Government school market share. They show that this year 951 students enrolled in Year 7 in the Ryde and Port Jackson districts. That is 40.75 percent of the 12-year-olds in that district. These students have been attracted to the schools by selective streams put in place under the *Building the Future* plan. And the figure of 40.75 is important, because it is nearly exactly the 41 per cent figure on which Dr Yusuf based his option 4 set of figures for projected enrolments at Government high schools, a figure which he said was very optimistic indeed. Yet here we are in the first year of the Build the Future plan having achieved a very optimistic enrolment. Projecting this enrolment forward over the next five years, based on Dr Yusuf's population projections, the schools that remain open will be at capacity, and that is without taking into account any of the other factors that other reports have shown, such as Dr Parr's report which has a much higher birth rate, or that any spare capacity in the coming years would be in the Leichhardt area where there will be fewer children. What of the schools that remain open that are meant to accommodate this influx of students? Already Riverside High and Epping High are way over capacity.¹⁷⁹

- 5.8** The Department also indicated in its submission that only 5% of students from primary schools in the Hunters Hill area (as defined by the Department's boundaries) choose to go to Hunters Hill High School. The submission states:

It is clear from this data that few parents from the local community wish to send their children to Hunters Hill High School.

- 5.9** An issue that was discussed extensively in the inquiry is that of the curriculum able to be offered in small schools.

¹⁷⁸ *Submission No 55*, p 2. (The Committee notes that the exact figure of students in Year 10 was 93)

¹⁷⁹ Evidence of Ms Kathy Prokhovnik, Hunters Hill High School P&C, 31 May 2002, p 10.

Curriculum

5.10 In their evidence to the Committee the Department indicated that there is a link between school size, the curriculum offered and academic achievement. The Department's theory follows that as schools become smaller their curriculum contracts, this results in reduced subject choice, a loss of the more demanding subjects, a loss of allocations to junior high school students (to maintain senior classes), a narrowing of the curriculum, a further loss of talented students to other schools and finally poor academic outcomes. The effect is known as "residualisation".¹⁸⁰

5.11 According to the Department the effect can also be seen in teaching. The theory follows that as a school becomes smaller it loses staff, with a loss of staff there is a loss of expertise, the opportunity to offer more classes is reduced, there is reduced face to face teaching and poor academic outcomes occur as a result.¹⁸¹

5.12 Dr Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, described the residualisation effect in his evidence to the Committee. He said:

The impact creates what we call residualisation. When you have reducing student numbers you get less choice in the curriculum, it is difficult to maintain a senior curriculum. We have some schools which are unable to offer subjects like physics, chemistry, some of the social sciences. When you get into the more, I guess, unusual subjects, information technology and so on, these schools are unable to offer it. This is what a number of the schools in the inner city are confronted with if the trend continued a narrowing of the curriculum. Students tend to say, "I can't get what I want. I want to move away. I have got to go somewhere where I can do particular courses", and it would become this spiral. That spiral of residualisation is confronting in the very near future and already in place in some of the schools in the inner city...¹⁸²

5.13 Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, indicated to the Committee that the residualisation effect means that schools can end up not being viable. He said:

...as schools become smaller they are losing rather than growing their curriculum capacity. The range of subjects which can be offered to many students is diminishing to the point where it is simply not viable.¹⁸³

5.14 Dr Laughlin indicated that the impact on a schools curriculum of its size can be seen by comparing the curriculum offered by Glebe High School and Blackwattle Bay Campus:

...an example of what can happen to the curriculum of a school when you start to get larger numbers in Year 11 is at Glebe High School. Glebe had this kind of curriculum and these were the subjects available within a line of the curriculum, so a student had to pick a subject within each line.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Tabled Document, Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, 29 May 2002.

¹⁸¹ Tabled Document, Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, 29 May 2002.

¹⁸² Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director, DET, 29 May 2002, p 4.

¹⁸³ Evidence of Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 2.

¹⁸⁴ Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director, DET, 29 May 2002, p 5.

5.15 A table showing a comparison of the curriculum offered at Glebe and Blackwattle Bay is attached as Appendix 1.

5.16 Dr Laughlin indicated that the impact of residualisation would effect Hunters Hill High School. He said:

If you look at the issue of enrolments at Hunters Hill... what you have got is that since 1992 the numbers have dropped quite rapidly, and that was a school, like many in the inner city, if you projected that on you would in fact find falling curriculum.¹⁸⁵

5.17 In his evidence to the Committee Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, SCRC, indicated that the curriculum quality and opportunities available at Hunters Hill High School were influencing factors in the recommendations made by the review:

Do you try and justify the retention of a school in isolation or do you have regard to the educational arguments about curriculum quality, opportunities and maximising the educational resource and resource infrastructure separate from that? That is what the department argued very convincingly to the Committee. It was not a question as to whether Hunters Hill High School in itself is a poor school.¹⁸⁶

5.18 However, a number of other participants in the Committee's inquiry held different views about the curriculum being offered by Hunters Hill High School. In her evidence to the Committee Ms O'Halloran indicated that the opportunities at the school are diverse:

The point of view of teachers and the Teachers' Federation is that the range of opportunities at Hunters Hill is great, very great. ... we have got very many successful high schools across the whole State, country areas are obvious ones, where schools about the size of Hunters Hill are incredibly successful schools. Yes, there are benefits to a wide range of course offerings, but there are also benefits in a number of students being at a certain site so that everybody in the school is known and the welfare need of the school is very, very strong and Hunters Hill is one of those schools.¹⁸⁷

5.19 This view was also argued by the Hunters Hill High School, Student Representative Council (HHHS SRC). The Council states in their submission to the inquiry:

We feel that the closure of Hunters Hill High School will result in serious academic disadvantage for our students. We have a number of electives available which are not offered at other schools in the Ryde District, including Balmain and Leichhardt High Schools.¹⁸⁸

5.20 In particular the submission mentions Japanese and Design and Technology subjects.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director, DET, 29 May 2002, p 4.

¹⁸⁶ Evidence of Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, School Closures Review Committee, 29 May 2002, p 26.

¹⁸⁷ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 68.

¹⁸⁸ *Submission No 81*, Hunters Hill High School Student Representative Council, p 2.

¹⁸⁹ *Submission No 81*, Hunters Hill High School Student Representative Council, p 2.

5.21 In her evidence to the Committee Ms O'Halloran indicated that in some circumstances where a subject may not be able to be offered by Hunters Hill High School other mechanisms could be introduced so the student/s could access the subject somewhere else. She said:

We have certainly got access to more technology now and there are other ways of making sure that a wide range of choice can be catered to. Another thing that can be useful in that way is that if schools co-operate in the district to ensure that subjects that are available at one school can be available to students at another school as well. You do not have to close a school to do that. You can have co-operative networks between schools.¹⁹⁰

5.22 Ms O'Halloran used the co-operative networks in Bathurst as an example. She said:

...in Bathurst, for example, they have a system where the schools co-operate to ensure that the subjects are offered to all the students in the town regardless of which school.¹⁹¹

The impact of rumour

5.23 The Committee was informed that rumour of closure had an impact on enrolments over the four years up prior to the announcement in March 2001 that the school may close.

5.24 In his evidence to the Committee Mr Dalton indicated that while reviewing the school closure they were made aware by the Department that the school had been put on notice that it was at risk four years ago. He said:

Hunters Hill High School had, for about four years, been under notice that it was at risk, I understand...¹⁹²

5.25 He also indicated to the Committee that this situation may have had an effect on enrolments. In response to a question from the Committee about whether the knowledge that it may close would reduce the level of enrolments at the school, he said:

I would have thought so.¹⁹³

5.26 Regarding a statement made by the Chairman that parents do not like changing their child's school, Mr Dalton replied:

Well, that was the implication of what the department was saying, I guess.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 69.

¹⁹¹ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 68.

¹⁹² Evidence of Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, School Closures Review Committee, 29 May 2002, p 26.

¹⁹³ Evidence of Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, School Closures Review Committee, 29 May 2002, p 26.

¹⁹⁴ Evidence of Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, School Closures Review Committee, 29 May 2002, p 32.

5.27 However, in her evidence to the Committee Ms Ros Jenner, a teacher at Hunters Hill High School, said that the school was not put on notice four years ago, but that rumours were circulating that the school could be closed. She said:

And no, we were not put on notice four years before the announcement of closure. There was no communication from the department that the school was in danger. There were rumours, and of course there were rumours for other schools as well, but this is not being put on notice.¹⁹⁵

5.28 In her evidence Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of P&C's indicated that rumours about the closure of Hunters Hill High would have an effect. She said:

People are not blind. They see numbers dropping and they think, well, what is the provision going to be like for my child here? Hunters Hill knew that its numbers were dropping and it started to have a look at why. It went to its community and said we have a fantastic school, why aren't you using it? It did know four years ago that its numbers were dropping, but it knew that it was doing things to get back...¹⁹⁶

5.29 Such rumours have a major impact on parents decisions regarding the best school for their children.

5.30 It appears from the enrolment figures (Refer Table 5.2) that amongst other factors such as the aging population, rumour may have had an impact on enrolment numbers over the four years proceeding the announcement of *Building the Future* in March 2001.¹⁹⁷ Table 5.2 shows that in 1998 there was a distinct increase in the percentage change in enrolment numbers. From 1994 to 1997 there was an average annual fall of 5.25%, however from 1998 to 2001 the average fall was almost double 10.25% (or a median fall of 9%).

Conclusion

The figures and the evidence presented before the Committee suggests that rumours regarding the schools possible closure may have played a role in the decline of enrolment numbers.

Academic Achievement

5.31 There has been considerable debate between the Department of Education and Training and proponents for HHHS about the extent of academic achievement at the school. The Department has argued that the academic performance of the school has been average to good but not excellent, while proponents for the school have suggested that the school is renown for its academic achievements.

¹⁹⁵ Evidence of Ms Ros Jenner, Teacher, Hunters Hill High School, 31 May 2002, p 13.

¹⁹⁶ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, Federation of NSW Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 53.

¹⁹⁷ It is important to note that school enrolment figures are as at March of that year.

5.32 In his evidence to the Committee Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director, DET, indicated that Hunters Hill High School is not the best performing school in the area. He said:

The other issue that has been raised is that Hunters Hill's academic results are outstanding - why did you choose to propose a closure of a school like that? Well, some of the results are very very good and some students have done excellent things, but if you look at the Z scores which are the standard deviation scores in subjects within the Higher School Certificate, in 1998, 1999 and 2000 some students have done in some subjects extremely well, and I think that is wonderful, some students have not, but that is not the picture of a school that is probably one of the most academically successful in the area. It is a school that is doing well in some areas, but not necessarily in others.¹⁹⁸

5.33 The Committee also received *in-camera* evidence from the Department about the academic results at Hunters Hill High School.

5.34 In their submission to the inquiry Hunters Hill High School parents, S & S Guy state that HHHS was one of the best comprehensive high school performers in the state and outperformed some other local schools. They state:

At the beginning of 2001 HHHS was a school of 424 students, just entering a new growth phase. HHHS was the third most successful co-educational comprehensive school in the State in 2000 HSC. Several other schools in the area, which are to remain open, had significantly lower enrolments and poorer HSC results than HHHS.¹⁹⁹

5.35 In their submission the Hunters Hill High School Student Representative Council also outlined the how successful the school had been in it's HSC results. The submission states:

Our students have been achieving outstanding HSC results. To give just a few examples: in 1998 three gained over UAI of over 97.5; in 2000, three students gained UAI results of over 99.45 percent and three students achieved results over 95; over 15% of students who sat for the 2000 HSC gained UAI results higher than 90%; in 2001, in English extension 1, 62.5% of students achieve in the top band compared to 34% across the State and in Ancient History 90% of students performed in the top three bands, compared to 65.6% across the State.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 6.

¹⁹⁹ *Submission No 21*, p 2.

²⁰⁰ *Submission No 81*, Hunters Hill High School Student Representative Council, p 1.

5.36 In correspondence to the Committee the Principal, Ms Felton detailed some of the Schools successes in 2000. These are outlined in the following table:

Table 5.3 Hunters Hill High 2000 HSC Results

Individual Performance	
Subject	Position in State
Modern History 2 Unit	2 nd
English 3 Unit	5 th
Ancient History 2 Unit	6 th
Business Studies 2 Unit	14 th and 19 th
Economics	18 th

Class performances	
Subject	% in top 10% of State
English 2 Unit	35%
English 3 Unit	20%
Legal Studies 2 Unit	35%
Legal Studies	33%
Music 2 Unit	27%
Industrial Technology	25%

Source: Correspondence received from Ms Judith Felton, Principal Hunters Hill High School, 18 June 18, 2002.

Conclusion

Although the Committee was presented with extensive evidence about the performance of students at Hunters Hill High School, the Committee believes that academic performance (whether it is excellent or poor) is not a justification for either closing a school or allowing it to remain open. The Committee feels that a schools performance is impacted on by many exterior factors quite apart from the school itself, including the socio-economic background of the students attending, parental support, the individual motivations of the students, the particular skills/expertise of the staff allocated to the school at the time and the varying capacity of students from year to year. As a consequence, this issue has played no role in the Committee's recommendations.

Choice, availability and accessibility

5.37 One of the key issues raised during the inquiry was the availability and accessibility of comprehensive education for students in the area once Hunters Hill High School has closed. The debate around this issue indicated that the Department has a differing view on

the definition of “comprehensive education” from many of the other participants in the inquiry.

What is comprehensive schooling?

5.38 In its submission to the inquiry the Education Department outlined its definition of what constitutes a comprehensive education:

Comprehensive: a large secondary school providing a wide range of course for children of all levels of learning.²⁰¹

5.39 The Department stated:

Under this definition comprehensive today includes the opportunity to study both the most academically challenging courses as well as a range of dual accredited vocational courses, both modern and community languages, options in social sciences, no just either history or geography and both modern and ancient history as well as opportunities to engage in music, a range of sports and to participate in performance activities. A comprehensive education is provided by single sex schools as well as coeducational schools.²⁰²

5.40 Dr Laughlin summarised the Department’s view on the meaning of “comprehensive” in his evidence to the Committee. He said:

Yes. What we have said here is, under this definition, “comprehensive” includes the opportunity to study both academically challenging as well as a range of dual accredited courses, et cetera. Now that is fine. I mean what we have done is moved into a situation where we are trying to offer the widest curriculum, we are trying to attract the broadest range of students and that is our understanding of what “comprehensive” means.

5.41 The Department also indicated that it is cannot be argued that partially selective and specialist schools are not comprehensive:

For some communities to argue that partially selective or partially specialist high schools are not comprehensive, and therefore by implication do not provide a comprehensive education for local students, flies in the face of reality.²⁰³

5.42 The Committee notes that it is not clear how many students from the Hunters Hill area chose to go to a selective, specialist or non-Government school.

5.43 Dr Genevieve Kang disputed the argument that schools with selective streams are comprehensive and presented a different view about what constitutes a comprehensive education. She wrote:

In a genuinely comprehensive high school all children start with an equal chance to demonstrate their ability. If there is streaming they have an equal chance to be

²⁰¹ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 53.

²⁰² *Submission No 91*, DET, p 54.

²⁰³ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 54.

in the top class. However, the combined selective/non selective system gives non selective students the impression they are already a failure, because they did not qualify for the selective stream.²⁰⁴

- 5.44** From the submissions received many participants viewed a comprehensive school as being one which offers a broad range of subjects, is co-educational and is not selective or only has a selective stream. This view is reflected in S & C McTaggart's submission. It states:

Hunters Hill High School offers an attractive option for parents seeking a comprehensive co-educational Years 7-12 High School. If the school closes, there will be no comprehensive co-educational Years 7-12 High School within reasonable proximity of our residence.²⁰⁵

- 5.45** The Committee also received evidence indicating that comprehensive schools as described can result in residualised schooling. The submission from Sydney Secondary College states:

The establishment of the multi campus, co-educational comprehensive college with a selective stream has ensured disadvantaged students are not part of a residualised school, as was occurring prior to the restructure.²⁰⁶

Choice

- 5.46** A large number of the submissions regarding the closure of Hunters Hill High School focused on the issue of "choice", with most indicating that the closure of Hunters Hill High School reduces the amount of choice that parents have when deciding which school to send their children.

- 5.47** However, Department in its submission to the inquiry indicated that it is bound by the terms of *the Act*. It states:

There is no requirement in the *Education Act 1990* for the Government to provide or maintain schools for the purpose of parental choice. The *Act* clearly states that in establishing schools 'The Minister may establish a school in any locality if the Minister is satisfied that sufficient children will regularly attend the school' (*Education Act 1990* Section 27 (1a)) and with reference to admission to Government schools 'The parent of a child may enrol the child in any Government school if the child is eligible to attend the school and the school can accommodate the child'. (*Education Act 1990* Section 34 (1))²⁰⁷

- 5.48** The Department also indicated that the closure of Hunters Hill High School will do little to impact on the level of choice offered to parents anyway. The submission states:

The closure of Hunters Hill High School will do little to diminish the extent of choice currently accessed by students.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ *Submission No 86*, p 2.

²⁰⁵ *Submission No 41*, p3.

²⁰⁶ *Submission No16*, Sydney Secondary College, p 3.

²⁰⁷ *Submission No91*, DET, p 53

²⁰⁸ *Submission No91*, DET, p 53

5.49 The Department also argued in its submission that *Building the Future* will actually expand the choices available to parents in the inner city. The submission states:

There is no risk to the quality of education available to students in inner Sydney under the plan. Quite the contrary, the plan is designed to extend and enhance the provision of quality education. Already students have access to a greater array of subject choices, more challenging and academically advanced subjects as well as a greater provision of vocational subjects.²⁰⁹

5.50 This argument was also made by the Principal of the Sydney Secondary College, Mr Mark Anderson, in his submission to the inquiry. He states:

The establishment of the Sydney Secondary College provides inner Sydney families a revitalised and expanded public education facility. The College has a capacity for, at least, 1800 full time students. Links with the University of Sydney, UTS and TAFE to expand curriculum offerings for students are being established. The increase in student numbers as a result of the restructuring has led to far greater subject choice. ... As the Principals of the Sydney Secondary College, we see the restructuring as a positive step in revitalising public education in Glebe, Balmain and Leichhardt area of inner Sydney. We are often dismayed when the opportunities the College presents are overshadowed by those with other agendas.²¹⁰

5.51 The Committee notes that the following comprehensive schools are readily accessible to students in the Glebe to Ryde area.

Comprehensive/Selective Co-educational

- Sydney Secondary College (3 campuses)
- Ryde Secondary College (formally Malvina)
- Chatswood High School
- Dulwich High
- Marrickville High

Comprehensive/Single sex

- Riverside Girls High School
- Ashfield Boys
- Epping Girls
- Burwood Girls

²⁰⁹ *Submission No91*, DET, p 47.

²¹⁰ *Submission No16*, Sydney Secondary College, p 4.

Comprehensive/Co-educational

- Marsden High School
- Concord High School

Selective

- Fort Street High School

5.52 The arguments made by Department and the Sydney Secondary College were questioned by many of the participants in the inquiry.

5.53 Dr Kang made the argument that parents should be able to choose from a school in their local area that did not have selective streams and that was coeducational:

Every child should have a right to attend a high school in his or her local area without being streamlined into selective and non-selective at age 11. Hunters Hill High School is the only genuinely comprehensive high school left in inner Sydney within reasonable travelling time and providing easy transport connections. If Hunters Hill High is closed, there will be no real option for parents who want a coeducational comprehensive year 7-12 school for their children with a reasonable travelling time from home. This is because the 3 other local schools in inner Sydney which were previously comprehensive; Glebe Balmain and Leichhardt, have all become streamed selective/non selective schools....

5.54 This argument was reiterated throughout many submissions, with numerous parents indicating that they are now about to or are sending their children to Mosman High, in order to access a school with a similar structure (comprehensive, coeducational without a selective stream) to Hunters Hill High.

5.55 In her submission to the Committee Ms Allyson Ryves, a Parent of a Hunters Hill High School Student indicated that Mosman was the nearest similar school. She said:

This is the only co-educational high school in the neighbourhood. It is ridiculous to think that if I wanted to send my son to a school nowadays that I would have to send him to Mosman. That is just beyond the possibility of public transport. It is just crazy that that is the next closest school.²¹¹

5.56 In her submission Mrs Noelene Steele states:

Our nearest comparable coeducational comprehensive high school, Concord, is at its capacity without accepting any of the displaced students from Hunters Hill School. To consider sending our children to Mosman High to regain similar circumstances those that are provided by Hunters Hill High School will add, at a minimum, an extra 2 hours travelling through peak hour traffic for our children.²¹²

²¹¹ Evidence of Ms Allyson Ryves, Parent Hunters Hill High student, 31 May 2002, p 18.

²¹² *Submission No 75*, p 3.

5.57 In her evidence to the Committee Ms Dianne Turner explained why parents have been choosing Mosman over other schools. She said:

The Hunters Hill High School Steering Committee surveyed students and staff in 2001. Those who were going or that were intending to go to Mosman reported they chose Mosman because it offered as closely as possible the education which was offered at Hunters Hill High School. None of the schools in the immediate vicinity offered a social environment or opportunities for academic success. Parents report local schools are in a state of change, introduction of multi-campus systems in selective and comprehensive schools, the collegiate system or else in Chatswood's case uncertainty about whether Chatswood would continue to be located on that site and therefore their children would have to change transport links and other things. Also the maintenance of the key networks was important.²¹³

5.58 The arguments outlined by parents regarding why they were choosing Mosman over other local schools were also outlined by Ms Judith Felton, Principal, Hunters Hill High School, in her evidence to the Committee. She said:

Of the approximately 96 children, more than half overwhelmingly chose Mosman High, and the reason that we had indicated to us for that choice was that they identified Mosman as a school with a similar culture to our own, and then of course there were breakdowns elsewhere, Concord High, Blackwattle campus, Marsden and Chatswood, but certainly in far, far fewer numbers than the cohort that moved to Mosman. The other reason for that, of course, is that it is important for friendship groupings and networks. We are in the latter part of this term continuing on that path and intend to survey the children, and we are anticipating - at this stage obviously it is anecdotal - that there will be a reflection that is similar to last year, that Mosman will continue to be an attractive option for the students and that also Chatswood will be. There is a slight loss to private schools and then the other schools I mentioned were quite insignificantly chosen...²¹⁴

5.59 Prior to the announcement that Hunters Hill High School would be closed, the Superintendent Mr Peter Haigh outlined the implications of school trends in his *Ryde District Strategic Analysis Plan* (undertaken at the request of Dr Ken Boston, Director General as a vision for the future of the Ryde district). In this report he raised concerns about the implications of Hunters Hill and Malvina being closed. He wrote:

Of particular concern is the rapid decline of Hunters Hill and Malvina High Schools. With Peter Board, Ryde and Drummoyne closed, the further loss of these two schools would see no co-educational Government presence in a large expanse from Balmain (itself under threat) to Marsden.²¹⁵

5.60 The Department described these arguments made by the Hunters Hill School community and indicated that they did not agree that there were no alternatives for students in the local area, in a tabled document on 7 June 2002. They said:

²¹³ Evidence of Ms Dianne Turner, Parent Hunters Hill High student, 31 May 2002, p 19.

