

**INQUIRY INTO CLOSURE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN NEW  
SOUTH WALES**

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

I originally thought that it would be a waste of time putting in a submission regarding the closure of small schools as our small school is closed and there is little chance of it ever re-opening again. But, my submission may go towards preventing this happening to other small schools in NSW.

My father was one of the original enrolments at Murrami Public School. 4 generations of our family have attended this small school.

I was horrified when I found out that the decision was made to close the school and merge with Whitton, some 14 kilometres away. There had been absolutely no consultation with the community prior to this announcement – absolutely none! Obviously, within the actual school there should have been knowledge of this closure prior to it being made known to the members of the Murrami community who did not have children attending the school. The only time there was a public meeting called was after the decision had been made to close the school. This meeting was held during the day at the school and I attended, as did many other members of the community. During the question time, we were told that there was absolutely no chance of the school not closing, that the decision was made and it was irreversible. We were also told that they had done surveys and there were no extra children in the area who would attend Murrami Public School in years to come. My comment on this was that circumstances change and people come and go all the time, to which I was told in emphatic terms that there were NO more children in the area! However, it is interesting to see that, due to a family readjustment, 2 school aged children have moved into the area in 2015- both of which were totally unexpected, and who are both now attending the merged school. Thus disproving the comment that there were 'no more children'.

Prior to closing, Murrami Public School had approximately 15 or 16 children attending. Whitton had a similar amount, even though it has a much larger village population than Murrami. For a small community, this number has been reached in prior years, and the school remained open and the numbers slowly increased. Numbers will always fluctuate in country areas, but this is no reason to close the school and give up on there ever being enough to support a school. Where was the community consultation to inform people about this prospective amalgamation and why was one school chosen over the other to close? Why was Whitton chosen as the school to amalgamate with – why not Wamoon School? No consultation at all on these matters.

Public Schools are an important hub in small communities. They hold the community together and often are the meeting places for parents and citizens to interact and to meet each other. Murrami School in particular used to hold a Christmas Concert in the local village community hall at the end of every year, where awards were handed out to the children in front of everyone in the community, not just the school members. There was always a concert, followed by the arrival of Santa, and then a generous supper where everyone would talk together. Grandparents and great grandparents would drive out from town to attend this traditional annual event. This is a great loss to our community as such a gathering will now not be possible.

There were other times when the community was also involved in school activities and we would receive notices in our mailboxes to inform us when there was something on at the school that the broader community members were invited to attend. I noticed in the paper this week that a special day was held at the newly merged school in which the principal said that members of the community enjoyed joining in – well, there was no notification letting the community of Murrami know about this, so perhaps he was only referring to the Whitton community only? So, that means that our community is missing out on the interaction with our local children even more.

Many people say that the children receive a better education in a larger school and the being in a one teacher school with 17 children is not beneficial to this. My reply to that is that it depends on the dedication of the teachers as you can get effective and ineffective teachers in any situation. However, in a one teacher school it is rarely just the one teacher who teaches the children. There are always additional staff to cover release times and often teacher's aides for children with special needs. In a normal classroom with only one grade in it, there are several levels of abilities to which the teacher must teach to, so what is the difference between that and the teaching expectations in a small school? I have had personal experience with being a student and also a teacher in small schools, and those schools have seen doctors, architects and teachers produced from their students - so, to say the education is any less in the small school is rubbish. It may require a more dedicated teacher, but they are around.

At the one and only community meeting after the closure of the Murrami School was announced, the Principal was emphatic that every student would have a computer and lots of other devices in the newly merged Whitton Murrami School, and they would not have this in the Murrami School. Well, devices are not the indicator of a good education. They were also promised free uniforms and whatever they wanted – sounded very much like they were being bribed.

The closure of small schools means that there is now no opportunity for the local children to ride or walk to school. Everyone has to go on the bus or be driven to their new school. In an age where people are concerned about the obesity of children, this is certainly not contributing to the fitness of children. They will be sitting for extra lengths of time where otherwise they could be being active. There are also many benefits to the broader community by having a small local school. With the closure of our school, many home owners are now concerned at the value of their homes being decreased because of the lack of a school nearby. This is a disincentive for people to move out of the large towns as education is important to their children. There have also been the benefits of having town water now available to some of the farms nearby to the school. Also the availability of gas to properties surrounding the school would never have been possible if it had not been for the school. There will be no added bonuses for our community any more as there is no school any more. The Murrami School buildings and land still stand intact and being cared for. At the public meeting we were told that the buildings would be moved immediately and even the tennis court would be relocated to the merged school in Whitton. This has not happened. But there is concern in the community that this building and land will become an eyesore just as one other local closed school grounds has become. It was always a very well cared for school and always looked immaculate.

We pay our taxes, and now all we have to show for them are our roads, of which most are local council responsibilities. There is no school, no broadband, no public transport, and no chance of there ever being additional conveniences in our village and surrounding area. It seems that only the big centres count any more.

Murrami Public school would have been 100 years old in 2025. I am certain that if there had been community consultation prior to the decision to close Murrami Public School, then we would be celebrating our local school centenary. Unfortunately it will never be celebrated in our community.