

INQUIRY INTO CLOSURE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Wyangala Dam Parents and Citizens Association
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Partially Confidential

Darren Smith
Chairperson Wyangala Dam Public School P&C

RE: CLOSURE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

To Whom It May Concern:

I write this letter on behalf of the students, parents and faculty of Wyangala Dam Public School, at Wyangala.

Our small school like the ones listed in the terms of reference is facing closure with out to much consultation from the education department or their representatives.

During informal review meetings and during the community consultation meeting to discuss the further provision of education of Wyangala Dam Public School with the area director, [REDACTED], the school community feels that the decision has been / was made prior to these meetings.

During meetings held with the department's director we have not been able to gain clear answer to the question "How many more student enrolments do we need to keep our school open?" Some answers have been a hand full; others have been a bus load, in the next breathe we get, "it is given at the end of the year the school will close", without a clear answer how can we set goals to attract new students to our area.

We feel that our small school is a thorn in the side of the current director and [REDACTED] role in the education department would be easier / more fulfilling if our school was no longer around, maybe it's a number game who knows.

The current Principal, representatives of the community and myself have formed a consultative committee to address the needs of the school and the surrounding area, one thing that has been addressed is the lack of housing that is available to families in the immediate village. After some investigations by the Principal we were informed that the education department owned vacant teacher house that abuts the school property would be able to be rented to a family that wanted to move in to the area, we thought great so action was taken to list the property for rent with a real estate agent in nearby Cowra, during the July school holiday we had a family with four children enquire about renting the house, as this family is friends with one our current attendees the children were looking forward to attending the school just next door, when the real estate agent contacted the department to make sure the house could still to tenanted the department informed the agent that it had been handed back and was not available for rent, this action was carried out just two days after the meeting was held to discuss the future of education at our school.

We acknowledge that with only 5 students attending the school and little hope of having new enrolments in the near future there will be a day when perhaps the school does have to close.

There are a few houses owned in the area by a local company that used to be available to their employees unfortunately for the company most of the employees choose to commute to work from the nearby larger town, leaving their housing empty. This company is endeavouring to have these houses rented out to families with school aged children with the hope that they will enrol in our school, but without a clear and transparent decision being made by the education department our devoted work to save the school might in vein.

If the school does close we feel that it will be the students that will suffer the most from this decision. The nearest school to our village once the local school is closed is in Cowra, which would mean a 50 minute bus ride each morning and afternoon just to gain an education.

To add salt to the wounds an article has appeared in the Daily Telegraph on Monday the 3rd of August 2015 that sets out the incompetency of the current roll out a computer system that has run grossly over budget and way over the time allowed to have the system rolled out, yes we agree that the department needs to keep the computer systems up to date but surely there could have been a better solution.

If only half the amount was used to upgrade the current computer system / program there would have been ample monies in the budget to help our school and those listed in the terms of reference to continue delivering the high standard of education that our small schools have achieved.

Wyangala Dam Public School might be a small school at present in regards to student numbers but it is a dynamic learning environment providing an excellent level of education for its students.

The School also plays an important part in the local community by providing access to computers, fax, email and the internet. (These are not available and / or easily understood by the elderly members of our community). Wyangala Dam Public School is an integral part of this community and we assist and interact with each other in many ways and on many levels. It is a vital link in the Community Chain and the effect of the school closing could be quite devastating for everyone, including the students, staff (who would have to be re-located) and especially the Wyangala Community

All we ask from the department is a fair and transparent review of the school closure policy.

Should you wish to discuss our situation please feel free to contact me on

We as a community look forward to the parliamentary committee's resolve of this situation as soon as possible.

With Regards

Darren Smith
For and on behalf of
Wyangala Dam Public School P&C