²¹⁴ Evidence of Ms Judith Felton, Principal, Hunters Hill High School, 31 May 2002, p 12.

²¹⁵ Mr Peter Haigh, *Ryde District Strategic Analysis Plan, Secondary Education, 2000-2005*, April 2000, p 4.

The decision of parents to send their children from Hunters Hill High School to Mosman High School is very similar to parents choosing to send their children to Hunters Hill High from outside the local area. I do not share the opinion that there are no other alternatives other than Mosman High School for students at Hunters Hill. Students attending Hunters Hill High School have the opportunity to attend Chatswood High School, Ryde Secondary College or Sydney Secondary College, Glebe, Balmain and Leichhardt campuses which I understand are far more accessible by public transport than Mosman High School.²¹⁶

5.61 The Department also indicated that it was surprised by the decision by many parents to choose Mosman High School. Dr Laughlin said:

It surprised me, to be honest, but I guess there was a lot of emotion involved in all of this and I can understand that.²¹⁷

5.62 Dr Laughlin also indicated that the Department had not done any analysis to determine why the parents from HHHS had chosen to send their children to Mosman.²¹⁸ In response to the contention of a Committee member that analysing why the parents had chosen Mosman, may be relevant to the type of education being sought, Mr Laughlin replied:

Well, I think people have made statements, they have said they are choosing that because it meets their particular needs, but I think it is because, in the heat of this, I do not think people have had a hard look, I would suggest, at what we have created in the new Sydney Secondary College. There is a lot of tension in that and I can understand it.²¹⁹

5.63 In relation to Dr Laughlin's comment that he was surprised by the choice of Mosman High, Ms Mary Pipes, a representative of the Hunters Hill P&C said:

I was at the hearing on Wednesday and Reverend Nile asked Dr Laughlin was he surprised that so many children went to Mosman and he said he was, and you asked if he had done an analysis or if he had any idea why that was happening, and he said no. I just say to you that the department sees children as statistics and post codes on a graph; they do not see people. They have not listened to the voices, and that is why this plan is so flawed, because it is based on statistics and numbers and amounts of money, and it is not based on education and people and all the things that public education should grow on.²²⁰

The Collegiate System

5.64 As outlined previously Ms Dianne Turner indicated in her evidence that some parents did not view the model of schooling being offered at the Sydney Secondary College as being comparable to that offered at Hunters Hill High School.²²¹

²¹⁶ Department of Education and Training, Tabled document, 7 June 2002.

²¹⁷ Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 15.

²¹⁸ Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 15.

²¹⁹ Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 16.

²²⁰ Evidence of Ms Mary Pipes, Parent, 31 May 2002, p 21.

²²¹ Evidence of Ms Dianne Turner, Parent Hunters Hill High student, 31 May 2002, p 19.

5.65 The model of schooling which was introduced for the Balmain, Leichhardt and Glebe schools, which now comprise the Sydney Secondary College, is known as the Collegiate model. The multi-campus collegiate model of which Sydney Secondary College is an example involves cooperative ventures and partnerships among schools and other educational providers, particularly with TAFE NSW and universities, in order to broaden curriculum provision in schools and to use educational resources more effectively. The school-based components involve a range of junior and senior secondary school models as well as links with other providers.

5.66 In his evidence to the Committee Mr Stephen Nemeth, Student, Hunters Hill High indicated that the collegiate system may not be appropriate. He said:

The Catholic system trialed for a number of years the junior and senior high schools. It failed. Why are we trialing it now?²²²

The value of the School site

5.67 The value of the school site both in aesthetic and monetary terms were raised by a large number of the participants discussing the value of Hunters Hill High School. It was felt by many that Hunters Hill High School provides a very attractive site enabling extensive sport and recreation by the students. Concerns were raised that one of the reasons for the sale of the site may have been the site's prime real estate value.

5.68 The Committee has also received evidence relating to non-educational values and implications/problems for the sale of the site.

Aesthetic Qualities

5.69 In their submission to the Committee the staff of Hunters Hill High highlighted the benefits of utilising the site that the school is currently situated on for educational purposes. It states:

Hunters Hill High School occupies a beautiful north-facing site beside the Lane Cove River. It consists of 6.6 hectares of open parkland with direct access to the water. These specific characteristics of Hunters Hill High School are responsible for our unique environment that encompasses peaceful ambience where students can and do enjoy opportunities to use and appreciate all areas of the school. Students from all age groups play games such as soccer touch football, basketball, cricket and volleyball on the playing fields every recess and lunchtime.²²³

5.70 This view was reiterated by the Hunters High School P&C. In their submission they state:

Hunters Hill High School is a possible showcase for public education. Sited on 6.6 hectares on the Lane Cove River, it is the perfect place for a school. Since 1958 its

²²² Evidence of Mr Stephen Nemeth, Yr 12 student Hunters Hill High School (aged over 18), 31 May 2002, p 17.

²²³ *Submission No42*, Hunters Hill High Staff, p 8.

students have benefited from the tranquillity of the site, and the school has become a place of academic, artistic and sporting excellence.²²⁴

5.71 In her evidence to the Committee, Ms Felton said

Hunters Hill High, situated as it is on 6.6 hectares of north facing bushland along the Lane Cove River, is an ideal site for an educational establishment and one that the families and children who chose public education have a right to enjoy. The site and the school's educational delivery are entwined. The space and peace of the site invite a calm within the daily operation of the school. Various visual arts, science, English and PE classes exploit the site's natural beauty, space and opportunity for creativity. The angst and anxiety that accompany some students, and especially some senior students' negotiation of their senior years, is diminished amidst the trees, water and quiet.²²⁵

5.72 The beauty and or appropriateness of the land itself (quite separate from the issues surrounding its geographical location) for a high school has not been questioned during the inquiry.

Dollar Value of the Site

5.73 In evidence to the Committee those opposing the Government's decision to close Hunters Hill High School have suggested that this decision was based on the financial returns which would result from the schools sale.

5.74 In their submission to the inquiry the Department refutes this claims. It states:

The value of the Hunters Hill site has been raised by opponents to the school closure as a fundamental element of the decision to close the school. This claim has been driven by perceptions that the value of the property is greater than that determined by the SVO. The assertion that the school was close to realise the asset value is incorrect....²²⁶

5.75 In their submission to the inquiry S&S Guy indicate that the financial considerations were a major contributing factor in the Department's decision to sell Hunters Hill High School. They wrote:

The way the closure announcement was made outside the BtF document strongly suggests that the closure decision was a financing decision, motivated only by the sale value of the school property. The value of the site as a superb public education resource for future generations would be much higher than the "quick fix" of selling it to finance "improvements to public schools which are in many cases just routine maintenance which should be funded out of normal operating revenues."²²⁷

²²⁴ *Submission No 92*, Hunters Hill High School P&C, p 1.

²²⁵ Evidence of Ms Judith Felton, Principal, HHHS, 31 May 2002, p 5.

²²⁶ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 39.

²²⁷ *Submission No 21*, p 3.

5.76 The Defenders of Sydney Foreshore also state:

The driving force behind the closure of the Hunters Hill High School, namely to make money out of the site by selling it to private developers, is flawed in all respects.²²⁸

5.77 The staff of Hunter Hill High School indicated in their decision that this view is held widely:

The asset value of a school site should not be a part of any consideration as to the viability of a school. Department officials must be aware that it is common and widespread belief that the value of the site has been a driving force behind the determination to close the school.²²⁹

5.78 In addition, the Hunters Hill High School P&C highlights that this is one of the major reasons for the decision. They wrote:

As a result of Freedom of Information requests to the DET, the HHHS P&C has received a document from the A/Director of Property Support at DET to the State Valuation Office. This letter states: "The Department is currently reviewing..."

5.79 In evidence to the Committee Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, said that the dollar value of the site was not a deciding factor and other school sites are worth a similar amount. He said:

Let me assure you, however, that the valuations on Glebe, on Balmain and on Hunters Hill were all of the same order and that there was no distinction made on which of those schools might close on the basis of the valuation. Were I to table the valuations before you in camera you would see that that was correct.²³⁰

5.80 It should be noted that subsequently the Department has provided to the Committee on an in camera basis valuations for all the school sites included in *Building the Future*.

Non Educational Issues

5.81 During the inquiry issues were also raised with the Committee about:

- The value of the Hunters Hill High School site to the community generally as it is water front land in the public domain, and
- Planning issues.

5.82 In their submission to the inquiry the Defenders of Sydney Harbour Foreshores state that there are various heritage issues associated with the Hunters Hill High School site and that this is one reasons why the school should not be sold. They state:

²²⁸ *Submission No 47*, Defenders Sydney Harbor Foreshores, p 3.

²²⁹ *Submission No 42*, Hunters hill High School Staff, p 6.

²³⁰ Evidence of Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, 29 May 2002.

The considerable public significance of the site covers many areas – cultural, historic, natural, social, educational, and generally environment and heritage. Because it is land of public significance it should not and must not be sold out of the public domain.²³¹

5.83 Defenders of Sydney Harbour Foreshores also equate the importance of the site to the Defence sites in Sydney Harbour. They state:

If any attempt is made to sell any of the Hunters Hill High School site to the private sector, a similar community battle will take place against the State Government as was successfully waged against the Commonwealth Government over the vacated Defence sites in Sydney Harbour. Secondly, to consider sale of the school to private developers shows appalling failure by the State Government to properly protect a number of significant public sites around Sydney Harbour.²³²

5.84 Mr Bruce Lucas, Mayor of Hunters Hill outlined in his evidence to the Committee some of the physical, heritage and planning issues associated with further developing the site. These issues are summarised as follows:

- A very large proportion of the school land is within a Planning New South Wales "disturbed terrain" boundary line. An expensive geotechnical study will be required prior to determining future land use.
- There are high levels of acid sulphate soils. Building on the school oval could be of some risk and would therefore be unlikely.
- The site needs to be rezoned.
- A high-pressure oil pipeline, carrying crude oil from Greenwich to the Shell oil refinery at Clyde, runs adjacent to the front boundary of the school. Building within a certain curtilage of the pipeline is prohibited.
- There are extensive council drainage easements that will reduce the potential lot yield from the site.
- The site is situated within the Hunters Hill Heritage Conservation area. A full heritage impact statement and conservation management plan will be required as part of any rezoning application. The site and footings of the historic pavilion, burnt down in the year 2000, will need to be preserved.
- There are significant trees on the site, which under the current tree preservation policy will require to be retained.
- Under the Sydney Harbour Regional Environment Plan (SEPP 56) strict planning guidelines apply to any waterfront development. A gazetted 60-metre "foreshore building line" applies to this site.²³³

²³¹ *Submission No 47, Defenders Sydney Harbor Foreshores, p 2.*

²³² *Submission No 47, Defenders Sydney Harbor Foreshores, p 3.*

²³³ *Evidence of Mr Bruce Lucas, Mayor, Municipality of Hunters Hill, 31 May 2002, pp 5-6.*

- 5.85** The Committee notes that the valuation obtained by the Department took these factors into account.

The Future

- 5.86** One of the main arguments put for the retention of Hunters Hill High School was that the residualisation effect, low enrolments and smaller curriculum base could be resolved by some structural changes to the school. In particular, it was thought a selective stream, a curriculum focus, open days, publicity and marketing, would help attract students. In their submission to the inquiry the staff of the Hunters Hill outlined their vision for the future of the school.

1. Selective Stream

An intake of gifted and talented students in the school's enrolments would benefit the entire school, giving the selected students a supportive and encouraging environment in which to extend their capabilities and adding to the school's existing high standards of achievement. Hunters Hill High School has a history of academic excellence. An experienced staff has helped students to achieve great HSC success across the curriculum. By the end of 2002 all staff will have undergone specialist training in teaching Gifted and Talented students.

2. An Environmental Studies focus

As the school occupies a unique site it is an obvious choice for the study of waterways, quality of water, mangroves and other ecologically related topics. The focus on environmental studies would be similar to the focus on agriculture, technology or creative arts that is a feature of many comprehensive and selective high schools in NSW. The Streamwatch project has been in place for sometime. Both Geography and Science have an environmental focus throughout their curriculum. The advantages of the site for river management and wetland studies are utilised.

3. A Performing Arts, Film and Television Focus

The school has always had an enviable reputation in the performing and creative arts. Over the years students have had their work selected for the HSC celebrations of outstanding work in Music, Art and Drama. Many of our students have gone on to successful careers in these fields. Our annual Variety Night showcases student talent. The Primary Enrichment Program raises community awareness of what the school can offer in these areas.

The school has been approached to make a television advertisement discouraging littering from boats. This is an example of the way in which an environmental focus and a performing arts, film and television focus could complement each other.²³⁴

²³⁴ *Submission No 42, Hunters Hill High School Staff, p 9.*

5.87 In her evidence to the Committee Ms Baker indicated that she thought Hunters Hill could have been a good school to use as the basis for attracting students to public education. In her evidence she said:

I keep saying that I don't believe education is a market, but we are in a market. I know a little bit about selling, and the first thing that you know about selling is you make sure that your package looks better than anybody else's. Some Government schools have got that sewn up. Here we have a beautiful site, the possibility of turning it into something absolutely stunning and seriously getting into this market. Have we done that? No. We are going to run away from that site.²³⁵

It has the opportunity of being a lighthouse school. If we had taken a different view, if we had said: Okay, we are going to market this wonderful thing called public education which we have in this State, we are going to take a school with dropping numbers, we are going to put some money into that, we are going to promote it, and we are going to demonstrate that if we are serious about turning public education around Hunters Hill is our vehicle, and we'd have done it. That school had everything going for it, including its location, which is a middle class location.²³⁶

5.88 In response to a question from the Committee about whether or not the Department had considered changing Hunters Hill High School to give it a selective stream, Dr Laughlin raised the issue of the potential to oversupply selective places. He said:

So we did take it into account, but we believed that on the balance of the number of students that might be attracted into public education it was going to be difficult to sustain. In fact we thought at the time we were probably overstretching the whole selective stream issue in any case because we introduced selective streams into less than four schools and frankly it was a doubt we had - I had anyway - that it would in fact work

5.89 During the Committee's public forum at Hunters Hill Town Hall many students from HHHS spoke eloquently about their positive experiences:

5.90 Student B:

This school is more than just buildings, desks and tables and chairs, it was a home away from home. It is a place where I had space and love and it is a place where I can meet up with my friends, to get the support that I need to get through these tough teenage years. But the friendships are not just in the playground. They extend to the classroom, where the teachers become friends and role models. All the students feel a connection to at least one teacher, which means that whenever we need support from an adult we know we can trust and confide in them.²³⁷

²³⁵ Evidence of Ms Beverly Baker, President, Federation of NSW Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 52.

²³⁶ Evidence of Ms Beverly Baker, President, Federation of NSW Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 52.

²³⁷ Evidence of Student B, Hunters Hill High School, 31 May 2002, p 20.

5.91 Student E:

We all fear losing our friends and teachers with whom we have formed caring, supportive bonds that will remain valuable for the rest of our lives. Though our school continues to exist healthily and vibrantly, closure is a constant cloud shadowing our daily activities, it is distressing and destabilising in a way that has interrupted every student's studies and personal life. Closure has invaded our lives and brought out our fiery emotions that could only emerge in order to express our feelings on an issue we feel so intensely about, saving our much loved, treasured and appreciated school.²³⁸

5.92 Student C, spoke about her vision for the school's continuance:

Many see the future of our school as being bleak, but we continue to fight for the school that we believe in. Hunters Hill High School is where I want to attend. We see a very bright future for Hunters Hill High School. We see a healthy number of students going into classrooms, enjoying their education. We see many teachers walking to their next classes with smiles on their faces due to the feeling they get when they look out onto the river and realise that they are at a school that they love and have fought for. We are see students participating, attending meetings and enjoying a number extracurricular activities that are not going to be available at other schools. We see room for expansion, improved facilities and student numbers that will be easy to fill because a strong foundation has been created by school sport. We see a comprehensive high school, free for all students, focusing on care and attention and welfare for all students.²³⁹

Conclusion 1

The Committee commends the High School on considering opportunities for further invigorating the school.

The Committee agrees that some changes to the current structure of the school would be beneficial in attracting students back from the non-Government sector and also in providing a viable alternative for students. The Committee feels that a specialist selective stream should be considered as a method for improving enrolments at the school, as the Committee understands that there are thousands of students seeking selective school places.

Demographic Issues and Land Availability**5.93** The Committee also notes that the issues outlined in Chapter 4 regarding the uncertainty of demographic projections and the problem of land availability into the future are particularly important and relevant to the Hunters Hill High School closure. For further information and the issues relevant to Hunters Hill High School please refer to Chapter 4 of this report.

²³⁸ Evidence of Student E, Hunters Hill High School, 31 May 2002, p 33.

²³⁹ Evidence of Student C, Hunters Hill High School, 31 May 2002, p 21.

Conclusion 2

The Committee is concerned that the closure of Hunters Hill High School and the sale of the site will have a detrimental outcome on the provision of public education both now and in the future. The Committee believes that all children should be able to access easily a school which provides opportunities for all students to advance and participate in the school's curriculum. The Committee also feels that the demographic evidence is uncertain. The Committee does not believe that 425 students (as of 2001) is too small for a school to be viable and feels that there is a possibility that there will be increases in student numbers in the area as a result of either increasing numbers of births, greater internal migration or a return flow from private education to public. Small changes in public policy at either a state or federal level could have these consequences. In the event that this occurs, the Committee is concerned that the Department would be unable to obtain (either because of cost or availability) a new site for a school. The Committee also notes the importance of the site to the local community as well as wider Sydney as it is public open space with harbour frontage.

Recommendation 2

That Hunters Hill High School not be closed.

Recommendation 3

That the provisions required by Hunters Hill High School for a partial specialist focus in areas such as environmental studies and performing arts, film and television, be arranged in close consultation with the school; and further consideration also be given to the establishment of a selective stream.

Chapter 6 Erskineville Public School

During the inquiry the Committee received extensive evidence with regards to the closure of Erskineville Public School. The issues raised with regards to the closure of this school included:

- Enrolments,
- Population projections for the area and the potential for enrolments,
- The viability of a merger with Newtown Public School, and
- The school as part of the community.

A large proportion of the arguments regarding the closure of Erskineville Public School also applied to Hunters Hill and Redfern, for example the uncertainty or legitimacy of the demographic and population projections undertaken and the issue of land availability for public schools in the future. These issues are discussed in some detail in Chapter 4. There were aspects of these arguments that are particular to the Erskineville Public School and hence are revisited in this chapter.

Size and Curriculum Offered

6.1 The following table shows the history of enrolments at Erskineville Public School.

Table 6.1 Enrolment numbers at Erskineville Public School

Year	Number of Enrolments
1977	480
1980	317
1985	84
1990	89
1995	62
1998	63
1999	65
2000	53
2001	43

Source: Yusuf and Caspersonn, September 2001.

6.2 The Committee has been informed that Erskineville Public School has a capacity for 480 students. Currently some of the space is being utilised for other purposes such as the State Equity Centre.

6.3 The Committee heard extensive evidence from representatives of the school and parents that although Erskineville Public School is small it is successful.

6.4 In their submission to the inquiry the NSW Teachers Federation indicates that although Erskineville is a small school, there are a large number of equally small schools around the State. They wrote:

This is a small school. However, if a decision to close a school is based on numbers, then there are 502 schools of a similar size in New South Wales, many of them in the city, which would also be vulnerable for closure. The real issue is one of the student population on a site designed for more students.²⁴⁰

6.5 The Erskineville P&C states in its submission that although the school is small the students are not missing out on educational opportunities. They wrote:

The *Building the Future* proposal infers that students in a small school, such as ours, may be missing out on educational opportunities. In fact parents believe that the small nature of the school is providing them with additional opportunities.²⁴¹

6.6 This view was reiterated by a parent of an Erskineville student, Mrs Cathy Calverley. She wrote in her submission to the inquiry:

I strongly reject the Department's assertion in the *Building the Future* proposal that the children at Erskineville are being disadvantaged attending a small school. Erskineville Public offers a wide range of activities/programs to complement the set curriculum. My husband and I would not have continued to send our children to Erskineville if we believed that they were not receiving a good education.²⁴²

6.7 In her submission Miss Amelia Jerram, a student at Erskineville Public indicated that although the school was small it was the best school for her. She said:

I don't want my school to close because it's a small school and you don't have to wait long in a line to go into class.... I think my school is the best school for me and my friends. ²⁴³

6.8 The Erskineville P&C indicated that the performance of Erskineville students is excellent. They wrote:

The education at Erskineville is excellent. This is highlighted by the schools good academic results in the basic skills exam and excellent art program but more importantly by parent satisfaction. Erskineville students performed exceptionally well in the basic skills test in 2001. Over 80% of the students performed in the top bands in the test.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ *Submission No 43*, NSW Teachers Federation, p 4.

²⁴¹ *Submission No 35*, Erskineville P&C, p 14.

²⁴² *Submission No 54*, p 7.

²⁴³ *Submission No 68*, p 1.

²⁴⁴ *Submission No 35*, Erskineville P&C, p 14.

