

MEDIA RELEASE

TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER 1999

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REJECTS SEAFORTH TAFE CLOSURE

The Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC, Chairman of General Purpose Standing Committee No 1, tabled the Committee's *Report on Inquiry into the Proposed Closure of Seaforth TAFE* in the Legislative Council today.

The Committee has recommended that the decision to close Seaforth TAFE in December 1999 not be implemented. In addition, the Committee has recommended that during 2000 the Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE review its decision to close Seaforth TAFE, in light of the findings of the report, and that the review include extensive community consultation.

"The Committee has recommended that Seaforth TAFE remain open in view of its unique qualities and valuable contribution to meeting the needs of over 1,800 students, especially those of mature-aged female students, disabled students, ethnic students and youth at risk" said Rev Fred Nile MLC.

The report is highly critical of the Government's failure to consult with the community prior to the decision to close Seaforth TAFE being taken, and of the fact that all economic analysis justifying the decision was undertaken after the decision had been made and the Committee's inquiry had been announced.

"The lack of consultation has resulted in anger and distress within the Northern Beaches community. Consultation is an essential part of ensuring governments meet the needs of communities. The Minister has failed in his duty to the community in this regard."

"We have recommended that the government adopt the same provisions for closing TAFE establishments as now exist for closing schools – with an 18 month consultation period" said Rev Fred Nile MLC.

The report makes a number of additional recommendations relating to the preservation of the Balgowlah Community Library on the Seaforth TAFE site, disabled access for students at Brookvale TAFE, and the retention of CGE and HSC courses at the Northern Beaches College of TAFE. A complete list of the recommendations is attached.

The report can be viewed on the Committee's website at:
www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/committs/gpurp/gpurp1.html

*For further information and comment please ring the Hon Revd Fred Nile MLC,
Chairman of the Committee, on 02 9230 2132 (ph) / 02 9751 1949 (pager)*

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the *Technical and Further Education Act 1990* be amended to insert provisions similar to section 28 of the *Education Act 1990* in respect of the closure of TAFE establishments.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that, irrespective of the final decision about Seaforth TAFE, the Department create a separate title for the land on which the heritage listed Balgowlah Community Library is located. The Standing Committee further recommends that the Government take all necessary steps to ensure the land and buildings are preserved for continued community use.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE evaluate disabled access at Brookvale, particularly access between Building M and other buildings, with a view to enabling students with a physical disability to move easily between those buildings.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that Seaforth TAFE be recognised as a centre catering for 'youth at risk' amongst school-aged students and continue to offer CGE and HSC courses as appropriate. However, should the Department close Seaforth TAFE, alternative arrangements in a suitable location must be made for 'youth at risk'.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Department undertake to provide both day and evening classes in an HSC program at Northern Beaches College of TAFE in 2000 and beyond. The Committee further recommends the Department undertake to advertise and promote this HSC program in 2000 to maximise enrolments.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the decision to close Seaforth TAFE in December 1999 not be implemented.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that during 2000 the Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE review its decision to close Seaforth TAFE, in light of the findings of this report, and that the review include extensive community consultation.