6.9 In her evidence to the Committee Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation indicated that all the evidence presented before the School Closures Review Committee suggested that although Erskineville was small it was very successful. She said:

Erskineville Public School is clearly a small school, but all the evidence before the Schools Closure Review Committee and all the evidence that the Teachers' Federation has was that it was a very successful school regardless of the small numbers, that indeed we have across the whole State 502 what are called PP5 schools which have small numbers.²⁴⁵

6.10 In her submission Ms Adrienne Jerram, a parent of a student at Erskineville Public, outlined the philosophy of the school which has aided its students success. She said that when she was considering sending her daughter to the school she raised concerns about its size with one of the teachers:

... her response was simple "You don't teach the class you teach the child". Although this teacher has long since left, this child centred philosophy still pervades the school. Reading and maths groups are organised according to ability not age. Every teacher knows and understands the needs of each child and teaches them individually. I could not ask for a better education of my child.²⁴⁶

6.11 It was suggested by a number of participants in the Committee's inquiry that one of the reasons for low enrolments in recent years, has been the impact of rumour.

6.12 In their submission the Erskineville Public School P&C states:

Feedback from the community indicates it was rumours about the school closing that stopped people enrolling their children at the school.²⁴⁷

6.13 In correspondence to the Committee the P&C indicates that this may have been the case for up to six years. They state:

The current school enrolments are a reflection of the local rumours that have been circulating for some six years and have been made a reality with the Ministerial announcement last year.²⁴⁸

6.14 In her evidence to the Committee Ms Gai O'Neill, Principal, Erskineville Public School indicated that she had had inquiries from parents wanting to enrol their children at Erskineville Public School and had told them that the school was to be closed. She said:

I have been at the school for just over two years Yes, I have been aware of the rumour because parents have approached me about enrolling at Erskineville Primary School and I feel it is my duty to inform them of the future of Erskineville Primary School and also provide choice around the community of other primary schools as well.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, New South Wales Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 61.

²⁴⁶ *Submission No 5*, p 1.

²⁴⁷ *Submission No 35*, Erskineville Public School P&C, p 3.

²⁴⁸ Correspondence received 14 June 2002, Erskineville P&C p 3.

²⁴⁹ Evidence of Ms Gai O'Neill, Principal, Erskineville Public School, 31 May 2002, p 9.

Population Projections and Potential enrolments

6.15 This section explores the following issues:

- The availability of places for students in the area at other primary schools,
- The demographic work,
- Anecdotal evidence regarding student numbers, and
- The 2001 Census.

6.16 As outlined in Chapter 4, the Committee has heard extensive evidence from the three schools which are the focus of this report regarding the demographic analysis undertaken for the School Closures Review Committee. Proponents for Erskineville Public School, have focussed heavily on population projections and enrolment numbers. As a consequence of the extent of this focus, (both in submissions and oral evidence) this issue is revisited here with a particular focus on the Erskineville area. For a background to the School Closures Review Committee, an outline of the work undertaken and the broader arguments about the demographic work, please refer to Chapter 4.

Availability of space in other schools

6.17 In his evidence to the Committee Mr John Burkhardt, General Manager (Properties) DET, indicated that the new Alexandria Park school would have a capacity of 800 students. He said:

I just stress that the Alexandria Community School is a K to 12 school, but it is based on two previous schools, Cleveland Street High School, which had a high school capacity for almost 800, and the Alexandria Primary School, which had a capacity in the order of I think around 300. So there is significant capacity at the moment for student enrolment that has dropped below 270.²⁵⁰

6.18 However, in their submission South Sydney Council contested this, citing the development application that the Department has placed with them was for an expected enrolment of 250 students in years K to 8. The Council also highlights that there are currently more than 250 students in the four schools being merged. They state:

In the Development Applications submitted to Council, the DET has indicated that the campuses are being developed to accommodate a maximum of 250 students at each site. In 2001 there were 271 primary school aged children enrolled in the 4 primary schools to be amalgamated. Accordingly there does not appear to be capacity for the new K-8 campus to cater for the existing primary school aged children enrolled in the 4 primary schools to be amalgamated.²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ Evidence of Mr John Burkhardt, General Manager (Properties), DET, 29 May 2002, p 15.

²⁵¹ *Submission No 94*, South Sydney Council, p 3.

6.19 However, in response to a question from the Committee Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, SCRC, indicated that there was sufficient capacity at Alexandria Park for the displaced students from the four schools he said:

Well, we were satisfied with the information that the department provided to argue that, yes.²⁵²

6.20 In her evidence Ms Jeni Mulvey indicated that a large number of the students from Erskineville Public (should it be closed) would be more likely to attend Newtown Primary School not Alexandria Park Community School, but that there may be problems with the physical size of the school in accommodating more students. She wrote:

... the majority of Erskineville has now been recast, in draft form anyway, to be a catchment area for Newtown Primary School in recognition, I guess, of the feedback we have been given about the way children walk and relate in that community. I guess that would mean that the Newtown Public School would be absorbing people from the Newtown area and that remains our concern based on the current capacity of the school, and that is not just the classrooms but also the environment. I know that the school had to seek the use of an adjacent park to the school through the council because their facilities were not enough to meet their children's needs and they also have used the Erskineville site on numerous occasions for their needs as well.²⁵³

6.21 Mr Burkhardt in his evidence indicated that in addition to the capacity at Alexandria Park there is room for more students at other local schools. He said:

In February 2002 there were 246 students enrolled across the Alexandria Public School, Erskineville, Redfern and Waterloo Public Schools. This is down from over 1,700 students back in the 1970s. There will be accommodation capacity for at least 800 students at Alexandria Park Community School. We, of course, do not anticipate that it will get to that number. There is capacity for 240 at Newtown Public School and 490 at Camdenville Public School. Together there is additional capacity of 860 students, which allows for an increase of primary enrolments in the area of 120 percent.²⁵⁴

Analysis of Demographic work

6.22 In addition to the concerns raised in Chapter 4 of this report, regarding the uncertainties involved in demographic projections and the method undertaken by the independent demographers Yusuf/Caspersonn, proponents for Erskineville Public School have also raised concerns about the feeder area chosen for estimating future growth in the Erskineville Public School area.

²⁵² Evidence of Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair, School Closures Review Committee, 29 May 2002, p 33.

²⁵³ Evidence of Ms Jeni Mulvey, Erskineville P&C, 7 June 2002, p 7.

²⁵⁴ Evidence of Mr John Burkhardt, General Manager (Properties), DET, 7 June 2002, p 15.

6.23 In its submission to the inquiry the Erskineville Public School P&C raised concerns about the feeder area boundary used in the demographic analysis undertaken by Yusuf/Caspersonn for determining future enrolments. They wrote:

... (the Yusuf/Caspersonn report) reviews the feeder area for the proposed new Alexandria Park Site not the demographics for the Erskineville Public School feeder area. This is evident from the boundaries examined in the reports designated area. The eastern boundary is less than 20 metres from the eastern boundary of the school and cuts the suburb of Erskineville itself in half. Indeed the school itself only just makes it into the boundary covered in the report.²⁵⁵

6.24 The P&C also indicated that the boundary chosen means that some recent developments in the local area have been excluded from the study. They wrote:

Because off the restricted nature of the “designated area” no examination of the impact of substantial developments in neighbouring suburbs to the west and south (particularly the most recent Alexandria Canal and Sydney Park “family friendly” developments) has been undertaken.²⁵⁶

6.25 In the report provided to the School Closures Review Committee, Yusuf/Caspersonn describe the feeder area or “designated area” (as it is described in their report) and also outline why this area was chosen. They state:

Applying the brief to Erskineville and Redfern Primary Schools requires analysis of a wider area than that covered by these two schools alone. Alexandria Primary School and Waterloo Primary School intake areas have been added because, in DET’s *Building the Future* report, these four schools are in a group and are proposed to become part of Alexandria Park Community School. The designated intake area of Erskineville, Redfern, Alexandria and Waterloo Primary Schools is an area defined by DET...²⁵⁷

6.26 The Committee has not received any evidence from the Department as to why the feeder/designated area was defined in that way.

6.27 Some participants to the inquiry indicated that the determined feeder area, in addition to other assumptions utilised by Yusuf/Caspersonn (see Chapter 4 for details) may have had a substantial impact on the projection work undertaken and may have resulted in an underestimation of the numbers of possible enrolments.

6.28 The South Sydney Council suggested that there were a large range of demographic issues with regards to the South Sydney area and that they believed the number of children would be higher than calculated by the Department’s independent expert.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ *Submission No 35*, Erskineville Public School, p 7.

²⁵⁶ *Submission No 35*, Erskineville Public School, p 7.

²⁵⁷ Yusuf and Caspersonn, *Demographic Analysis of South Sydney and Intake Area of Selected Primary Schools*, 6 September 2001, p 2.

²⁵⁸ *Submission No 94*, South Sydney Council, pp 3-5.

6.29 The Council highlighted that this may result in reduced supply and choice of schools in the future. They wrote:

There is a real risk that there may not be adequate choice and supply of public primary school and high school education in the future.²⁵⁹

6.30 The signatories to the petition to the Committee regarding the closure of Erskineville Public, state:

The report by the Department failed to take into account the growth and future need of surrounding Primary schools (including in particular Newtown and North Newtown) and instead chose to review Erskineville Public School as part of the catchment area for the newly proposed Alexandria Park. Both Newtown and North Newtown schools are either at capacity or nearing it.²⁶⁰

6.31 The petition also states:

There is an indisputable and significant increase in the number of children in the area.²⁶¹

6.32 In his evidence to the Committee Dr Peter Phibbs, demographer, Sydney University also raised another issue regarding the demographic work undertaken regarding Erskineville School. He said:

I guess the other issue is the notion of changing preferences for schools. Preferences change over time. If you are in a situation where basically the population of the entire area had emptied out, there would be a very clear trend that there were not enough children to go into schools, but if you actually just move out of the boundary area into the Newtown area, schools there seem quite full. Again, as a forecaster, I would be a little concerned that maybe you should build a model where some of the preferences for different school use would be part of that modelling.²⁶²

6.33 The Committee notes that of the 34 children attending Erskineville Public School 14 come from the suburb or Erskineville and a further 7 come from the adjacent suburbs of Newtown and Alexandria. The remaining 13 come from suburbs further afield, including Waterloo, Redfern and Hurlstone Park.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ *Submission No 94, South Sydney Council, p 6.*

²⁶⁰ *Supplementary Submission to No 35, Petition signed by 400 individuals.*

²⁶¹ *Supplementary Submission to No 35, Petition signed by 400 individuals.*

²⁶² *Evidence of Dr Peter Phibbs, University of Sydney, 7 June 2002, p 7.*

²⁶³ *Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, 7 June 2002, p 14.*

Anecdotal evidence

6.34 The Committee also received anecdotal evidence regarding possible indicators that student numbers may increase.

6.35 In her evidence to the Committee Ms Margaret Young, Director of Lady Gowrie Child Centre indicated that they have a substantial waiting list of children. She said:

Our waiting list figures, of course, have changed since our original submission but the trend is holding up. There are many people from our immediate local neighbourhoods and the immediate suburbs around. It is also interesting to us because we have 300 children on our waiting list at the moment, and many of them are in the baby to two-year age group and many of them are in the two to three year age group. They are the vast majority of our waiting list and they are the ones who will be moving into school of course in a couple of years. There are many people from the local community on that waiting list. That was a prime concern of ours.²⁶⁴

6.36 Mrs Cathy Calverley, parent:

The closure of Erskineville Public School will put a severe strain on the enrolment capacity of several other neighbouring public schools over the next several years due to the large number of children currently attending local childcare centres....²⁶⁵

6.37 In his evidence to the inquiry Mr Burkhardt indicated that although Lady Gowrie and other child care centres do have waiting lists, that these children were not necessarily moving through to Erskineville Public. He said:

In terms of the Lady Gowrie Child Centre, the submission to the School Closures Review Committee indicated that Lady Gowrie Child Centre had 82 places and 92 children under two years and 28 children, two to three years, on their waiting list. The submission also provided that there were five local pre-schools and day care centres which enrolled a total of 72 four to five-year-olds last year. The input of pre-schools in public education enrolments is problematic. These pre-schools have always been in high demand but this has not resulted in these numbers translating into our schools.²⁶⁶

6.38 In her submission Dr Joanne Warner suggested that many of the people living in the Erskineville area were first homebuyers and would possibly be starting families in the near future. She said:

Closure of Erskineville School would be detrimental because: ... many of the new residents are first homebuyers and likely to start families in the next 1-3 years.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Evidence of Ms Margaret Young, Director, Lady Gowrie Child Care Centre, 31 May 2002, p 5.

²⁶⁵ *Submission No 54*, Mrs Cathy Calverley, p 5.

²⁶⁶ Evidence of Mr John Burkhardt, General Manager (Properties), DET, 7 June 2002. p 15.

²⁶⁷ *Submission No 8*, p 1.

2001 Census

6.39 It was suggested in a large number of the submissions received, as well as in the petition to the Committee signed by 400 people, that as a consequence of the fact that 1996 Census data was utilised for the demographic projections (see Chapter 4) and of the issues raised about some of the assumptions made in the Yusuf /Caspersonn study, that the Department review the 2001 Census Statistics before determining whether to close Erskineville Public School.

6.40 In their submission to the inquiry the Port Jackson District Council of P&C makes this point. They state:

Future planning should be based on demographic projections of family populations in the inner city, from statistical evidence to be released in the 2002 Census this September.²⁶⁸

6.41 Ms Dione Barrett, a parent of a potential student of Erskineville Public also indicated that there is a need to consider the 2001 Census. In her submission she states:

I do not believe that the decision was made using the most relevant data on demographics and as such would ask for a delay in any closure until updated data is available. At the 1996 census I neither had a child nor was thinking of having one. I am sure a large percentage was in a similar situation at the time of that census.²⁶⁹

6.42 The petition signed by approximately 400 individuals states:

...the population in this area is forecast to double in the next ten years. Closing Erskineville Public School will leave us with insufficient places to educate our children. Using enrolment figures alone from the last 25 years is inaccurate and focuses on the past. We urge the Committee to instruct the Department to use the current data from the 2001 Census.²⁷⁰

Conclusion

There are inherent, substantial, uncertainties in predicting populations and in particular projecting the likely populations within a certain age bracket in a tightly defined area into the future.

Other Options – A merger with Newtown?

6.43 Instead of closing the Erskineville Public School proponents of keeping the school open made the suggestion that Erskineville Public School merge with Newtown Primary, but on the Erskineville site. They argued that Newtown Primary School has much smaller grounds and less recreational facilities. The Department argued that Newtown Public was not aware

²⁶⁸ *Submission No 61, Port Jackson District Council of P&C p 2.*

²⁶⁹ *Submission No 63, p 1.*

²⁷⁰ *Supplementary Submission to No 35, Petition signed by 400 individuals.*

of the proposal and that it did not make sense to move 200 children from Newtown Public for under 40 students from Erskineville.

The proposal

- 6.44** In her evidence to the Committee Ms Fioni Stavert, Union Organiser, NSW Teachers Federation, outlined the proposal for Newtown Public and Erskineville Public to merge. She said:

The New South Wales Teachers Federation believes that to grow public education in this area what can be done is that Erskineville, yes, closes at the end of the year, but remains in public hands, public education hands, is refurbished so that it can take on both the students of that Erskineville area and the Newtown area, that is south of King Street. We would see then the closure of Newtown Public School and Newtown Public School would provide an expanded premises for Newtown High School of the Performing Arts.²⁷¹

- 6.45** This suggestion was further reiterated in the NSW Teachers Federation submission to the Committee. It states:

The Federation urged the Minister to link Newtown and Erskineville communities through, for example, amalgamating Newtown Public School and Erskineville Public School on the Erskineville site and allowing expansion of the Newtown Performing Arts High School. Such a plan had the potential to draw students back from the private McDonald Performing Arts College.²⁷²

- 6.46** In her evidence to the Committee Ms Mulvey explained the rationale behind the proposal. She highlighted to the Committee that Newtown is near capacity and has limited room for expansion. She said:

Now I guess what we tried to communicate to the department is that your planning direction needs to take account of the fact that Erskineville relates to Newtown and the children will not attend Alexandria Park School. ... in terms of other primary schools in the area, the children at Erskineville attending the school or future children within Erskineville are more likely to attend the Newtown schools and the Newtown schools currently are almost at or are at capacity, and into the future that will become an issue. Again, it is not the issue about tomorrow, it is not the issue about today, what the enrolments are at Erskineville, the issue is the future. What capacity do we have in this area to meet the education needs of the Erskineville-Newtown children? ²⁷³

- 6.47** This was reiterated by Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of NSW Parents and Citizens, in her evidence to the Committee. She said:

The parents at that school did not want the school closed. They saw that it was in an ideal situation, that it was perfectly possible, and what they proposed, and it is a proposal that I support, is that Newtown Performing Arts High School is packed

²⁷¹ Evidence of Ms Fioni Stavert, NSW Teachers Federation, 31 May 2002, p 5.

²⁷² *Submission No 43*, NSW Teachers Federation, p 4.

²⁷³ Evidence of Ms Jeni Mulvey, Erskineville P&C, 7 June 2002, p 5.

to the rafters and in fact pressure is on that school to become more selective, which is the only high school in that area. It shares the site with Newtown Public School. To actually move Newtown Public School to Erskineville and create a new school there, it is not a long distance, it is not a huge ask. We are not bussing people half way across the town, but to actually do something, you could then expand Newtown Performing Arts, remove the pressure to make it more selective and you would actually maintain it as a comprehensive school within that town with a performing arts bent and you would move Newtown.²⁷⁴

6.48 In her evidence to the Committee Ms O'Halloran highlighted the benefits of the merger. She said:

...that rather than sell Erskineville Public School and lose that land to the public, that we ought to look at other alternatives in the area, and one of those alternatives we tried to put forward, but the department would not listen to us, either in consultation sessions or in the Schools Closure Review Committee, was the proposition that we could amalgamate Newtown Public School with Erskineville Public School on the Erskineville site, which is a tremendous site in terms of public transport facilities, and that Newtown High School of Performing Arts could be expanded so that it could have more auditioned places and more local selection places.²⁷⁵

6.49 On its site visit at Erskineville Public School, the Committee noted the size and extent of the recreational and educational facilities provided at the school. The Committee was particularly impressed by the extent of open space and playing areas for the students.

6.50 In correspondence to the Committee from the Erskineville P&C it refers to the Committee's visit and the extent of the facilities at Erskineville Public School. It states:

Members of the Inquiry would remember, however, the excellent facilities at Erskineville, which include performance facilities and an expanse of green space, facilities lacking at Newtown Public School. Perhaps if Mr Burkhardt and other members of the department had taken a similar tour and talked to parents at both Newtown and Erskineville they could have seen why better and more expansive grounds for the children of Erskineville and Newtown children makes a lot of sense.²⁷⁶

Department Response

6.51 In his evidence to the Committee Dr Laughlin indicated that the proposal to merge the schools actually supported the Department's view that only one school was required and highlighted why Erskineville should be the one to close. He said:

This was put forward by Fionie Stavert from the New South Wales Teachers' Federation, and in doing that, what she has basically acknowledged is the fact that we have two schools, which are not large schools, close together and they may be

²⁷⁴ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of NSW Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 53.

²⁷⁵ Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, New South Wales Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 61.

²⁷⁶ Correspondence from Erskineville P&C, received 20 June 2002, p 2.

better off being one school. So in proposing what she has proposed, she has acknowledged in fact the direction we have been heading. When you look at the actual numbers though, Newtown primary school has some 200 students and if we picked them up and moved them to Erskineville, we would be moving 200 to build up the numbers where there are 34. That frankly did not make a lot of sense to us.²⁷⁷

- 6.52** In response to the contention that the issue had already been discussed with the Newtown Primary School, Dr Laughlin tabled a letter from the Principal of the School (addressed to Dr Alan Laughlin and dated 3 June 2002). The letter states:

A proposal to amalgamate Newtown Public School with Erskineville Public School has not been put forward or supported by the Principal of Newtown Public School. This matter has not been discussed with the staff. The matter has not been discussed with the parent or the broader school community. The matter was raised with me by Ms Fioni Stavert, Teachers Federation Organiser, following the announcement of the closure of Erskineville Public School and the establishment of Alexandria Park Community School.²⁷⁸

Events since 7 June 2002

- 6.53** In response to Dr Laughlin's statements, Ms Jeni Mulvey, Erskineville P&C wrote to the Committee concerning the liaison between Erskineville and Newtown public schools regarding the merger proposal. She wrote:

It is untrue to say that there have been no discussions within the broader community. Discussions at a community level and between parents have certainly taken place, as you cannot stop people talking about things that are presented in the media and in public forums. More recently there has been contact between Erskineville and Newtown P&C's and there is a commitment to now formalise discussions with all parents from both the schools...²⁷⁹

- 6.54** Since this letter the P&C's for each of the schools (Newtown and Erskineville) have met and have reached an agreement on their preferred solution. Their resolution is outlined in correspondence received by the Committee on 20 June 2002, from Erskineville Public School. It states:

It was agreed to support a joint motion to the Port Jackson District P&C, in the following "draft" terms-

"That the Minister for Education and Training:

Immediately withdraw plans to dispose of Erskineville Public School as a public education facility;

Direct the Department of Education and Training to discuss the proposal from Erskineville/Newtown community with a view to the development of an

²⁷⁷ Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET 7 June 2002, p 16.

²⁷⁸ Tabled Document, Dr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, DET, 7 June 2002.

²⁷⁹ Correspondence from Ms Jeni Mulvey, President, Erskineville P&C, dated 14 June 2002, p 7.

integrated and innovative public school model that will meet local needs, utilise existing resources at the three local school sites (Erskineville Public, Newtown Primary and Newtown High School for the Performing Arts) and presents as an attractive public education option for children across school age years; and

Direct the Department to underpin this planning and development with current qualitative and quantitative data and research, including the application of the recently released ABS statistics".²⁸⁰

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that Erskineville Public School not be closed.

Recommendation 5

That the Department give full consideration to options for the school including the merger of Newtown Public School with Erskineville Public School and the future needs of Newtown High School of Performing Arts, in consultation with the teachers, students and local communities associated with those schools.

²⁸⁰ Correspondence from Erskineville P&C, received 20 June 2002, p 2.

Chapter 7 Redfern Public School

The Committee received extensive evidence regarding the appropriateness of the closure of Redfern Public School. The key issues raised and views expressed by participants in the inquiry included:

- lack of consultation of affected communities, and
- vulnerability of disadvantaged students.

Enrolment Decline

7.1 From 1977 to 1995 the enrolments at Redfern Primary School fell by almost 80%. Between 1995 and 1999 the numbers fell by 19%, most of which occurred from 1998 to 1999. Before the announcement of *Building the Future*, Redfern Primary School had just 78 students.²⁸¹ In the 26 years between 1977 and 2001 the enrolments at Redfern Public had fallen by 92% or by an average of almost 25 students per year.

Table 7.2 Enrolments at Redfern Primary School

Year	Number of Students
1977	711
1980	608
1985	389
1990	202
1995	149
1998	142
1999	121
2000	78
2001	69

Source: Yusuf and Caspersonn, 6 September 2001, p 90.

Loss of Community and School Links

A Disadvantaged Community

7.2 Many participants highlighted the nature of the community in Redfern and highlighted the extent of the disadvantage being experienced by a large number in the community from which Redfern Public School draws its students. In her evidence to the Committee Ms Debbie Coulter, Redfern Waterloo Project Manager, South Sydney Council presented some statistics about the community. She said:

²⁸¹ Yusuf and Caspersonn, "Demographic Analysis of South Sydney and Intake Area of Selected Primary Schools", 6 September 2001, p 90.

76 per cent of Waterloo residents live in public housing. We have high rates of unemployment, large numbers of children identified as at risk, high levels of drug and alcohol abuse, low levels of literacy and numeracy, many people with a chronic disability, increasing homelessness amongst the Redfern-Waterloo population, a problem with crime, a significant number of families of prisoners, many people who are victims of violence or sexual abuse and high rates of employment-related discrimination. It is a very disadvantaged community. We know the most disadvantaged children are the ones facing already barriers to going to school and this new school is going to compound them.²⁸²

7.3 Ms Coulter highlighted that the Redfern Waterloo community is one of the most disadvantaged communities in NSW:

A study by Tony Vinson in 1999, *Unequal in Life*, talks about social disadvantage across New South Wales. Of the 578 postcode areas he studied across New South Wales, Waterloo ranked 22 out of the 578. It was one of two urban areas in the whole of New South Wales, the other is Windale in Newcastle, that came out in the top 30. Most of the other top 30 were rural areas. Waterloo also included four of the top 30 rankings for disadvantage out of the ten indicators used.²⁸³

7.4 In calculating the level of disadvantage in his report entitled *Unequal in Life, the distribution of social disadvantage in Victoria and NSW*, Mr Vinson draws upon a range of indicators including; unemployment, income, birth weight, child abuse, proportion of children leaving education before 15 years, emergency assistance, court convictions, child injuries mortality and proportions of unskilled employment. Using these factors he calculates the level of cumulative disadvantage where the lowest level of disadvantage is 2.73 and the highest is negative (-)5.22. The highest levels of disadvantage are grouped for the purposes of mapping and include all post codes falling between -5.22 and -1.26.²⁸⁴ Waterloo falls within this group with a cumulative disadvantage score of -1.83.²⁸⁵ The post code of Redfern itself has a cumulative disadvantage score of -.3019.²⁸⁶ By way of comparison the following chart shows the level of cumulative disadvantage in neighbouring areas.

²⁸² Evidence of Ms Deborah Coulter, Redfern Waterloo Project Manager, South Sydney Council, 31 May 2002, p 20.

²⁸³ Evidence of Ms Deborah Coulter, Redfern Waterloo Project Manager, South Sydney Council, 31 May 2002, p 20.

²⁸⁴ Mr Tony Vinson, *Unequal in Life: the distribution of social disadvantage in Victoria and New South Wales*, August 1999, p 36.

²⁸⁵ It should be noted that Redfern Public School is located close to the border of Waterloo and Redfern and that public housing estates in both the Redfern and Waterloo area are within the catchment area of Redfern public school.

²⁸⁶ Mr Tony Vinson, *Unequal in Life: the distribution of social disadvantage in Victoria and New South Wales*, August 1999, p 68.

Table 7.1 Cumulative Disadvantage in Inner Sydney suburbs

Suburb	Post code	Cumulative Level of Disadvantage	State Ranking
Paddington	2021	1.481	552
Pymont	2009	.824	459
Broadway/Ultimo	2007	.746	445
Erskineville	2043	.688	439
Sydney	2000	.503	403
Newtown	2042	.496	401
Darlinghurst	2010	-0.125	240
Redfern	2016	-0.3019	189
Waterloo	2017	-1.8358	22

Source: Mr Tony Vinson, "Unequal in Life: the distribution of social disadvantage in Victoria and NSW", Aug 1999, p 68.

7.5 In relation to the higher ranking of Redfern compared to Waterloo, the Redfern P&C made the following comment:

...whilst this may on the surface seem to represent a more advantaged area it should be remembered that the figures for Redfern include a greater mix of public and private housing as opposed to Waterloo where according to the 1996 Census, 76% of residents live in public housing. The extraordinary levels of disadvantage experienced by those in low-income housing in Redfern, particularly local Aboriginal families are a result masked.²⁸⁷

7.6 Rev McIntyre highlighted to the Committee the nature of the community in Redfern, he said:

What we are talking about is that we are a community that is disadvantaged by the circumstances of our community. This decision makes our circumstances even worse. It disadvantages us further.²⁸⁸

7.7 Ms Butland also indicated that the decision to close the school was not taking into account the needs of the local community. She said:

When you allow the population to move around people will move in the belief that they are seeking and finding a better school, and you have remaining in other schools a community, and this is what happened at Redfern, a community where people are disempowered in the process, who have a disadvantaged context of life, a marginal community where unemployment is high, drug use is high, and what we have got in the proposal to close Redfern Public School is a position which the department, and indeed the Government, say is an economic decision. It does not recognise the unique needs of the community in Redfern or indeed any of the other communities where the populations have declined.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Submission No 78, Redfern P&C, p 12.

²⁸⁸ Evidence of Rev John McIntyre, Redfern P&C, 31 May 2002, p 16.

²⁸⁹ Evidence of Ms Dianne Butland, Redfern P&C, 31 May 2002, p 17.

7.8 In their submission to the inquiry the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Coop Ltd state:

Redfern and Waterloo are neighbourhoods with high levels of disadvantage by most significant indicators. The coexistence and interaction of these multiple agencies of disadvantage work to actively exclude substantial sectors of the population in these suburbs from an active community life. People in this situation have special needs and tackling the complex causes of social exclusion requires special measures.²⁹⁰

7.9 Although Redfern/Waterloo is a disadvantaged community, it is also a proud community. Ms Munro demonstrated the commitment by many in the community to the area and to the school she said:

...I come to you with a whole different aspect about history and learning and teaching, Aboriginal history, our sense of place. We have a very strong affinity with the Redfern community, we have a very long, proud association with the Redfern school...²⁹¹

and

Our children get a sense of place from there, they get a sense of history from there and they get a sense of justice, and where it is not done properly also.²⁹²

7.10 During the Committee's inquiry it became clear that a major issue for participants was the impact that the school's closure would have on the community and the need the community had for a school to be located in their area.

7.11 In his evidence to the Committee Mr Boston indicated that he agreed that there is a link between communities and primary schools. He said:

Well, the link between primary schools and our communities is very important. I would not say that it varied from Wyndham's day...²⁹³

7.12 This view has also been cited by Dr Tony Vinson in his report on the provision of public education in NSW. In this report he states:

...schools form a vital part of the economic and social fabric of communities particularly in disadvantaged and non-metropolitan localities, they represent a potentially valuable site for connecting individuals and families in need of services and resources that might assist them.²⁹⁴

7.13 The Redfern P&C indicates in their submission to the inquiry that the proposed amalgamation of Redfern, Waterloo, Alexandria and Erskineville Public schools at Alexandria Park Community School does not reflect the importance of the link between a community and its school. The submission states:

²⁹⁰ *Submission No 64*, Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Coop Ltd, p 2.

²⁹¹ Evidence of Ms Jenny Munro, Student, 31 May 2002, p 16.

²⁹² Evidence of Ms Jenny Munro, Student, 31 May 2002, p 17.

²⁹³ Evidence of Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET, 29 May 2002, p 17.

²⁹⁴ Mr Tony Vinson, *Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in NSW*, May 2002, p xxii.

...the amalgamation of several schools into Alexandria Park Community School does not acknowledge the importance of locality based schooling, especially in relation to a community such as Redfern's. Schools play a major role in local communities and the community building process. This is demonstrated by the fact that Redfern Primary School not only provides the educational focal point for the community but houses other local community services such as South Sydney Aboriginal Corporation Resource Centre, South Sydney Community Aid, Aboriginal Tenancy Service, Redfern Connect, Marrigamarada Montessori Play Group and the Breakfast Club.²⁹⁵

7.14 Ms O'Halloran indicated that it was important to the community that Redfern Public School remain open and was encouraged to grow. She said:

...the community argued strongly that the Redfern Public School site was at the heart of the Redfern community, that the loss of the site itself would lose some of the community's assets ... there needed to be some proposal in order to allow Redfern Public School to grow and to remain in the system. There is certainly a lot of evidence that some of the students would not go to the Alexandria Park Community School and it would be a great loss to the community around Redfern Public School.²⁹⁶

7.15 In her submission to the inquiry Ms Clover Moore MP, makes the following observations about the importance of community linkages with Redfern Public School:

Local services such as the Redfern Connect School as Community Centre, Aboriginal Medical Service and the Settlement Neighbourhood Centre work with families from Aboriginal and migrant/refugee backgrounds, and disadvantaged families from economically deprived and marginalised backgrounds. They have identified key strategies to improve school attendance and educational outcomes for these groups. These include:

- Providing breakfast programs so children are not hungry
- Providing special buses to collect children from breakfast programs and take them to school,
- Providing before school and after school, weekend and holiday activity programs for school aged children and young people,
- Providing Homework programs such as Links to Learning.
- These services and activities are best integrated with local schools to bridge school, home and community. Redfern Public School provides a very local school that is already building these bridges and should be used to its full potential. Schools that are further away will not be able to achieve this.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ *Submission No 78, Redfern P&C, p 11.*

²⁹⁶ *Evidence of Ms Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation, 29 May 2002, p 64.*

²⁹⁷ *Submission No 80, Ms Clover Moore MP, p 6.*

Department Initiative Regarding Alexandria Park School

7.16 The proposed *Building the Future* outlined the Department's intention that the newly created Alexandria Park School would be a school for primary school aged children only. The school would be formed by the merger of Alexandria Public, Erskineville Public, Redfern Public and Waterloo Public schools and was to be located on the Cleveland Street High School site. No secondary school students would remain on the site. However, after the consultation period it was agreed that the school would become a P-12 community school. High school students would be located on the Alexandria Public School site across the road from the Cleveland Street High School site. The revised proposal highlighted that the P-12 community concept would be further developed over the proceeding 3 months in consultation with the local community.²⁹⁸

7.17 In his letter to the Committee Mr Terry Denzil described the process. He said:

At the announcement of The *Building the Future* in 2001 the school communities had a consultative campaign culminating in a public meeting of 500 plus people from the Waterloo, Erskineville, Redfern, Alexandria, Darlington and Newtown communities. One of the proposals from this meeting was voted unanimously to fully support a P-12 submission as an alternative to the Department of Education proposal for the amalgamation of schools. From that meeting a Working Consultative Community groups was formed to develop the P-12 submission.²⁹⁹

7.18 In his evidence to the Committee Mr Boston indicated that the needs of the Redfern community would be met at the Alexandria Park Public School site. He said:

...the Alexandria Park Community School has undertaken to accommodate a range of community services within the school forming a genuine community link for the Redfern area. Those services include Centrelink and Connect Redfern and Health and DOCS and Police Citizens Youth Club to encourage maintenance of programs when its site is closed. Frankly, I cannot think of any other school we have established that has so many community services located on the one site or one that has so great a potential to benefit its community.³⁰⁰

7.19 In the Department's submission it highlights that a Steering Committee for Alexandria Park Community School has been established to liaise with the community. The Committee is comprised of community representatives including the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group.³⁰¹

7.20 In his evidence to the Committee, Rev McIntyre indicated that many in the Redfern community did not recognise Alexandria as being part of the Redfern community. He said:

In what we call our community there will be no schools left. People need to recognise and acknowledge that. Our community is not being listened to in this whole process. By that I mean that what we consider to be our place, which is

²⁹⁸ Department of Education and Training, *Building the Future, Consultation Report*, June 2001, p 37.

²⁹⁹ Correspondence from Mr Terry Denzil, Committee Member, Alexandria Park Community School Steering Committee, received 7 June 2002.

³⁰⁰ Evidence of Dr Ken Boston, Director, DET, 7 June 2002, p 12.

³⁰¹ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 62.

Redfern and Waterloo, and even within that there are quite discrete communities, what we consider to be our place is being totally bereft of any public school. We think that that is an indictment on the Government to treat us in that manner.

Alexandria is not part of our community. Increasingly, Alexandria is going to become less and less our community too, because it is a wealthy community. What is the largest public housing estate in the whole of New South Wales, in Redfern and Waterloo, will be left to one side. I have no doubt about that. They will not want our kids going to this posh new school. We have a dilemma in relation to that.³⁰²

7.21 The submission from the Redfern P&C also makes this point, it states:

Alexandria Park Community School is not situated in, nor identified as part of, the Redfern community. A school which is outside its local community will severely limit the sense of community in the school. Fewer parents will be taking their children to and from school if it is not within walking distance and they will have less connection to the school and therefore less involvement in its activities.³⁰³

7.22 This view was reiterated by Ms Fioni Stavert, Union Organiser, NSW Teachers Federation, who said:

...communities keep schools open, and schools are there to provide for the children of those communities.³⁰⁴

I think it is absolutely clear that the people who originally made the decision about these communities had no knowledge of these communities, because on a map it all looks - Waterloo is up the road, Alexandria is over there, Erskineville is up there, but from my experience of working with people in these communities, they might as well be 20 kilometres away from each other because they are distinct communities.³⁰⁵

7.23 The Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Coop Ltd also indicated that facilities for disadvantaged communities should be provided within the community. The submission states:

The School's current location and operations facilitate its role as a development agency with a brief to address the community's special requirements. It already acts to connect families from surrounding disadvantaged communities with each other and with agencies and services which otherwise have difficulty reaching them. This vision for the School was behind the DET's recent decision to include it in the 'School's as Community Centres Program'. It is able to fill this function because its current location is at the heart of the most disadvantaged communities in metropolitan Sydney. Transferring the site of primary school education to a remote location on the other side of the LGA and amalgamating Redfern Public School into a much larger institution, will act to break this connection.³⁰⁶

³⁰² Evidence of Rev John McIntyre, Redfern P&C representative, 31 May 2002, p 15.

³⁰³ *Submission No 78*, Redfern P&C, p 9.

³⁰⁴ Evidence of Ms Fioni Stavert, Union Organiser, NSW Teachers Federation, 31 May 2002, p 18.

³⁰⁵ Evidence of Ms Fioni Stavert, Union Organiser, NSW Teachers Federation, 31 May 2002, pp 18-19.

³⁰⁶ *Submission No 64*, Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Cooperative, p 2.

7.24 In the document entitled *DET Response to Issues*, tabled by the Department on 7 June 2002, reference is made to the impact the Department thinks a small school will have on the education of students in Redfern. It states:

...without Alexandria Park Community School the students at Redfern Public School are at high risk of receiving a second rate education...The new school, with its three stages and larger enrolment has a much greater chance of providing first rate education. It will have a broader spread of academic achievement, a broader peer group, more productive and positive role models, larger and more specialised staff group able to spend more time in meeting particular needs, executive to provide supervision and support, full time library and extensive cultural and sporting opportunities.³⁰⁷

7.25 In their submission to the inquiry the Department states:

The needs of disadvantaged students are easier to meet in larger schools compared to small schools where reliance on part-time or casual specialists can result in programs that are fragmented and lack continuity.³⁰⁸

7.26 However, there is considerable debate amongst academics about whether small schools and more particularly, small class sizes, are detrimental or beneficial to student learning. This debate was also reflected in evidence presented before the Committee.

7.27 The Redfern P&C made a similar argument in their submission. They state:

A larger school has more pupils and it is harder for teachers to get to know the students and their parents simply because of the numbers involved. A larger school needs to be more diverse and therefore dilutes the focus that can be given to particular groups and their needs.³⁰⁹

7.28 In his evidence to the Committee, the Rev John McIntyre said:

There is nothing wrong, as far as I am concerned, with small schools. What I believe, as has already been emphasised by some, is that communities are often built around schools, and in some ways the smaller the better.³¹⁰

Redfern Waterloo Partnerships Program

7.29 The Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project is a whole of Government, whole of community approach to address issues in Redfern/Waterloo. The project combines the efforts of State Government agencies, South Sydney Council, Commonwealth agencies, non-Government organisations and the community in working towards developing long term solutions to address issues being faced by the area³¹¹

³⁰⁷ Tabled Document 7 June 2002, "DET Response to Issues", Dr Ken Boston, Director General, DET.

³⁰⁸ *Submission No 91*, DET, p 63.

³⁰⁹ *Submission No78*, Redfern P&C, p 13.

³¹⁰ Evidence of Rev John McIntyre, Redfern P&C representative, 31 May 2002, p 16.

³¹¹ *Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project Public Meetings 7 to 9 May 2002*, p 1.

7.30 On 21 March 2002 the Premier Mr Bob Carr announced the Redfern/Waterloo Package of initiatives, worth \$7million over three years.³¹² The package of initiatives aim to:

- Reduce crime and improve safety,
- Enhance children's services,
- Provide additional support for families,
- Improve health outcomes,
- Enhance educational opportunities,
- Increase employment opportunities,
- Improve urban amenity and public space,
- Improve planning and service coordination, and
- Develop better working relationships between Government and the local community.³¹³

7.31 The aims particularly relevant to this inquiry include, enhancing children's services, enhancing educational opportunities and developing working relationships between Government and the local community.

7.32 Although the Partnership aims to improve educational opportunities and enhance services for children, once Waterloo and Redfern schools close there will not be any schools in the Redfern Waterloo area. As highlighted by a number of the witnesses to the Committee's inquiry, children will have to travel outside their community in order to access both primary and high schools.

7.33 In her submission to the inquiry Ms Clover Moore MP indicates that the Government is working against its own intentions of improving educational opportunities in the area by closing the local schools. She writes:

This new project is a wide-ranging and very welcome response to the long standing, systemic and seemingly intractable problems facing the Redfern and Waterloo communities. For the first time in many years, the local community has a realistic opportunity to address its problems and change the life outcomes for its highly disadvantaged groups. Now is not the time to close a school that is central to the project's catchment area: this would clearly reduce educational opportunities.³¹⁴

³¹² *Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project Public Meetings 7 to 9 May 2002*, p 1.

³¹³ *Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project Public Meetings 7 to 9 May 2002*, p 1.

³¹⁴ *Submission No 80*, Ms Clover Moore MP, p 2.

7.34 Ms Debbie Coulter also indicated in her evidence to the Committee that the closure of the school would work against the Government's broader plans under the Redfern/Waterloo Project. She said:

It is a whole of Government, whole of community approach to address the social, economic and environmental and planning issues in Redfern and Waterloo. The closure of Redfern and Waterloo schools will only compound the issues facing the project.³¹⁵

Conclusion

The Committee acknowledges that Redfern Public School has been servicing a disadvantaged community and faces many challenges. There are real fears in the community about how the absence of a local school will affect educational opportunities and services for children in the area. The Government has established the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project to address the broader issues relating to disadvantage and the Committee believes that educational issues need to be given appropriate consideration by the Project when making its recommendations.

Accessibility and Attendance

Transport and Accessibility

7.35 A major issue raised by participants in the inquiry regarding the closure of Redfern Public School was that the Alexandria Park Community School is some distance away and there are a number of major roads to cross in order to get to it.

7.36 In his evidence Rev McIntyre said:

We also have a dilemma in relation to physical access. We are in a situation where there is an expectation that even while there will be bussing of kids, not all kids will get the bus. How do they get across the roads? They are very dangerous roads, some of the most dangerous roads in the whole of the inner city.³¹⁶

7.37 This issue was also raised by Ms Coulter, she said:

We have around 1,080 in Redfern-Waterloo in the five to 12 age group. These are the young children that would be required to go to Alexandria Park School. They would need to cross up to three arterial roads to get there, Elizabeth Street, Botany Road and Wyndham Street. We also have a further 716 in the 13 to 18 years range.³¹⁷

³¹⁵ Evidence of Ms Deborah Coulter, Redfern Waterloo Project Manager, South Sydney Council, 31 May 2002, p 20.

³¹⁶ Evidence of Rev John McIntyre, Redfern P&C representative, 31 May 2002, p 15.

³¹⁷ Evidence of Ms Deborah Coulter, Redfern Waterloo Project Manager, South Sydney Council, 31 May 2002, p 19.

- 7.38** Ms Coulter also indicated that public transport routes between Redfern and Alexandria are not strong and that the difficulties of access may impact on the Redfern community being able to connect with the school:

The public transport routes around and across South Sydney, but particularly in the Redfern and Waterloo areas, are very poor, particularly east/west. There may be some routes that can get people from Redfern to Waterloo, but they will not necessarily carry them on to Alexandria. How do you then get your children, perhaps a five-year-old and toddler, to Alexandria Park School from Elizabeth Street, Redfern, on a rainy day? I do not know how people would do that. The new school no doubt will have a lot to offer, but we are just concerned that the Redfern and Waterloo parents will be dislocated from that school and be unable to participate in any of those extracurricular things.³¹⁸

- 7.39** The Redfern P&C points out that the Redfern community has low car ownership, an issue which is likely to further exacerbate the communities ability to access the school. She said:

It is well known that the Redfern community is within the lowest car ownership community in NSW. Parents and citizens will be deterred from attending after school events, especially those which occur or end after dark, if they have to rely on public transport because walking such distances at such times outside of their local community is not safe.³¹⁹

- 7.40** The Redfern P&C also raised the issue of bullying and the increased opportunities for this to occur when children are travelling long distances. She said:

The Redfern P&C also has concerns that children attending a school outside of their local community to which they have to walk or travel significant distances and which has a student body from age 15-18 years, increases enormously the chances of younger children or those from minority groups will be bullied on their way to and from school.³²⁰

Low Attendance Rates

- 7.41** Concerns were also raised that low attendance rates in the area may be exacerbated by the extra distances that students will have to travel.

- 7.42** In their submission to the inquiry the South Sydney Council states:

It is possible that up to 24% of primary school aged children are not attending school regularly. The school attendance rates of 5-11 year olds in Redfern were 68% and 82% for Waterloo. Across Sydney the rate was 95%.³²¹

³¹⁸ Evidence of Ms Deborah Coulter, Redfern Waterloo Project Manager, South Sydney Council, 31 May 2002, p 20.

³¹⁹ *Submission No 78*, Redfern P&C, p 10.

³²⁰ *Submission No 78*, Redfern P&C, p 10.

³²¹ *Submission No 94*, South Sydney Council, p 11.

7.43 The Council indicated that Department of Housing figures also indicate that there is a large non attendance rate in Redfern/Waterloo. They state:

A profile of DOH residents compiled in April 2000 revealed at least 417 children aged between 5-12 years live in the Redfern Waterloo housing estates. This is a conservative figure based on DOH tenant figures which were approximately 90% complete at the time of counting, and does not include children living in private housing. Actual enrolments in 2000 at Government and non-Government schools located in Redfern and Waterloo totalled 322 children.³²²

7.44 The Council also states:

The closure of Redfern and Waterloo Public Schools will require Redfern and Waterloo children to travel further to other schools, which is a barrier to attendance and would exacerbate already poor school attendance rates. Safe transport and access to and from the proposed new school at Alexandria is a major issue for children/carers who live in Redfern and Waterloo.³²³

Department Response

7.45 The Department has questioned both the contention that transport to the school will be difficult to access and the levels of non-attendance.

7.46 Dr Boston indicated in his evidence that Ms Coulter was incorrect about the levels of non-attendance. He said:

The In South Sydney only 1.2 percent of five to eleven-year-olds indicated that they were not attending school. This was consistent with the results for all New South Wales. Note that it is not compulsory to attend school until six years of age.³²⁴

7.47 Dr Boston also indicated that he did not believe the set up of Alexandria Park Community School would impact on non-attendance rates. He said:

Now while it is of concern to me that many Aboriginal students do have poor attendance patterns, the issue is overstated in relation to the set-up of Alexandria Park. There is every reason to believe that the middle school structure will address these students' needs better than the structures we currently have in the area. The Port Jackson district has excellent systems for monitoring attendance and its attendance figures are comparable with those Statewide.³²⁵

³²² *Submission No 94*, South Sydney Council, p 13.

³²³ *Submission No 94*, South Sydney Council, p 13.

³²⁴ Evidence of Dr Boston, Director General, DET, 7 June 2002, p 13.

³²⁵ Evidence of Dr Boston, Director General, DET, 7 June 2002, p 13.

7.48 In relation to the accessibility of the school Alexandria Park School to Redfern students the Department indicated that transport would be provided. In his evidence to the Committee Dr Laughlin said:

We have also had five meetings so far with Sydney buses about transport to Alexandria Park Community School, and we believe that we can have positional pick-up and drop-off times and rerouting of some buses to make sure that this is a safe alternative. We are also incorporating a new bus turning circle at Alexandria Park Community School and we are buying the school a bus. We are purchasing that at this moment, and there is a connect Redfern bus as well. So it will be a school that really is very well serviced by transport, in an area where there are many private schools at the moment, very close together, with students moving across that area in quite a diverse way.³²⁶

Conclusion

The Committee understands the Department of Education and Training made efforts to consult the Redfern community.

Contamination

7.49 In her evidence to the Committee Ms Baker indicated that one of the justifications put to the School Closures Review Committee for the closure of Redfern Public was that it was on a contaminated site. In her evidence she said:

In terms of Redfern, we were told that the site was toxic - not toxic enough not to put a kindergarten on it I hasten to add, but nonetheless it was a toxic site. In terms of my social and moral responsibilities, I will not and cannot put children on what I am told is toxic.³²⁷

7.50 Rev McIntyre indicated to the Committee that he thought the contamination was a convenient reason. He said:

We believe that contamination was conveniently found in about June of last year. Prior to that there had been not much talk about contamination. We also know that just about every property in South Sydney is to some extent contaminated anyway. With that in mind why is the Redfern Primary School currently on that site if it is contaminated? Why are there plans to have Murawina Preschool go onto that site, if it is currently contaminated?³²⁸

7.51 This view was also reflected in Ms Butland's evidence:

...mysteriously contamination was found on the back oval of the school, which makes a nice big oval for redevelopment, contamination was found on that site and the school is to be closed and Murawina preschool is to be relocated into one

³²⁶ Evidence of Dr Alan Laughlin, Assistant Director General, DET, 7 June 2002, p 15.

³²⁷ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of NSW Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 53.

³²⁸ Evidence of Rev John McIntyre, Redfern P&C representative, 31 May 2002, p 16.

of the key buildings on the site. That is completely contradictory to the notion of providing for the transition. I do not know how on earth you can think about creating a preschool and then closing the school, because it is contradictory to the educational needs needed in that area. I will leave it at that point.³²⁹

7.52 In her evidence Ms Baker indicated that she thought the contamination issue on part of the site may have been resolved already. She said:

What happened was that virtually within a couple of days of the place closing, in came the dozers, took off the top layer of soil. Nobody mentioned it was only that thick and you could fix it. If it is not all right to put kids between the age of five and twelve on the site, why is it all right to put kids between the age of one and four on the site.³³⁰

7.53 On the 31 May 2002, the Committee undertook a site visit of the Redfern School. It was indicated to the Committee by the Principal of the School Mr John Benton that the contaminated land was not currently used by the school. The main school grounds are largely asphalt covered, excepting a small oval at the back of the school. The Committee understands that the contaminated soil has already been removed from this small back oval.

Recommendation 6

The Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project is tasked with finding holistic solutions to disadvantage in the local community. In light of this the Committee recommends that the Government review its decision to close Redfern Public School, pending an evaluation by the Project of the role that school education can play in meeting the Project's objectives of community renewal.

³²⁹ Evidence of Ms Dianne Butland, Lecturer in Education, 31 May 2002, p 18.

³³⁰ Evidence of Ms Bev Baker, President, Federation of NSW Parents and Citizens Associations, 29 May 2002, p 59.

Appendix 1

Glebe High School Comparison of Curriculum with Sydney Secondary College

Glebe High School Comparison of Curriculum with Sydney Secondary College

Glebe High School					
2001 Year 11 Curriculum					
Line 1	Line 2	Line 3	Line 4	Line 5	Line 6
English	2U Maths	Information Processing	Software design	Design and Technology	Business Studies
ESL/English	Maths General	Visual Arts	Retail VET	Hospitality VET	Information technology VET
<i>Off line: Chinese Extension Maths</i>					
<i>Chemistry</i>					
<i>Biology</i>					
Sydney Secondary College, Blackwattle Bay Campus					
2002 Year 11 Curriculum					
Line 1	Line 2	Line 3	Line 4	Line 5	Line 6
Visual Arts	English ESL	English Advanced	English Advanced	English Standard	English Fundamentals
Maths 2U/3U	English Advanced	English Standard	English Standard	Hospitality VET	English ESL
Business Studies	English Standard	Biology	Maths 2U	Modern History	Ancient History
Information Technology VET	Retail VET	Design and Technology	Maths General	Maths 2U/3U	Modern History
Information Processing	PD/H/PE	Business Studies	Chemistry	Biology	Maths 2U
Sport and Recreation	Chemistry	Physics	Drama	Business Studies	Maths general
	Information Processing	Music	Information Technology VET	Software Design	Physics
	Legal Studies		Chinese	Geography	Economics
<i>Off line: Japanese, Extension Maths, Extension English and TVET Courses delivered at TAFE</i>					
<i>Society and Culture</i>					

Appendix 2

Site Visits

Site Visits

Friday 31 May 2002

Hunters Hill High School

Ms Judith Felton, Principal
Mr Geoff Sheperd, Deputy Principal
Ms Vicki Maggs, Head Science Teacher
Mr Mark Jones, Teacher
Ms Beatrice Heine, School Captain
Mr James Tannock, School Captain
Mr Mark Fennech, Vice Captain

Erskineville Public School

Ms Gai O'Neill, Principal
Ms Jeni Mulvey, President, Erskineville Public School P&C
Ms Adrienne Jerram, Erskineville Public School P&C
Mr Mark Haines, Erskineville Public School P&C

Redfern Public School

Mr John Benton, Principal

Appendix 3

Minutes of Proceedings

Minutes of Proceedings

Meeting No. 73

Monday, 11 April 2002
At Parliament House 1.00pm

1. Members present

Rev Nile (Chairman)
Ms Burnswoods (Mr Kelly)
Mrs Forsythe
Mr Tsang
Mr Primrose

2. Apologies

Mr Wong
Mr Moppett (unable to be notified)

3. Substitute Members

The Chairman noted advice received from the Government Whip, advising that Ms Burnswoods would replace Mr Kelly for the purposes of today's meeting.

4. Inquiry into Inner City Schools

Reference from the house

The Chairman tabled the following reference from the House:

1. That General Purpose Standing Committee No. 1 inquire into and report on the circumstances, processes, effects and short and long term consequences of the proposed closure and restructuring of Government schools in inner Sydney, especially the closure of Hunters Hill High School, and in particular:
 - (a) the validity, relevance and veracity of the demographic and other evidence advanced or used in support of the proposed restructuring,
 - (b) the effectiveness and integrity of the public consultation processes used to develop the plan and to determine the closures of the schools,
 - (c) the accuracy and probity of the asset valuation process and the implications of conducting it before any assessment of educational needs was completed,
 - (d) the role and functioning of the School Closure Committee and the validity of its findings,

- (e) the risk to the future provision of school education arising from the loss of education sites in inner Sydney area,
- (f) the impact of State Government funding policies, enrolment policies and investment infrastructure for public school on the attractiveness of public schools,
- (g) the impacts on availability of local comprehensive public education as an option for residents of inner Sydney,
- (h) the impacts on the educational and social needs of children and young people with high welfare needs, and
- (i) the development of appropriate measures to ensure that children forced to move schools are not disadvantaged.

That the Committee report by 27 June 2002

Advertisement for Submissions

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Tsang, that:

A deadline for submissions be set at 26 May 2002.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The words “-put and passed” be removed from the draft advertisement.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Tsang, that:

The draft advertisement calling for submissions be adopted as amended.

Newspapers for placement of advertisement.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Tsang, that:

The advertisement calling for submissions be placed in the following newspapers:

Sydney Morning Herald - Saturday
Daily Telegraph - Monday
Inner Western Suburbs Courier
Glebe and Inner Western Weekly
North Shore Times
Northern District Times
Wentworth Courier
Leichhardt Village Voice
Balmain Village Voice
P& C newsletter (if within next three weeks)
Teachers' Federation paper ("Education") (if within next three weeks)

Inviting submissions

Mrs Forsythe requested that the following persons be invited to make submissions:

The P & C Federation
The NSW Teachers' Federation
South Sydney Council
Hunters Hill Council
Leichhardt Council
Marrickville Council
Local Government Association
Primary Principals Association
Secondary Principals Association
Dr Tony Vinson, Public Education Review Inquiry
The P&C School Councils at each school in the BTF plan
Dr Alan Laughlin (DET)
The Director of Properties (DET)
District Superintendent – Ryde (DET)
Local Members in affected areas

Resolved, on motion of Mr Tsang, that:

Members be given 7 days to provide any additional persons or organisations to be invited to make submissions list of other invitees to the secretariat.

Program of Hearings

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The Committee hold up to 3 hearings (2 with a reserve if needed) for the inquiry, and that members be circulated by the secretariat for appropriate dates.

5. Next meeting

The meeting closed at 12.23 pm until Monday 3 June, 10.00am, at Parliament House.

The Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC
Chairman

Meeting No. 74

Wednesday, 29 May 2002
At Parliament House (Room 814/815) 9.30am

1. Members Present

Rev Nile (Chairman)
Ms Burnswoods
Mrs Forsythe
Mr Tsang
Mr Wong
Mr Primrose
Mr Harwin

2. Inner City Schools

Public Hearing

The public and media were admitted.

The Chairman welcomed the gallery and reminded the media of their obligation under Standing Order 252 of the Legislative Council in relation to evidence given before, and documents presented to, the Committee. The Chairman also distributed copies of the guidelines governing broadcast of proceedings.

Dr Ken Boston, Director General, Mr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, Mr John Burkhardt, General Manager Properties and Mr Michael Waterhouse, Director Legal Services, Department of Education and Training, were sworn and examined.

Dr Laughlin tendered copies of the Department's overhead presentation.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The papers be tabled.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The Committee publishes the Department's submission to enable future witnesses to have notice of the arguments presented.

The Committee requested a list of the property valuations of schools proposed for closure under the *Building the Future* plan. Mr Burkhardt requested that the Department be permitted to provide this *in-camera*.

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The Department provide to the Committee on an in camera basis the list of property valuations of schools proposed for closure in the *Building the Future* plan.

The Department representatives undertook to take questions on notice from the Committee.

The Chairman directed that members of the Committee wishing to lodge further questions on notice should provide them to the secretariat by no later than 5pm on Friday, 31 May 2002.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

Mr Vernon Dalton, Chair of the Inner City Schools Closure Review Committee, was sworn and examined.

The Chairman directed that members of the Committee wishing to lodge further questions on notice should provide them to the secretariat by no later than 5pm on Friday, 31 May 2002.

Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

Professor Ian Burnley, Professor in Geography, University of NSW, was sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

Ms Beverley Baker, President, Federation of NSW Parents and Teachers, was sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

Ms Maree O'Halloran, Senior Vice President, NSW Teachers Federation, was sworn and examined.

Ms O'Halloran tendered the Teachers Federation submission to the *Building the Future* inquiry.

Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The media and the public withdrew.

Publication of Proceedings

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Tsang, that:

Pursuant to the provisions of section 4 of the *Parliamentary Papers (Supplementary Provisions) Act 1975* and under the authority of Standing Order 252, the Committee authorises the Clerk of the Committee to make the tabled documents and corrected transcripts of today's hearing publicly available.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The draft minutes of the meeting numbered No.73 be confirmed.

4. Tabled Documents

Correspondence

The Chairman tabled the following items of correspondence received:

- Letter from the Minister for Education and Training, received on 21 May, 2002 regarding the venues for the hearings and the attendance of Departmental staff.
- Letter from Cr John Fowler, Mayor of South Sydney Council regarding the Committee's invitation to forward a submission.
- E-mail from Ms Jenny Mulvey, President, Erskineville P&C regarding the need to extend the Committee's reporting time and other witnesses for consideration.

The Chairman tabled the following items of correspondence sent:

- Letter to the Minister the Hon John Watkins MP, regarding the attendance of Departmental staff, dated 7 May, 2002.
- Letter to the Minister for Planning the Hon Andrew Refshauge MP, regarding the provision of population projections, dated 8 May, 2002.
- Letter to the Minister the Hon John Watkins MP, regarding the site visits by the Committee, dated 13 May, 2002.
- Letter to the Minister the Hon John Watkins MP, regarding the attendance of Departmental staff, dated 22 May, 2002.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The letters be received.

Submissions

Resolved on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Pursuant to the provisions of section 4 of the *Parliamentary Papers (Supplementary Provisions) Act 1975* and under the authority of Standing Order 252, the Committee authorises the Clerk of the Committee to publish all submissions received by the Committee with the exception of those who have requested confidentiality.

5. Inner City Schools Inquiry: Future meetings

Attendance of local members on 31 May visits

The Committee deliberated regarding requests from Ms Clover Moore MP and Ms Kerry Chikarovski MP to attend the Committee's visits to their local schools on 31 May 2002.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Primrose, that:

The visits to Hunters Hill High, Erskineville Public School and Redfern Public School be private to the Committee; however that Ms Chikarovski and Ms Moore be offered the opportunity to speak at the public forum at Hunters Hill Town Hall or the afternoon hearing for Redfern Public School.

Suggested Witness list for 7 June Hearing

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The Department witnesses be recalled for further questioning on the 7 June hearing.

Deliberative meeting for chair's Draft report

The Chairman suggested that 24 June 2002 be set aside as the date for a deliberative meeting to consider the Chairman's draft, subject to availability of members.

6. Next meeting

Friday 31 May 2002 at 9:15 am at Hunters Hill High School.

The Committee adjourned at 5:05pm.

The Revd the Hon Fred Nile MLC
Chairman

Meeting No. 75

Friday, 31 May 2002
At Hunters Hill High School 9.15am

1. Members Present

Rev Nile (Chairman)
Ms Burnswoods
Mrs Forsythe
Mr Tsang (on other duties during Erskineville and Redfern site visits)
Mr Primrose
Mr Harwin

2. Apologies

Mr Wong

3. Inner City Schools Inquiry

Site Visit: Hunters Hill High School

The Committee visited Hunters Hill High School accompanied by the Principal, Ms Judith Felton, senior staff and school captains.

The Committee departed at 9:50am.

Public Hearing

The Committee reconvened at Hunters Hill Town Hall at 10:00 am.

The public and media were admitted.

The Chairman welcomed the gallery and reminded the media of their obligation under Standing Order 252 of the Legislative Council in relation to evidence given before, and documents presented to, the Committee. The Chairman also distributed copies of the guidelines governing broadcast of proceedings.

Ms Kathy Prokhovnik, President Hunters Hill P&C, Ms Ros Jenner, teacher, Hunters Hill High, Ms Susan Hoopman, Chair, Defenders of Hunters Hill High School, Clr Bruce Lucas, Mayor, Municipality of Hunters Hill, Dr Nicholas Parr, demographer, Macquarie University and Ms Judith Felton, Principal, Hunters Hill High, were sworn and examined.

Clr Lucas and Ms Jenner agreed to take questions on notice from the Committee.

The Chairman directed that members of the Committee wishing to lodge further questions on notice should provide them to the secretariat by no later than 5pm on Friday, 31 May 2002.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

Public Forum

The Chairman advised the media that the Committee had agreed to make the next session closed to media reporting, although the Committee intended to publish an amended transcript of the forum.

The media withdrew.

The Chairman advised the public that the transcript of the public forum would be published with the names of minors not identified, and that any other person could request that their name also be withheld. The Chairman also advised those speaking to avoid making defamatory remarks or identifying individuals when making critical comments.

The Committee heard comments from the following persons:

- Mr Phillip Jenkyn
- Ms Anne McKeon
- Mr Andrew Jackson
- Mr Stephen Nemeth
- Ms Alysonn Ryves
- Ms Diane Turner
- Student A
- Student B
- Student C
- Student D
- Ms Mary Pipes
- Ms Brierley Newton
- Student E
- Mr Steffan Nemeth

The Forum concluded at 12.35pm.

Site visit: Erskineville Public School

The Committee visited Erskineville Public School accompanied by the Principal, Ms Gai O'Neil, Mr Mark Haines, Treasurer Erskineville P& C, teachers, parents and members of the Erskineville community.

The Committee departed at 2.00pm.

Site visit: Redfern Public School

The Committee visited Redfern Public School accompanied by the Principal, Mr John Benton.

The Committee departed at 2.45pm.

Public Hearing: Room 814/815, Parliament House

The Committee reconvened in room 814/815, Parliament House, at 3.00pm.

The public and media were admitted.

The Chairman welcomed the gallery and reminded the media of the guidelines governing broadcast of proceedings.

Ms Jeni Mulvey, representative, Erskineville P&C, Ms Gai O'Neill, Principal, Erskineville P&C; Ms Margaret Young, Executive Director, Lady Gowrie Child Care Centre, Ms Fionie Stavert, Area representative, Inner City Teachers Association; Clr John Fowler, Mayor, South Sydney Council; Ms Sharon Campisi, Children's Services Co-ordinator, South Sydney Council and Ms Deborah Coulter, Redfern-Waterloo Project Manager, South Sydney Council, were sworn and examined.

Ms Mulvey tendered the following documents:

- 2 maps showing areas of Erskineville's drawing area.
- letter from Jeni Mulvey to NSW Ombudsman regarding FOI application to Department.
- letter to Department of Education seeking review of the decision on FOI application, and the Department's reply.

Ms Coulter tendered a document on school non-attendance rates in LGA areas.

Ms O'Neill, Ms Campisi and Ms Young agreed to take questions on notice from the Committee.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

Mr John Benton, Principal, Redfern Public School, Rev Charles McIntyre, Redfern P&C, Ms Jenny Munroe, Redfern P&C, Ms Dianne Butland, Redfern P&C were sworn and examined. The Chairman reminded Ms Stavert, Clr Fowler, Ms Coulter and Ms Campisi that they were still under oath.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The media and the public withdrew.

Publication of Proceedings

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Pursuant to the provisions of section 4 of the *Parliamentary Papers (Supplementary Provisions) Act 1975* and under the authority of Standing Order 252, the Committee authorises the Clerk of the Committee to make the tabled documents and transcripts of today's hearing publicly available.

4. Next meeting

Friday 7 June 2002 at 2.30pm at Parliament House.

The Committee adjourned at 5.15pm.

The Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC
Chairman

Meeting No. 78

Friday, 7 June 2002
At Parliament House (Room 814/815) 2.30am

1. Members Present

Rev Nile (Chairman)
Ms Burnswoods
Mrs Forsythe
Mr Tsang
Mr Wong
Mr Harwin

2. Apologies

Mr Primrose (at GPSC 3 hearing)

3. Inner City Schools

Public Hearing

The public and media were admitted.

The Chairman welcomed the gallery and reminded the media of their obligation under Standing Order 252 of the Legislative Council in relation to evidence given before, and documents presented to, the Committee. The Chairman also distributed copies of the guidelines governing broadcast of proceedings.

Ms Jeni Mulvey, President Erskineville P&C, Mr Peter Phibbs, Demographer, University of Sydney were sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

Dr Ken Boston, Director General, Mr Alan Laughlin, Deputy Director General, Mr John Burkhardt, General Manager Properties and Mr Michael Waterhouse, Director Legal Services, Department of Education and Training, were reminded by the Chairman that they were still providing sworn evidence.

The Department representatives requested that part of their evidence be heard *in-camera*.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The Department's evidence be heard *in-camera*.

The media and the public withdrew.

[Persons present other than Committee members: Ms Emma Lawson, Ms Rachel Simpson, Legislative Council Committee staff, CAT reporters]

Dr Laughlin tendered the following documents on an in camera basis:

- a document relating to Hunters Hill High.
- a document relating to Redfern Public School.

Copies of the document were distributed to members; Ms Burnswoods, Mr Tsang and Mr Wong returned their copies at the conclusion of the in camera session.

The *in-camera* evidence concluded and the media and the public were re-admitted.

Dr Laughlin tendered a letter from the Principal of Newtown Public School regarding proposals to amalgamate with Erskineville Public School.

The Department representatives undertook to take questions on notice from the Committee.

The Chairman directed that members of the Committee wishing to lodge further questions on notice should provide them to the secretariat by no later than 5pm on Tuesday, 11 June 2002.

Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The media and the public withdrew.

Publication of Proceedings

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Tsang, that:

Pursuant to the provisions of section 4 of the *Parliamentary Papers (Supplementary Provisions) Act 1975* and under the authority of Standing Order 252, the Committee authorises the Clerk of the Committee to make the tabled documents and corrected transcripts of today's hearing publicly available, with the exception of the *in-camera* evidence.

The Committee agreed that the Chairman should request that answers to questions on notice be provided by 5.00pm Monday, 17 June 2002.

Resolved on motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Written questions on notice relating to the evidence of the Department of Education and Training be lodged with the Clerk of the Committee by 5.00pm Tuesday, 11 June 2002.

Resolved on motion of Mr Tsang, that:

Where a written question on notice relates to evidence given in camera or confidential documents tabled in evidence:

- (a) the Member is to lodge the question with the Clerk of the House by 5.00pm Tuesday, 11 June 2002.
- (b) the Clerk is to forward the question to the Director General of the Department of Education.

- (c) the question is to made available only to Members of the Committee and not copied or published without an order of the Committee.

Resolved on motion of Mr Tsang, that:

Where it is considered that an answer to a written question on notice is privileged and should not be made public by the Committee the answer is to be delivered to the Clerk of the House and:

- (a) made available only to Members of the Committee and the Clerk to the Committee.
(b) not published or copied without an order of the Committee.

4. Tabled Documents

Correspondence Received

The Chairman tabled the following items of correspondence received:

- Letter from the Erskineville P& C regarding the process for the inquiry.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The letter be received.

Submissions

Resolved on the motion of Mr Tsang, that:

Pursuant to the provisions of section 4 of the *Parliamentary Papers (Supplementary Provisions) Act 1975* and under the authority of Standing Order 252, the Committee authorises the Clerk of the Committee to publish all submissions received by the Committee since 29 May 2002, with the exception of those who have requested confidentiality.

5. Next meeting

Friday, 24 June 2002 at 3.30pm at Parliament House.

The Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC
Chairman

Meeting No. 83

Wednesday, 26 June 2002
At Parliament House, Room 1108 - 1.00pm

1. Members present

Rev Nile (Chairman)
Ms Burnswoods
Mr Harwin
Mrs Forsythe
Mr Primrose

2. Apologies

Mr Wong
Mr Tsang

3. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The draft minutes of meeting 77 be confirmed.

4. Inquiry into the Closure of Inner City Schools

Tabled Documents

Correspondence Received

The Chairman tabled the following three items of correspondence received:

- Letter from the Hon Andrew Refshauge, MP, Deputy Premier, Minister for Planning, regarding population projections from Planning SA, received 3 June 2002. (available of required)
- Letter from Jeni Mulvey, President, Erskineville P&C responding to the Department's evidence of 7 June 2002, received 14 June 2002. (circulated previously)
- Letter from Jeni Mulvey, President, Erskineville P&C, providing information about the proposed merger of Newtown and Erskineville Public Schools, received 20 June 2002. (circulated previously)
- Letter from Judith Felton, Principal, Hunters Hill High School, regarding the academic performance of Hunters Hill High School students, received 18 June 2002. (circulated previously)
- Letter from Ms Rosemary Caden, Staff Representative, Hunters Hill High School, regarding the academic performance of Hunters Hill High School students, received 14 June 2002. (attached)

- Letter from Ms Ros Jenner, Teacher, Hunters Hill High School, regarding further detail in response to question asked at the public hearing on 31 May 2002, received on 19 June 2002. (attached)
- Letter from Ms Margaret Minatel, regarding the closure of Hunters Hill High School. (attached)
- Letter from Ms Anne McKeon, regarding the closure of Hunters Hill High School, received 13 June 2002. (attached)

Publication of submissions and Answers to Questions on Notice received

The Chairman tabled an answer to a question on notice received from Mr Vern Dalton.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The submissions received since 7 June 2002, and the answers to questions on notice received from the Department and Mr Dalton, excluding answers relating to in camera evidence, be published as received.

Chairman's Draft Report

The Chairman tabled his draft report entitled "Proposed Closure and Restructuring of Government Schools in Inner Sydney". Once circulated, the draft report was accepted as being read.

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The Committee secretariat be authorised to correct typographical, spelling and grammatical errors.

Chapter One was read.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harwin, that:

Chapter One be adopted.

Chapter Two was read.

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, tha:

The words "the Department of Education indicated" be added to the first words of the first sentence of paragraph 2.2.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Two dot points be added to paragraph 2.13 making reference to the proposed merger of Dulwich and Marrickville High; and to the relocation of Chatswood High.

Resolved, on the motion Mrs Forsythe, that:

A dot point be added to paragraph 2.19 stating that Chatswood High was removed from any further proposals.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “(Building the Future Plan or Btf)” be removed from the second sentence of para 2.1 and that in the report Building the Future be referred to in italics.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The reference to “disproportionate numbers of males to females” be explained in paragraph 2.10.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “refer to attached table” be added to the end of the third dot point at paragraph 2.10, and a table sourced from the Department demonstrating the declining enrolments be attached. [Committee to see table inserted prior to publication].

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The following changes be made to paragraph 2.19:

1. Delete second dot point referring to Redfern, Erskineville and Waterloo
2. Add a dot point stating that Dulwich High and Marrickville High were provided with a three month extension for consultation and deliberation, and taken out of the further development of Building the Future
3. Delete the current dot point relating to Dulwich High and Marrickville High (see later Mrs Forsythe resolution to move this deleted point to 2.20)
4. Add the words “As at June 2001” to the beginning of the first sentence of the paragraph.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Wherever available, dates be added to paragraphs 2.13 and 2.15.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The dot point regarding Dulwich High and Marrickville High previously in paragraph 2.19 be moved to the end of paragraph 2.20, under a new sub heading.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The references to Leichhardt, Balmain and Glebe High Schools in paragraph 2.23 be indented to make it clear they are all part of Sydney Secondary College.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

A dot point be inserted under the Hunters Hill High School section of paragraph 2.23 stating that initially no year 7 students were to be enrolled in 2002, and that subsequently some students were permitted to enrol.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Chapter Two as amended be adopted.

Chapter Three was read.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

All references to "Draft" in relation to Building the Future be deleted and instead the words "proposal" used where necessary.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The title of Table 3.1 delete the words "in School Closures".

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

References to the 3 month extension of consultation for Dulwich High and Marrickville High and to the date at which the School Closures Review Committee was appointed be added to Table 3.1.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Mr McGaw be given his full title and his report put in context in paragraph 3.15.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Footnote 12 on page 5 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The "conclusion" on page 5 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

"Conclusion" on page 7 be deleted and replaced with the following:

"The Committee believes that in considering submissions and correspondence in the development and preparation of the final plan the Department should have made known the Department's definition of what constituted a valid submission."

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

A "?" be added to the subheading above paragraph 3.24.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2.02pm until Wednesday 26 June 2002 at 5.30pm (Budget Estimates)

The Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC
Chairman

Meeting No. 85

Thursday, 27 June 2002
At Parliament House Room 1136 - 9.00 am

1. Members present

Rev Nile (Chairman)
Ms Burnswoods
Mr Harwin
Mrs Forsythe
Mr Primrose
Mr Tsang

2. Apologies

Mr Wong

3. Inquiry into the Closure of Inner City Schools:

Consideration of Chairman's Draft

The Committee resumed consideration of the Chairman's draft report entitled "Proposed Closure and Restructuring of Government Schools in Inner Sydney".

The Committee considered the table from *Building the Future* on declining enrolments suggested for inclusion in Chapter Two.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The table be included together with an additional table, if available, on declining enrolments at Redfern, Alexandria, Waterloo and Erskineville Public Schools for comparable periods.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The amendments to Chapter Two approved on 26 June 2002 include the insertion of a section mentioning Vacluse, Dover Heights and Maroubra High Schools prior to the section at paragraph 2.8.

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The word "serious" be deleted from the first sentence of paragraph 3.33.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Paragraph 3.39 be replaced with the words:

“The intention of Section 28 is to ensure that the community has an opportunity to comment and/or object to the closure of the school”

Resolved on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “needs to be changes to prevent the” be deleted from the second sentence of the conclusion at page 15, and replaced with the words “has been a”; and the words “some sections of the local” be added before the word “community”.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The last sentence of the conclusion on page 15 be deleted.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “in order to enable individual school closures to be reviewed in context” be added at the start of the first sentence of the conclusion on page 20.

Resolved on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

A sentence be added after the first sentence in paragraph 3.81 stating that Dulwich and Marrickville High were give a three month extension of the consultation period.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The conclusion on page 22 be deleted.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

A sentence be inserted after the quote in paragraph 3.95 stating:

The Committee understands that the Ombudsman has yet to finish its investigation into the disputed documents.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Paragraph 3.97 be deleted and replaced with:

The Committee has been informed by the Department that all items requested by the Erskineville P&C have been provided, except for names and addresses of those who had made submissions to the Department, which were exempt under privacy clauses relating to the release of personal information.

Resolved on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that;

The word “alleged” be added before “obstructions in the first sentence of the conclusion on page 24; and the word “justified” be replaced with “compounded” in that sentence; and that all words after “requirements under FOI” be deleted from the second sentence.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “indicating that the consultation process” be deleted from paragraph 3.98 and replaced with “claiming that school enrolments”.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

“largely” be deleted from the second sentence of the conclusion on page 25.

Resolved on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The words “particularly”, and “a situation where one school is to be closed due to declining numbers not” be deleted from the third sentence of the conclusion on page 25; and the word “based” be replaced with “focus” in that sentence; and the words “the proposed closure of a school rather than” be inserted after “on” in that sentence.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Harwin, that:

The words “were never fully given the opportunity” and “during the process undertaken” be deleted from the fourth sentence of the conclusion on page 25, and that after “believes the” the words “ process does not provide” be inserted; and that after the words “affected schools” insert “adequate opportunities”.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harwin, that:

Chapter Three as amended be adopted.

Further Deliberatives

Resolved on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The Committee resume at 1.15pm but that in view of competing commitments involving Committee members that any votes be deferred until all available members have the opportunity to be present.

Extension of Reporting Date

Resolved on the motion of Mr Harwin, that:

The Chairman seek leave of the House for an extension of the reporting date until Thursday, 7 July 2002.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 am until Thursday, 27 June 2002 at 1.15pm.

The Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC
Chairman

Meeting No. 86

Thursday, 27 June 2002
At Parliament House Room 1136 - 1:15pm

1. Members present

Rev Nile (Chairman)
Ms Burnswoods
Mrs Forsythe

2. Apologies

Mr Wong
Mr Harwin
Mr Primrose
Mr Tsang

The Chairman reminded the Committee that as Mr Primrose and Mr Harwin had a conflicting Committee meeting no votes would be taken on divisions until the evening deliberative.

3. Inquiry into the Closure of Inner City Schools

Consideration of Chairman's Draft

The Committee resumed consideration of the Chairman's draft report entitled "Proposed Closure and Restructuring of Government Schools in Inner Sydney".

Chapter Four was read.

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The words "On a macro level" be deleted from the start of the first sentence of the second paragraph of the introduction.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The heading above paragraph 4.6 be replaced with the words "Government and Non-Government Schools".

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Table 3.2 be moved up so that it appears immediately under Table 3.1., and that the note under the table also refer back to the table on enrolments in Chapter Two.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

All words after “stabilised” be deleted from the last sentence of paragraph 4.11.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The word “reasons” be replaced with “factors affecting” in the first sentence of paragraph 4.13, and “factors” replace “reasons” in the second sentence.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The words “evidence indicating” be replaced with “submissions claimed”

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Wherever the words “public and private schools” appear they be replaced with “Government and non-Government schools”.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Paragraphs 4.21 and 4.22 be deleted together with the relevant dot point at 4.13.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The first sentence of paragraph 4.33 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “the legitimacy of” be deleted from paragraph 4.34.

The Committee agreed to resume the deliberation at paragraph 4.44.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1.55pm until Thursday, 27 June 2002 at 6.30pm.

The Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC
Chairman

Meeting No. 87

Thursday, 27 June, 2002
At Parliament House Room 1136, 6.30pm

1. Members present

Rev Nile (Chairman)
Ms Burnswoods
Mrs Forsythe
Mr Harwin
Mr Wong

2. Apologies

Mr Primrose
Mr Tsang

3. Inquiry into the Closure of Inner City Schools:

Consideration of Chairman's Draft

The Committee resumed consideration of Chapter Four of the Chairman's draft report entitled "Proposed Closure and Restructuring of Government Schools in Inner Sydney".

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harwin, that:

The sub headings "Failure to acknowledge uncertainties" and "uncertainties" be replaced with one sub-heading "Methodological Issues" above paragraph 4.54.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The first sentence of paragraph 4.54 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Paragraph 4.61 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The word "also indicated" be replaced with "suggesting" in paragraph 4.62.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The subheading "Data Used" be deleted, and the first sentence of paragraph 4.66 be re-organised to read:

The age and type of the data used by Yusuf and Caspersonn in undertaking their work was of concern to many.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

“also” be removed from the first sentence of paragraph 4.67.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “It was also” be deleted from the first sentence of paragraph 4.69 and be replaced with the words “Some witnesses”.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “also indicated this” be deleted from the first sentence of paragraph 4.70.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “one of the methods utilised by” and “to determine” be deleted, and the word “estimated” be inserted after Caspersonn in the first sentence of paragraph 4.72.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

“was to look” in that sentence be replaced by “by looking”.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The an extract from the hearing on 31 August 2002 in which Ms Burnswoods questioned Dr Phibbs about the impact on families of the price of units in Green Square be inserted after the quote at paragraph 4.74.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The conclusion at page 21 be deleted and replaced with the words:

The conflicting analyses from demographers made it difficult for affected communities to accept that there was a compelling case for closure of their school.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “valid” be deleted from the first sentence of the conclusion on page 23; and the second sentence be replaced with:

The Committee’s focus is with the specific decisions made to close schools and whether the Department thoroughly considered other alternatives.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harwin, that:

Chapter Four as amended be adopted by the Committee.

Chapter Five was read.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The section on enrolments be moved to the start of the Chapter.

The Committee agreed to resume the deliberation at paragraph 5.1.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7.20pm until Monday, 1 July 2002 at 9.30am.

The Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC
Chairman

Meeting No. 88

Monday 1 July, 2002
At Parliament House Room 1108, 9:30 am

1. Members present

Rev Nile (Chairman)
Ms Burnswoods
Mrs Forsythe
Mr Harwin
Mr Wong (after 12:00pm)
Mr Primrose
Mr Tsang

2. Inquiry into the Closure of Inner City Schools:

Consideration of Chairman's Draft

The Committee resumed consideration of Chapter Five of the Chairman's draft report entitled "Proposed Closure and Restructuring of Government Schools in Inner Sydney".

The Chairman suggested the Committee begin by consideration of the conclusion and the recommendations before proceeding to the text of the chapter.

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The words "may have" be inserted after "closure" in the first sentence; the word "substantial" be deleted and the second sentence of the conclusion on page 7 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The second sentence of the conclusion on page 9 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The word "equal" be deleted after "opportunities" in the second sentence, and the word "not" be deleted before "too small" in the third sentence of the conclusion on page 23.

Mrs Forsythe moved that:

The conclusion on page 23 as amended be adopted by the Committee.

The Committee deliberated.

Question put.

Ayes: Mr Nile
Mr Harwin
Mrs Forsythe

Noes Ms Burnswoods
Mr Primrose
Mr Tsang

There being an equality of votes, question resolved in the affirmative on the casting vote of the Chairman.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Recommendation 1 on page 23 be split into two recommendations, one for each sentence.

Mrs Forsythe moved that:

The new recommendation 1, "That Hunters Hill High School not be closed" be adopted by the Committee.

The Committee deliberated.

Question put.

Ayes: Mr Nile
Mr Harwin
Mrs Forsythe

Noes Ms Burnswoods
Mr Primrose
Mr Tsang

There being an equality of votes, question resolved in the affirmative on the casting vote of the Chairman.

[Mr Wong, when he attended later in the meeting, asked that it be noted that he would have voted in support of the recommendation.]

Mrs Forsythe moved that:

The new recommendation 2, with the words "such as" in substitution for "including", be adopted by the Committee.

The Committee deliberated.

Question put.

Ayes: Mr Nile
Mr Harwin
Mrs Forsythe

Noes Ms Burnswoods
 Mr Primrose
 Mr Tsang

There being an equality of votes, question resolved in the affirmative on the casting vote of the Chairman.

[Mr Wong, when he attended later in the meeting, asked that it be noted that he would have voted in support of the recommendation.]

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Paragraph 5.15 be moved to below paragraph 5.17.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The third and fifth sentences of paragraph 5.17 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Paragraphs 5.18 and 5.19 be reversed.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Footnote 13 have the following words added:

The Committee notes the exact figure for year 10 enrolments was 93.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

“also” be removed from the first sentence of paragraph 4.67.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “received evidence” be replaced with “was informed” in the first sentence of paragraph 5.21

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Paragraph 5.26 be moved to paragraph 5.29.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Paragraph 5.28, including table 7.2, be moved underneath table 7.1.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

A sentence be inserted at the end of paragraph 5.31 to read:

The Department also provided in camera evidence on Hunters Hill High School's academic record.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The word "partially" be inserted before "selective in the opening sentence.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Paragraph 5.40 be inserted immediately after paragraph 5.17, and a sentence be added which reads:

The Committee notes that it is not clear how many students from the Hunters Hill area chose to go to a selective, specialist or non-Government school.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The second sentence and the quote from paragraph 5.42 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words "as described by Dr Kang" be deleted from the first sentence of paragraph 5.44.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words of the first sentence of paragraph 5.46 be deleted after the word "inquiry" and replaced with:

"indicated that it is bound by the terms of the Education Act 1901, which states:"

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

A final sentence be inserted at the end of paragraph of 5.52:

The Committee notes that in the broad area from Glebe to Ryde, the following co-educational comprehensive schools include...[name of schools] and the following comprehensive single sex schools...[name of schools]

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words "and/or Malvena" be added to the second sentence of paragraph 5.57 after the words "Hunters Hill".

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

A final section be added to paragraph 5.63 clarifying the meaning of "collegiate schools".

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The word "large" be deleted from the second sentence of paragraph 5.65.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “because many of” be replaced with “and that” in the first sentence of paragraph 5.77.

Mr Harwin moved that:

The following sentence be added to the end of paragraph 5.78:

The Committee notes that the Department received a valuation for Hunters Hill high school from the State Valuation Office dated... whilst the valuation for Balmain and Glebe High Schools were received on...

The Committee agreed that a vote on this motion be delayed until all members had some opportunity to consider it.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The third dot point of paragraph 5.79 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Tsang, that:

Following the dot points at paragraph 5.82, a sentence be added stating:

The Committee notes that the Department took some of these factors into account.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Paragraph 5.83 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “and their vision for its continuance” be deleted from paragraph 5.87 and inserted into the introduction to the quote in paragraph 5.90.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harwin, that:

Chapter Five as amended be adopted by the Committee, with the exception of the motion regarding the valuations in paragraph 5.78.

Mr Wong requested that it be noted that he did not receive formal advice of the time of the deliberative meeting, other than an email message, and that his vote in support of the recommendations regarding Hunters Hill High School be noted.

Chapter Six was read.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

A table on trends in enrolments similar to that which appeared in the Hunters Hill High School chapter be inserted at the end of the introduction together with a sentence on the capacity of the school:

The Committee has been informed Erskineville has a capacity for 480 students and some of this capacity is being used for other purposes such as the State Equity Centre.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The second sentence of paragraph 6.1 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Paragraph 6.6 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Paragraph 6.10 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The quote from the Principal of Erskineville regarding the impact on enrolments of the announcement of closure be inserted at the end of paragraph 6.13.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The wording of paragraph 6.19 be checked.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “ regarding the boundaries for the feeder/designated area be deleted and replaced with “ as to why the boundaries have been placed where they are”.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

“many” be replaced with “some”, and “would” replaced with “may” in the first sentence of paragraph 6.27.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “The council indicated” be replaced with “South Sydney Council suggested” at the start of the first sentence of paragraph 6.28.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The words “this issue was highlighted by” be deleted from the first sentence of paragraph 6.30, and “The petition” be deleted from the second sentence to make a single sentence.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

After paragraph 6.32 a paragraph be inserted which reads:

The Committee notes that a significant proportion of the children attending Erskineville Public School come from outside the area and the majority of children in Erskineville attend other schools

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harwin, that:

The word “showing” be deleted and “will” be replaced with “may” in paragraph 6.33.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The words “Given that”, and “fifteen to twenty years” and “and” be deleted from the first sentence of the conclusion on page 9; and the rest of the conclusion be deleted, and replaced with:

There are inherent substantial uncertainties in predicting populations and in particular projecting the likely populations, within certain age brackets in a tightly defined area into the future.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The conclusion on page 13 be deleted.

Mrs Forsythe gave notice that when all Committee members were present she would move that the first sentence of the current recommendation 1 be replaced with the following recommendation:

That Erskineville Public School not be closed.

Mrs Forsythe also gave notice that she would later move that the second sentence of the current recommendation 1 become recommendation 2, with the words “be given” and “for” deleted and the words “and the future needs of Newtown High School for Performing Arts” be added after the words “Erskineville Public School”.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harwin, that:

Chapter Six as amended be adopted by the Committee, with the exception of the motions regarding the recommendations.

Chapter Seven was read.

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Table 7.2 and paragraph 7.21 be inserted at the end of the introduction to the chapter.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The sentence beginning “The only other postcode” be deleted from paragraph 7.3.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Background detail be inserted at the beginning of paragraph 7.15 to explain the plans of the Department which led to the establishment of Alexandria Park Public School.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Paragraphs 7.23 and 7.22 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The subheading “enrolments” appear at the start of the chapter with paragraph 7.21 and table 7.2,

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harwin, that:

The sub-heading “Debate Regarding Class Size” be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harwin, that:

Paragraphs 7.29 to 7.32 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Harwin, that:

The conclusion on page 11 be deleted and replaced with the following:

The Committee acknowledges that Redfern Public School has been servicing a disadvantaged community and faces many challenges. There are real fears in the community about how the absence of a local school will affect educational opportunities and services for children in the area. The Government has established the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project to address broader issues relating to disadvantage and the Committee believes that educational issues need to be given appropriate consideration by the project when making its recommendations.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

“sections of” be deleted from the conclusion on page 14.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

Paragraph 7.53 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The words “adjacent field” be removed from the second sentence of paragraph 7.58.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The last sentence of paragraph 7.58 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The conclusions on page 16 be deleted.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the recommendations until all members were present to vote.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The Committee not publish the in camera transcript from the 7 June 2002 hearing, and that the Chairman write to Erskineville P&C advising them that the evidence was not used in the Committee’s report.

The Chairman indicated that 12.00pm on Tuesday would be the deadline for a dissenting report to be lodged.

The Committee adjourned at 2.05pm and resumed at 2.30pm.

Mrs Forsythe moved that:

The first sentence of the current recommendation 1 in Chapter Six be replaced with the following recommendation:

That Erskineville Public School not be closed.

The Committee deliberated.

Question put.

Ayes: Mr Nile
Mr Harwin
Mrs Forsythe
Mr Wong

Noes Ms Burnswoods
Mr Primrose
Mr Tsang

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mrs Forsythe moved that:

The second sentence of the current recommendation 1 in Chapter Six become recommendation 2, with the words "be given" and "for" deleted and the words "and the future needs of Newtown High School for Performing Arts" be added after the words "Erskineville Public School".

The Committee deliberated.

Question put.

Ayes: Mr Nile
Mr Harwin
Mrs Forsythe
Mr Wong

Noes Ms Burnswoods
Mr Primrose
Mr Tsang

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Harwin moved that:

The recommendation in Chapter Seven be deleted and replaced with the following:

As the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project is tasked with finding holistic solutions to disadvantage in the local community, the Committee recommends that the Government review its decision to close Redfern Public School pending the project's evaluation of the role that school education can play in meeting the Project's objective of community renewal.

The Committee deliberated.

Question put.

Ayes: Mr Nile
Mr Harwin
Mrs Forsythe
Mr Wong

Noes Ms Burnswoods
Mr Primrose
Mr Tsang

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The Chairman, Ms Burnswoods and Mrs Forsythe would meet on Wednesday, 3 July at 10:00am to adopt the report, once all amendments by the Committee had been made and checked by members.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The Committee adjourned at 2.45pm until Tuesday, 2 July 2002 at 10.30am (Workers Compensation inquiry).

The Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC
Chairman

Meeting No. 90

Wednesday, 3 July 2002
At Parliament House Room 1108, 10.00 am

1. Members present

Rev Nile (Chairman)
Ms Burnswoods
Mrs Forsythe
Mr Wong

2. Apologies

Mr Primrose
Mr Harwin
Mr Tsang

3. Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Minutes numbers 83, 85 86, 87, and 88 be confirmed.

4. Inquiry into the Closure of Inner City Schools:

Consideration of Chairma's Draft

The Committee considered the revised draft report entitled "Proposed Closure and Restructuring of Government Schools in Inner Sydney", incorporating the Committee's changes from previous meetings.

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The Department's definition of "collegiate schools" be inserted into the Glossary and paragraph 5.64.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Burnswoods, that:

The table in Appendix Eight be moved into the appropriate place in Chapter Two.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The last sentence of paragraph 4.16 be deleted.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The answer to her question on notice to Mr Vern Dalton be included in the Appendix of answers to questions on notice.

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

The report as amended, be adopted as the report of the Committee. The Chairman noted that a dissenting statement had been made by three Committee members, and would appear as the final Appendix.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Forsythe, that:

Transcripts of evidence, submissions, tabled documents and correspondence (excepting in camera evidence, confidential submissions and documents provided on a confidential basis) be tabled with the report and made public.

The Chairman noted that the report would be tabled with the Clerk of the Parliaments, in accordance with the resolution of the House of 13 May 1999 establishing General Purpose Standing Committees.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Committee adjourned at 10:30 am until Friday, 19 July 2002 at 10.00am (Workers Compensation inquiry).

The Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC
Chairman

Appendix 4

Submissions

Submissions

No	Author
1	Dr Brian Noad
2	Mr Steffan Nemeth
3	Mrs R Prokhovnik
4	Mr John Maynard
5	Ms Adrienne Jerram
6	Dr Alister Sharp
7	Ms Janelle Neville
8	Dr Joanne Warner
9	Mrs Robyn Watkins
10	Alan and Robyn Woolley
11	Gil and Vincie Wahlquist
12	Mrs Gillian Shearman
13	Mr Paul Adam
14	Ms Roslyn Barrett
15	Brendon and Kerry Stewart
16	Mr Mark Anderson (College Management Group, Sydney Secondary College)
17	Ms Nicole Radloff
18	Mr Michael Hill (Blackwattle Bay Campus Community Steering Committee)
19	Ms Amanda Lehman
20	Mrs Elaine Butters
21	Susan and Stephen Guy
22	Dr Nick Parr (Macquarie University)
23	Mr Geoff Milne
24	Ms Linda Blair
25	Peter and Elizabeth Colthorpe
26	Mr Brian Murphy
27	Mrs George Markham
28	Mr John Warton
29	Ms Jane Johnson
30	Mr Anthony Lehman
31	Mrs Kath Jameson
32	Mr Garry Riggs
33	Ms Tara Frost

34	Ms Gloria McCurley
35	Ms Jeni Mulvey (Erskineville Public School P&C)
36	Ms Sally Gaunt
37	Mr Rick Beehag
38	Mr Jim McAlpine (NSW Secondary Principals' Council)
39	Dr Peter Phibbs (The University of Sydney)
40	Ms Judy King (Riverside Girls High School)
41	S and C McTaggart
42	Ms Rosemary Caden & Associates (Hunters Hill High School)
43	Mr Barry Johnson (NSW Teachers Federation)
44	Mrs Janette Dive
45	Ms Elizabeth Anderson
46	Ms Lisa-Maree Siebert
47	Mr Phillip Jenkyn (Defenders of Sydney Harbour Foreshores)
48	Ms Christine Hopkins
49	Ms Sheila Jolley
50	Ms Diane Turner
51	Mr Gordon Coulter
52	Ms Suzi Coulter
53	Ms Hilary Pulver
54	Mrs Cathy Calverley
55	Mr Thomas Daunt
56	Mr Neil Hopkins
57	Mr James Waters
58	Ms Penny Waters
59	Ms Deborah Slack
60	Mr Stephen Weaver
61	Mr Robert Alcock (Port Jackson District Council of P&C)
62	Mr Andrew Pulver
63	Ms Dione Barrett (Minerva Rehabilitation)
64	Mr Charlie Richardson (Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Coop)
65	Mr Daniel Anderson
66	Ms Cathy Merchant (Lane Cove River District Council of P&C Associations)
67	Mrs Helena Ivantsoff
68	Miss Amelia Jerram
69	Ms Mary Pipes

70	Mrs Brigid Dowsett (Ryde Hunter's Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society)
71	Confidential
72	Confidential
73	Mrs S Christodoulou (Drummoyne Public School P&C Association)
74	Mr Ron Steele
75	Mrs Noelene Steele
76	Mr Henry Wong (Lane Cove Council)
77	Mr Mitchell Geddes
78	Ms Jenny Munroe (Redfern Primary School Parents & Teachers Association)
79	Peter and Sarah Patterson
80	Ms Clover Moore MP (Independent Member for Bligh)
81	Miss Anne Chestnut (Hunters Hill High School Student Representative Council)
82	Ms Barbara Aroney (Balmain High School Concerned Support Unit Staff)
83	William and Kathy Greer
84	Mrs Lindy Wilson
85	Mr Gregory Foster
86	Dr Genevieve Kang
87	Mr Anthony Vlatko
88	Mrs Patricia Clay (Round Corner Village Residents' Association Inc)
89	Mrs Diana Harden
90	Mr North Sullivan (Balmain Parents & Citizens Association)
91	Mr Ken Boston (Department of Education and Training)
92	Ms Kathy Prokhovnik (Hunters Hill High School P&C)
93	Mr Gray Southon (Committee of Quaker Peace and Justice NSW)
94	Ms Sharon Campisi (South Sydney Council)
95	Ms Guri MacKinnon & Associates (Dulwich High School Branch of the Teachers Federation)
96	Mr Jonathan Falk (Jonathan Falk Planning Consultants Pty Ltd)
97	Mr Michael Sagan (NSW Teachers Federation at Wilkins IEC)
98	Mr Barry Smith (Hunters Hill Council)
99	Miss Natalia Newling
100	Mr Tony Coote (Hunters Hill Trust)
101	Cr Peter Woods (Local Government Association of NSW)
102	Confidential
103	Ms Pamela Heale
104	Ms Jennifer Walke (Gladesville Public School)
105	Mr Ray Rauscher (Sustainable Urban Research (SUR))

106 Ms Catherine Chan

107 Ms Juile Chestnut

108 Ms Clover Moore MP (Independent Member for Bligh)

109 Ms Pam Mort (Wilkins Public School P&C Association)

110 Ms Annette Griggs (Leichhardt Council)

111 Ms Kathy Greer (Gladesville Public School)

112 Ms Narelle Penrose

113 Ms Sandra Conte

Petition received from Ms Jeni Mulvey (Erskineville Public School P&C) –

Mr Sean Bryant	Mr Stephen Ryan	Lee Manning
Ms Bette O'Brien	Ms Phoebe Masso	Mr Mick Fardell
Mr Tim Mackay	Mr Nathan Ferguson	Mr John Sheen
Mr Trevor Hal	Mr Chris McGuinness	Mr Viktor Desovski
Ms Jenny-Lee Heylen	Ms Carly Leonard	Mr Iain Scott
Hadi Assanteh	Ms Janine McGlynn	Mr Graeme Trwein
Mr Paul Brooks	Ms Rachael Caldert	Mr Sean Dugan
Cadence Brown	Ms Kylie Kiem	Ms Jane Turner
Mr Scott Keogh	Mr Jonathan Gavin	K Haywood
C.A. Noble	Ms Nicole Winkler	Mr James Shaw
Mr Ian Dunn	Mr David Hampson	Ms Kara Gabbet
Ms Annette Wade	Kwan Puriyapan	Ms Joan Calinna
Ms Jenny Wells	Mr Alex Wissif	Mr Matthew Larnach
Ms Deborah Hawkins	Mr Russel Skyes	Ms Jane Giuliano
Taulina Fustitu'a	Mr Alan Gribben	Mr Les Wright
B.J. Bamben	Ms Nicole Peacocke	Mr Mike Studman
Ms Jane Bullen	Ms Andrea Myles	Mr Roman Wolozynski
Mr Eric Parker	Mr Matthew Bouh	Mr Robert Vickerstaff
Ms Jenny Woods	Ms Aref Diab	Ms Nicole Wood
Mr James Woods	Mr Ali Diab	Mr Bruce Cook
Ma Kim Hyeyoung	Mr Grant Nevell	Ms Karina Waddell
Ms Jeni Mulvey	Ms Vy Nguyen	Ms Tammy Afrika
Ms Victoria Read	Dr Ross Heisey	Ms Edwina Searle
Ms Carol Warrener	Mr Luke Sloane	Ms Julie Grant
Mr David Osland	Ms Deny Kirkwood	Ms Jennifer Buck
Ms Michelle King	Ms Sascha Raeburn	Mr Paul Hewitt
Ms Debbie Olsen	Ms Jane Martin	Ms Alexandra Mersdorf
Ms Lisa Tomes	Ms Megan Brennan	Ms Melanie Chong
Chui Vatavalis	Ms Michelle Anderson	Mr Philip Rome
Mr Ian Standen	Mr David Braddon-Mitchell	Mr David Stodart
Mr David Spicer	Ms Michelle Pradie	Mr Iain Kaan
Ms Trish Brownett	Lee Cannon	Ms Katy Foy
Ms Diane Mason	Mr Zachery Marshall-Radcliffe	Ms Sue Portwin
Ms Lynda Hussein	Ms Anna Dorney	Mr Goran Maksimovic
Ms Sandra Higgins	Mr Robert McCathie	W Magle
Ms Jane Robinson	Ms Alicia Doherty	Ms Denise Keogh
Ms Ivy Beadle	Ms Alexandra Siddall	Ms Melissa Keogh
Mr Mark Gardiner	Mr Richard Bell	Mr Elliot Thorn
Mr Colin Redman	Ms Dawn Martin	Ms Danielle de Boehmler
Mr Stephen Thatcher	Ms Michele Wood	Mahesh Roy
Ms Moiree Royston	Mr Barry Brundill	Mr Martin Shew
Ms Claire Sheahan	Ms Anne Goodfellow	Mr Sean Budgie
Mr Paul Andrews	Ms Colleen Sheen	Mr Mark Haines
Ms Natalie Glaser	Mr David Thompson	Mr Glenn McArthur
Dr Tarrin Wills	Ms Narelle Vine	Ms Debra Porch
Ms Suryo Cunningham	Ms Carolyn Kearney	Mr Ian Were
Ms Liz Hurley	Ms Deborah Grisdale	Ms Meredith Quinn
Ms Eva Adams	Ms Peta Morris	Mr Matthew Hollie
Mr Allan Yoush	Ms Christine Miles	Mr John Leatham
Ms Fiona Henderson	Ms Katrina Marshall	Januar Hartanto
Ms Aimee Shooten	Mr Jonathan Boyd	Mr Ivan Kelana
Ms Anna Murray	Mr Damien McCoudden	Mr Stephen Rempel
Mr Andrew Smith	Ms Lilla Smee	Ms Anna Carr
Mr Bradley Holland	Ms Jan Novak	M Husband
Mr George Heasley	Ms Ann Cuddy	Ms Jodie Boaer
Ms Krista Sweetnam	Mr Patrick Zahra	Mr Brandon Ellissi
Sam Murphy	Mr Alan Bell	H Kelly
Sujit Sen	Ms Lorna McKensie	Mr Thomas Duggan
Ms Donna Ross	A.R. Ireland	Mr John Gilbert

Ms Ruth Ellis	Ms Mary Georgiou	Mr Alan Finn
Mr Andrew Jones	Mr Luke Gindele	Cale Sutherland
Mr Mark Thomas	Tasha	Mr Dave Graham
Mr David McGuigen	Ms Ashleigh Chadwick	Mr Aaron Gearry
Mr Mark Rivas	Ms Jane Newbery	Mr Carl McGann
Ms Vikki Szabades	Ms Maree Kelly	Ms Lingyin Tang
Ms Fiona Livermore	Ms Laraine Jones	Ms Emma Grenard
Mr John Tierney	Ms Jacqui Spelding	Ms Soula Panos
Ms Georgina Whallin	Ms Petra Robinson	Mr Tom Panos
Mr Charlie Wallace	Ms Lia Anderson	Ms Mary Wyer
Ms Jacquie Widin	Mr Max Middleton	Mr Ben Dearnley
Ms Sue Pedley	Mr Mark Gardiner	M Brennan
Mr Paul Vincent	Bindie Stewart-Fitzpatrick	Mr Leonard Choice
Ms Evelyn Evearets	Mr Olivier Duvillard	Ms Tara Queenan
Kerina M	Mr Leon Rogon	Ms Patti Harriss
Mr John Lonsdale	Ms Margaret Maguire	Jann Schwansen
Mr Stuart Wilson	Ms Sophie Potter	Ms Jo Bray
S Haridin	Mr Simon LeJeune	Ms Margie Tyrrell-Binning
Mr Elyss McCleary	Ms Sandy Garcia	Mr Neil Fraser
Ms Joan Van Meet	Ms Mary Restrepo	Ms Sarah Tindale
Ms Lisa Thomas	Ms Kate Duggan	Mr Justin Marden
Tecan Richardson	Hieu Nguyen	Ms Cassandra Hunnam
J Lowe	Ms Kate Umphelby	Kynels Van Der Casseyen
Mr Robin Queenan	Ms Michele Leeming	Ms Jane Courtney
Mr Mark Stuhmann	Ms Amanda Logon	Mr Thomas Dunn
Mr Mark Tewfik	Ms Jenni Barnes	Ms Gillian Fuller
Mr John Dale	R Wallen	Mr Peter Robinson
Mr George Holmes	Mr Stephen Robinson	Mr Brad Argent
MS Nicole Roberts	Mr David Hall	Mr Karl Chrsitophorou
Ms Suze English	Ms Maya Mulvey-Santana	Mr Andrew Dennes
Mr Nick Kenyon	Mr Dean Denton-Giles	Mr Mark McPherson
Ms Ann Dombraski	Ms Joanna Watson	S Sigel
Mr James Caldwell	Ms Syreeta Clarke	Ms Bonnie Hayes
Mr Greg Peel	Ms Brenda Ross	A Docce
Ms Megan Bastik	Mr Phil Davis	Mr Andrew Bell
M Smitheringale	Jolau Bates	G.H. Rose
M Downie	J Andrews	Ms Elie Hasbani
Ms Amy Gulficlan	Mrs R Mancell	M Anderson
Mr Scott Burton	Ms Paula Johns	Ms Barbara Rose
A Gilkillen	Mr Adrian Atlims	Ms Louise Rose
Mr Anthony Babicci	Mr Simon Rajonoitnam	Ms Angela Rose
Mr Chrsi Dalley	Ms Deborah Manlin	Mr Michael Rose
MS Robyn Lowe	Mr Joshua Adderton	Ms Lynn Tohovaba
Ms Vicki Dowling	Mr Aidan McSirr	Mr Anthony Barono
Ms Jacqueline West	Ms Rebekah Amery	Ms Megan Barono
C May	L Carter-Taylor	Keiojy Babkjan
Mr Shane Winmill	Ms Lynette Ryan	Mr Kirsty Mulholland
M Piga	Ms Caitlin Bell	Ms Catherine Anderson
Ms Corinne Grant	Ms Louise Banks	Mr Ryan Jounson
Ms Kirsten Berridge	Mr Norm Taylor	Mr Osama Moussara
Socokko Guiccatore	Mr Christian May	Mr David Musgrave
Ms Amber Moxey	Mr John Berwick	Ms Fiona Robards
Jaun Fuller	A Chapman	Ms Katrina Irvine
Ms Vanna Lockwood	Ms Jemima Wood	Mr Matthew Day
Mr Caleb Stuart	Ms Lola Stow	Ms Dione Barrett
Ms Lynn Kelly	Ms Tracey Crawlour	Q Duong Tiu
Mr Steve Mesley	Benison Kilby	Ms Josephine Lambert
Ms Anna Kirk	Ms Kris Worthington	Mr Lawrence Macefield
Ms Lori Steel	Mr Luis Pacheco	Ms Ingrid Mills

Dr Justin Blows	Mr David Osland	Ms Jennifer Buck
Dr Stephanie Blows	Ms Debbie Olsen	Ms Alexandra Mersdorf
Mr Alastair Lyall	Chui Vatavalis	Mr Philip Rome
Mr Rod Stennard	Mr David Spicer	Mr Iain Kaan
P Ravens	Ms Diane Mason	Ms Sue Portwin
Ms Deborah Rozea	Ms Sandra Higgins	W Magle
Mr Alexander Micallef	Ms Ivy Beadle	Ms Melissa Keogh
Mr Bret Williams	Mr Colin Redman	Ms Danielle de Boehmler
Ms Cherie King	Ms Moiree Royston	Mr Martin Shew
Mr Barry Cant	Mr Paul Andrews	Mr Mark Haines
Ms Eleanor Gibbs	Dr Tarrin Wills	Ms Debra Porch
Ms Jo'an Papadopoulos	Ms Liz Hurley	Ms Meredith Quinn
Ms Eva Papadopoulos	Mr Allan Yoush	Mr John Leatham
Mr Lars Lohmann	Ms Aimee Shooten	Mr Ivan Kelana
Mr Peter Martin	Mr Andrew Smith	Ms Anna Carr
Mr Theo Beal	Mr George Heasley	Ms Jodie Boaer
D Hawurrson	Sam Murphy	H Kelly
Mr Peter McMahan	Ms Donna Ross	Mr John Gilberg
Mr Stuart McQueen	Ms Phoebe Masso	Mr Andrew Jones
Ms Catherine Dicker	Mr Chris McGuinness	Mr David McGuigen
V Vomieno	Ms Janine McGlynn	Ms Vikki Szabades
Mr David Mendieta	Ms Kylie Kiem	Mr John Tierney
Mr John Conway	Ms Nicole Winkler	Mr Charlie Wallace
Mr David Curtis	Kwan Puriyapan	Ms Sue Pedley
Ms Tracie Gregory	Mr Russel Skyes	Ms Evelyn Evearets
Ms Kara Matthews	Ms Nicole Peacocke	Mr John Lonsdale
Ms Trudi Fletcher	Mr Matthew Bouh	S Haridin
Mr Brett Lepine	Mr Ali Diab	Ms Joan Van Meet
Ms Kim Selling	Ms Vy Nguyen	Tecan Richardson
Ms Donna Brett	Mr Luke Sloane	Mr Robin Queenan
Mr John Bass	Ms Sascha Raeburn	Mr Mark Tewfik
Ms Helen Courtalis	Ms Megan Brennan	Mr George Holmes
Mrs M Dudgeon	Mr David Braddon-Mitchell	Ms Suze English
Ms Mavis Parker	Lee Cannon	Ms Ann Dombraski
Mr Stanley Johnson	Ms Anna Dorney	Mr Greg Peel
Ms Tracey Fortune	Ms Alicia Doherty	M Smitheringale
Mr Ronald Peisley	Mr Richard Bell	Ms Amy Gulficlan
Mr Scott Armstrong	Ms Michele Wood	A Gilkillen
Mr E.S. Devine	Ms Anne Goodfellow	Mr Chrsi Dalley
Mr Dean McManus	Mr David Thompson	Ms Vicki Dowling
Ms Louise Coutts	Ms Carolyn Kearney	C May
Ms Wendy Williams	Ms Peta Morris	M Piga
D.N. Karey	Ms Katrina Marshall	Ms Kirsten Berridge
Mrs Lori Schreuder	Mr Damien McCoudden	Ms Amber Moxey
Mr Blair Frendn	Ms Jan Novak	Ms Vanna Lockwood
Ms Debra Phillips	Mr Patrick Zahra	Ms Lynn Kelly
Ms Jacqueline Ohlin	Ms Lorna McKensie	Ms Anna Kirk
Mr Sean Bryant	Lee Manning	Ms Mary Georgiou
Mr Tim Mackay	Mr John Sheen	Tasha
Ms Jenny-Lee Heylen	Mr Iain Scott	Ms Jane Newbery
Mr Paul Brooks	Mr Sean Dugan	Ms Laraine Jones
Mr Scott Keogh	K Haywood	Ms Petra Robinson
Mr Ian Dunn	Ms Kara Gabbet	Mr Max Middleton
Ms Jenny Wells	Mr Matthew Larnach	Bindie Stewart-Fitzpatricle
Taulina Fustitu'a	Mr Les Wright	Mr Leon Rogon
Ms Jane Bullen	Mr Roman Wolozynski	Ms Sophie Potter
Ms Jenny Woods	Ms Nicole Wood	Ms Sandy Garcia
Ma Kim Hyeyoung	Ms Karina Waddell	Ms Kate Duggan
Ms Victoria Read	Ms Edwina Searle	Ms Kate Umphelby

Ms Amanda Logon	M Anderson
R Wallen	Ms Louise Rose
Mr David Hall	Mr Michael Rose
Mr Dean Denton-Giles	Mr Anthony Barono
Ms Syreeta Clarke	Keiojy Babkjan
Mr Phil Davis	Ms Catherine Anderson
J Andrews	Mr Osama Moussara
Ms Paula Johns	Ms Fiona Robards
Mr Simon Rajonoinam	Mr Matthew Day
Mr Joshua Adderton	Q Duong Tiu
Ms Rebekah Amery	Mr Lawrence Macefield
Ms Lynette Ryan	Dr Justin Blows
Ms Louise Banks	Mr Alastair Lyall
Mr Christian May	P Ravens
A Chapman	Mr Alexander Micallef
Ms Lola Stow	Ms Cherie King
Benison Kilby	Ms Eleanor Gibbs
Mr Luis Pacheco	Ms Eva Papadopoulas
Cale Sutherland	Mr Peter Martin
Mr Aaron Gearry	D Hawurrson
Ms Lingyin Tang	Mr Stuart McQueen
Ms Soula Panos	V Vomieno
Ms Mary Wyer	Mr John Conway
M Brennan	Ms Tracie Gregory
Ms Tara Queenan	Ms Trudi Fletcher
Jann Schwansen	Ms Kim Selling
Ms Margie Tyrrell-Binning	Mr John Bass
Ms Sarah Tindale	Mrs M Dudgeon
Ms Cassandra Hunnam	Mr Stanley Johnson
Ms Jane Courtney	Mr Ronald Peisley
Ms Gillian Fuller	Mr E.S. Devine
Mr Brad Argent	Ms Louise Coutts
Mr Andrew Dennes	D.N. Karey
S Sigel	Mr Blair Frendn
A Docce	Ms Jacqueline Ohlin
G.H. Rose	

Appendix 5

Witnesses

Witnesses

Wednesday 29 May 2002

Room 814/815, Parliament House

Dr Ken Boston

Director General

Department of Education and Training

Dr Alan Laughlin

Deputy Director General

Department of Education and Training

Mr John Burkhardt

General Manager Properties

Department of Education and Training

Mr Michael Waterhouse

Director Legal Services

Department of Education and Training

Mr Vernon Dalton

Chair

Inner City Schools Closure Review Committee

Professor Ian Burnley

Professor in Geography

University of NSW

Ms Bev Baker

President

Federation of NSW Parents and Teachers

Ms Maree O'Halloran

Senior Vice President

NSW Teachers Federation

Friday 31 May 2002 – am

Hunters Hill Town Hall

Ms Kathy Prokhovnik

President

Hunters Hill High School P&C

Ms Ros Jenner

Teacher

Hunters Hill High School

Ms Susan Hoopman

Chair

Defenders of Hunters Hill High School

Mr Bruce Lucas

Mayor

Municipality of Hunters Hill

Dr Nicholas Parr

Demographer

Macquarie University

Ms Judith Felton

Principal

Hunters Hill High School

Friday 31 May 2002 – pm

Room 814/815, Parliament House

Ms Jeni Mulvey

President

Erskineville P&C

Mr John Fowler

Mayor

South Sydney Council

Ms Sharon Campisi

Children's Services Co-ordinator

Ms Debbie Coulter	<i>South Sydney Council</i> Redfern-Waterloo Project Manager <i>South Sydney Council</i>
Ms Fioni Stavert	Area Representative <i>Inner City Teachers Association</i>
Ms Margaret Young	Director <i>Lady Gowrie Child Care Centre</i>
Ms Gai O'Neill	Principal <i>Erskineville Primary School</i>
Ms Jenny Munroe	President <i>Redfern Primary School P&C</i>
Ms Dianne Butland	Secretary <i>Redfern Primary School P&C</i>
Mr John Benton	Principal <i>Redfern Public School</i>
Rev John McIntyre	Representative <i>Redfern Primary School P&C</i>

Friday 7 June 2002**Room 814/815, Parliament House**

Ms Jeni Mulvey	President <i>Erskineville P&C</i>
Mr Peter Phibbs	Demographer <i>University of Sydney</i>
Dr Ken Boston	Director General <i>Department of Education and Training</i>
Dr Alan Laughlin	Deputy Director General <i>Department of Education and Training</i>
Mr John Burkhardt	General Manager Properties <i>Department of Education and Training</i>
Mr Michael Waterhouse	Director Legal Services <i>Department of Education and Training</i>

Participants in the Public Forum held on Friday 31 May 2002 at Hunters Hill Town Hall

Mr Phillip Jenkyn	Ms Anne Mckeon
Mr Andrew Jackson	Mr Stephen Nemeth
Ms Alysonn Ryves	Ms Diane Turner
Student A	Student B
Ms Mary Pipes	Ms Brierley Newton
Student C	Mr Steffan Nemeth
Student D	Student E

Appendix 6

Tabled Documents

Tabled Documents

Wednesday 29 May 2002

Dr Alan Laughlin

Department of Education and Training

Overhead Presentation

Ms Maree O'Halloran

NSW Teachers Federation

Teachers Federation submission to the Building the Future Inquiry

Friday 31 May 2002

Ms Jeni Mulvey

Erskineville Public School P&C

2 maps showing areas of Erskineville's drawing area

Letter from Jeni Mulvey to NSW Ombudsman regarding FOI application to Department

Letter to Department of Education seeking review of the decision on FOI application, and the Department's reply

Ms Debbie Coulter

South Sydney Council

School non-attendance rates in LGA areas

Friday 7 June 2002

Dr Alan Laughlin

Department of Education and Training

Letter from the Principal of Newtown Public School regarding proposals to amalgamate with Erskineville Public School

Paper: Response to Issues

Appendix 7

Answers to Questions on Notice

Answers to Questions on Notice

The Hon Patricia Forsythe MLC asked the Deputy Director-General of the Department of Education, Dr Alan Laughlin on 29 May 2002—

1. In relation to the data presented in the overhead presentation to the Committee and provided in the document (yellow cover) and the graph showing participation in Government schooling for the five LGAs:
 - a) How many selective School places in 2001 were in those five LGAs?
 - b) What number of students in 2000 and 2001 who attended one of the Government Primary schools enrolled in 2001 and 2002 in a selective high school?

Answer:

- a) There were no academically selective high schools in the five LGAs (Ryde, Lane Cove, Hunters Hill, Drummoyne and Leichhardt) in 2002.
- b) In 2001 150 students from primary schools (Year 6 2000) in the five LGAs enrolled in academically selective high schools. In 2002 195 students from primary schools (Year 6 2001) in the five LGAs enrolled in academically selective high schools.

The Hon Patricia Forsythe MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Education, Dr Ken Boston on 29 May 2002—

2. Page 35 of the Department's Submission to the Committee says that, "proposals which maintained all schools as they were....were not accepted."
 - a) How many proposals were in this category?
 - b) Were these proposals forwarded to the School Closures Review Committee?

Answer:

- a) All submissions and correspondence were read and considered.
 - b) Yes.
3. In relation to the valuations provided to the Committee:
 - a) On what date were these valuations sought?
 - b) On what date were they provided to the Department?
 - c) Who undertook the valuations?
 - d) Was only one valuation for each property sought?
 - e) What instructions were given to the valuer providing the valuation?

Answer:

- a) Valuations were sought during 2000 and 2001.
 - b) Valuations were provided to the Department during 2000 and 2001.
 - c) The State Valuations Office
 - d) Yes.
 - e) To provide an indication of the value of the properties.
4. What is the capacity and current enrolment figures for:
- a) Newtown Performing Arts High School?
 - b) Newtown Public School?
 - c) Newtown North Public School?

Answer:

- a) Newtown Performing Arts High School has permanent accommodation capacity for 860 students and had 789 students in Term 1, 2002.
- b) Newtown Public School has permanent accommodation capacity for 203 students and had 205 students in Term 1, 2002. Newtown has access to a further 30 places in 2003 through the re-instatement of a former Dental Health Clinic as a classroom.
- c) Newtown North Public School has a permanent accommodation capacity for 230 students and had 212 students in Term 1, 2002.

The Hon Patricia Forsythe MLC asked the General Manager Properties, Department of Education, Mr John Burkhardt on 29 May 2002-

5. Comments were made by Mr David Rowland, then General Manager of Properties, to the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Public Works in 1997 regarding urban regeneration. Can you give the Committee an assurance that, in the time since 1997, the department is in a position to have good evidence so it can make decisions on this?

Answer:

Yes.

The impact of urban regeneration is revealing patterns in 2001/2 that were not present in 1997.

In the inner Sydney area, significant higher density residential developments have not generally led to higher school enrolments in schools. In many instances the numbers of students generated from these higher density developments are lower than the numbers of students generated from older separate houses that they replace or there are more dominant demographic changes occurring within the area. Consequently, higher density developments have generated such low numbers of students that they have tended to moderate declining enrolments rather than lead to increasing enrolments.

The Hon Dr Peter Wong MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Education, Dr Ken Boston on 29 May 2002—

6. In relation to your visit to Hunters Hill High School on 12 October 2000, the day that the school's hall burnt down:
- Can you confirm that on that day you said to Hunters Hill High School staff that the school hall would be rebuilt?
 - When was the decision made that the school hall would not be rebuilt?
 - What was the reason for the decision that the hall would not be rebuilt?
 - Who made the decision not to rebuild the hall?

Answer:

- I indicated that Properties people would visit the site immediately, assess the situation, and look at the question of replacement.
 - The decision not to rebuild the hall was a consequence of the decision to close Hunters Hill High School.
 - Refer to b) above.
 - Refer to b) above.
7. In the previous Budget Estimates Committee meeting in which you were present, Mr Chair, the then Minister respectively denied that there was a drop in public school enrolments. My question is, since then, when did such a drop happen, when did it reach crisis point and when did you decide to have a *Building the Future* plan?

Answer:

The former Minister, the Hon John Aquilina MP, made the following statement to the Budget Estimates Committee on Friday 22 June 2001:

'In recent times there has been a drop, particularly in the secondary school area, but I am equally confident that, with some of the strategies that are being adopted, particularly in the inner-city district, as well as the campaign that is being conducted, we will see not so much an increase in enrolments but we will certainly be able to stop the decline to the degree that it has been in recent times.'

In 2001 enrolments in Government primary schools decreased by approximately 0.6 per cent and enrolments in secondary schools decreased by approximately 1.05 per cent state-wide, based on the Department's February census figures.

In 2002 primary school enrolments decreased by approximately 0.8 per cent while enrolments in secondary schools increased by approximately 0.6 per cent.

Enrolments in Government comprehensive co-educational secondary schools across inner Sydney declined from around 16,000 in 1985 to around 7,000 at the beginning of 2001. A decline of approximately 59 per cent over that period.

Consideration of issues leading to the *Building the Future* proposal commenced in 2000.

The Hon Peter Primrose MLC asked the Mayor of the Municipality of Hunters Hill, Clr Bruce Lucas on 31 May 2002 –

8. Could you briefly outline what proposals council has for increased medium or high density developments in your council area to accommodate the increased population projections, not including the Hunters Hill High School site?

Answer:

Councils strategy was predicated on population projections from ABS and Planning NSW and specifically targeted increasing housing densities on the three major public transport routes in the Municipality – Victoria Road, Pittwater Road and Ryde Road.

The densities and controls proposed for the strategy are working with, numerous new residential flat developments occurring in all three locations.

It is therefore unlikely that any future targets cannot be met and the Hunters Hill High School site was at no time factored into Councils calculations, as land being needed for development to satisfy population projections.

In fact the opposite position was taken. It is more important and essential that retention of a local neighbourhood school occurs in the forward planning process, and the following extract from the Charter for New Urbanism is the most relevant argument.

“The Neighbourhood

The district and the corridor

7. Concentrations of civic, institutional, and commercial activity should be embedded in neighbourhoods and districts, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk to bicycle to them”.

The long-term future of education in our society should not be wholly based on the principles of economic rationalism, but also include acceptance of the central role that schools play in the development of communities, large or small, new or old.

The residential housing strategy and forward planning principles of Hunters Hill Council support these views.

The Hon Patricia Forsythe MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Education, Dr Ken Boston on 7 June 2002 –

9. When was the decision taken to excise Marrickville and Dulwich High School from the loan process applying to schools in the *Building the Future* plan – as advised to the Committee on Friday 7 June?
- a) Who took this decision?

Answer:

No decision was taken to excise the schools as they had not been included.

- a) Not applicable.
10. In relation to Mr Waterhouse's answer on Friday 7 June about no emails or other files in relation to Hunters Hill High being supplied that the email system was changed, please advise:
- a) The date on which this occurred and
 - b) Whether emails are stored in a central Departmental system or has the Department disposed of them?

Answer:

Mr Waterhouse's answer referred to a question concerning Mr Burkhardt. Mr Burkhardt's email was converted from GroupWise to Microsoft Outlook in December 2001. Since that date regular updates to the email software have been made.

Not all emails are stored. Each department officer is responsible for retaining or deleting emails they send and/or receive in accordance with the Department's records management policy.

11. In early 2000, PlanningNSW reviewed the DET (Yusef) demographic study as part of the Government's asset disposal procedures.
- a) What advice did the Department give PlanningNSW about errors in the study?
 - b) Did the Department advise PlanningNSW that Year 7 enrolments and total enrolments in 2002 were higher than predicted in the Yusuf study?

Answer:

- a) The Department is not aware of any errors in the study.
 - b) No advice was sought.
12. Where in the *Education Act* or the Department's policies is the process that was followed allowed for, i.e. the release of the *Building the Future* document followed by a consultation process?
- a) Is this contrary to the process outlined in the 'Draft Policy and Procedures for School Closures and Rationalisation 1994'?
 - b) Was this draft policy adopted by DET? If so, when? Is it still current? If so, please supply it to the inquiry.

Answer:

The Department followed a consultation procedure designed specifically for the assessment of inner city schools. This included a ten week consultation period.

No.

a) It was not adopted.

13. An FOI response to Hunters Hill High School from PlanningNSW indicates that planning that took place in 2002 indicates that there will be between 3,000 and 5,000 residents living on the Gladesville Hospital site on the southern side of Victoria Road. This is in addition to the extensive development occurring on the old hospital site on the northern side.

a) What advice from PlanningNSW did the Department have on the development of the Southern side of Victoria road before the proposal was announced?

b) Where was this impending development considered in the BTF proposal?

Answer:

a) The Department was aware of the possible development of the Gladesville Hospital site, on the southern side of Victoria Road, through the Metropolitan Urban Development consultations undertaken by PlanningNSW.

Before the *Building the Future* draft proposal was announced and during the 2000 round of consultations PlanningNSW advised under *Comments (key constraints/significant issues)* "Imminent master plan for development of Gladesville Hospital site (Southern Campus)."

Following the announcement of the *Building the Future* proposal and during the 2001 round of consultations PlanningNSW advised under *Comments (key constraints/significant issues)*: "Ongoing speculation regarding development of the Gladesville Hospital site."

b) The possible development of Gladesville Hospital was known and considered amongst all possible developments throughout the inner Sydney area. The former Gladesville Hospital, undeveloped southern site, Hunters Hill, is listed as a Major Residential Project and shown on Map 2 of the Yusuf and Caspersonn report on Hunters Hill High School and discussed on page 40 of that report.

14. What date did the Department first seek the demographic figures that it used in the *Building the Future* Report?

Answer:

The Department annually reviews and projects enrolments in every school.

The Hon Don Harwin MLC asked the Director-General of the Department of Education, Dr Ken Boston on 7 June 2002-

15. Given the clear community of interest between the communities of Newtown and Erskineville, why wasn't the future of Erskineville Public School taken into account alongside North Newtown, Newtown and Camdensville Public Schools?

Answer:

An assessment of where students attending Erskineville Public School live clearly indicates that the majority of students lived on the eastern side of the railway line and closer to the proposed Alexandria Park Community School site than to either Newtown, Newtown North or

Camdenville Public Schools. In fact, in 2001, only two students lived on the western side of the railway line.

Students currently enrolled at Erskineville Public School have the opportunity to enrol in the public school of their choice, including Newtown, Newtown North and Camdenville in 2003, should they so wish.

The President of the Erskineville Parents and Citizens' Association is currently working with the District Superintendent Port Jackson in developing new primary school boundaries for the Newtown and Erskineville areas in the best interest of students currently attending Erskineville Public School.

16. Please advise what respective weight was given to the following factors in constructing the *Building the Future* proposal:
- educational outcomes of the affected schools,
 - declining enrolments in affected schools, demographic analysis estimating future enrolments, and
 - valuations of what might be realised if affected schools were sold.

Answer:

The primary consideration in the development of the *Building the Future* proposal was to arrest declining Government school enrolments across inner Sydney and the impact of that decline on curriculum opportunity, depth of study and consequently students learning outcomes.

The Department on page 2 of its submission to the Committee stated:

'Residualisation can impact on the quality of teaching. Fewer enrolments means loss of teaching staff and consequently loss of expertise, fewer opportunities to teach more difficult courses, increased pressure through trying to meet the same community expectations with fewer staff, and reduced face-to-face teaching opportunities. This situation contributes further to the deterioration of academic outcomes.'

With respect to the valuation of Department sites, Mr John Burkhardt is recorded in the Report of Proceedings before General Purpose Standing Committee No 1 on 29 May 2002 as saying:

'let me assure you that valuations did not [have an impact on the Department's decision of what schools should close], and from what you have seen in the presentation from Dr Laughlin, the issue around education and dramatic decline were the issues that drove the process. The seeking of valuations was a part of the exercise in terms of determining the availability of funds that could be reinvested in those parts of the inner city that were being redeveloped.' (p.7)

The Hon Patricia Forsythe MLC asked the Chair of the Schools Closure Review Committee, Mr Vernon Dalton

Please provide details of your previous consultancy work for the Department.

Answer:

I am self-employed as a Management and Dispute Resolution Consultant. Since 1995 I have undertaken numerous projects for private, State Government and Local Government organisations and authorities. I am unable to provide any information beyond that on the basis that my personal and business arrangements are commercial and in confidence.

**There were also questions taken on notice during the Department's *in-camera* evidence. The answers were also provided *in-camera*.

Appendix 8

Statement of Dissent

Statement of Dissent

Statement of Dissent

By

Jan Burnswoods MLC

Henry Tsang MLC

Peter Primrose MLC

Enrolments in government primary and high schools in inner Sydney have shown a decline of approximately 40% over the past two decades.

This is the result of a variety of significant factors, including falling fertility rates, changes in the socio-economic, ethnic and age mix of populations in the area, increasing property prices, a drift to non-government schools especially at the secondary level, and choices made by parents of school-aged children about where they send their children to school. There has been a marked decline in the proportion of parents seeking a comprehensive high school for their children.

It is incumbent on government to apply public education resources in the most appropriate ways possible. The enrolments at Alexandria, Erskineville, Redfern and Waterloo Public Schools fell from 1700 in 1977 to 271 in 2001. Operating numerous small schools in close proximity in the inner city is unlikely to provide the best educational outcomes for students attending those schools, and is wasteful of taxpayers' resources. There is excess capacity in existing school buildings to accommodate projected enrolments for years to come.

The plan to rationalise and restructure inner Sydney high schools was designed to provide a new breadth of curriculum and quality of education for students in schools where the fall in enrolments had seriously weakened the successful functioning and attractiveness of the schools. In particular, co-educational comprehensive high schools had suffered a catastrophic decline in enrolments.

The issue of enrolments cannot be ignored in determining the viability of the educational service provided by a school. The majority report chooses to substantially ignore enrolment issues and misrepresents the demographic studies used to support the restructure of schools.

Quality of education impacts on society as a whole. The majority report focuses on three individual cases of school closures in isolation rather than considering the context of the restructuring of inner Sydney schools as a whole.

It is in the nature of population changes that schools will, from time to time, have to close, despite the pain that closures often bring to local communities.

Growth areas require new schools. Areas where enrolments are in substantial decline need to be re-examined. Unfortunately the committee majority declined to analyse the evidence presented to it in the proper context.

For these reasons we are unable to support the recommendations of the majority.