

**Submission
No 15**

INQUIRY INTO CLOSURE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Wyangala Country Club Ltd

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7th August 2015

The Director
Select Committee on the Closure of Public Schools
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

To The Director,

RE: Impact on Local School Communities Affected by School Closures

In regards to the possible closure of our local school, Wyangala Dam Public School, on behalf of the Board of Directors of Wyangala Country Club, I would like to bring your attention to a few items for consideration.

While it is true that currently we have a lack of young adults with children in the village surrounding Wyangala Dam Public School, a number of the large farms within 5kms of the village are currently being sub-divided and sold off.

People who are typically purchasing these properties are young adults with school going children who seek an alternative lifestyle to what is now available in the cities. As we all know, the fringe areas of Greater Sydney were once rural but this has rapidly disappeared to be replaced by urban areas in the last decade.

Five or 10 years ago, people purchased these hobby farms with somewhere to escape to on weekends, but now the purchasers are buying with a view to moving here permanently.

With a school nearby that has a low pupil to teacher ratio, it makes it all the more attractive for these young families to enrol their children at Wyangala Dam Public School. With businesses becoming more virtual and staff members working from home, there is not always a need for the parents to commute daily into Cowra, our nearest town at 42kms away at minimum, which means they would need to put their young children on a bus to get to and from school. This is not really an attractive option. It also leaves the children in a school where they need to compete for the attention of the teacher.

While the demographic of the locals in the village surrounding the school is ageing, the school does still provide facilities beneficial to them. Such facilities include, but is not limited to, the availability of computers with someone to assist, facsimile access, email and internet access. Not all elderly people are comfortable enough with computers to have one in their own home and so choose to utilise that which is available to them with assistance provided.

There is a strong connection between Wyangala Dam Public School and Wyangala Country Club in that the Country Club provides a venue for the school children to publicly display their arts and crafts. The children of the school often come to the Country Club with their parents and dine in the Bistro where these works are on display. It's an opportunity for the children to receive recognition from the parents and the wider community on their handiwork.

The school children also benefit greatly from involvement with the sporting sub-clubs in learning new sports from our members, especially from the Fishing Club. On one particular outing, Fishing Club members spent time at Wyangala Dam teaching the children how to fish, how to identify their catch and also about preservation.

Every six weeks Wyangala Dam Public School P&C holds a market night meat raffle at the Country Club that helps raise funds for the school. These nights are attended by locals and visitors alike who want to know their money is going to a good cause. The school children also hold a stall at our annual Fireworks night in June, further creating an outlet for additional fundraising and opportunities for the children to learn outside the classroom.

In closing, it is not only the children currently at the school who will be impacted by any potential closure, but new young families looking to move out here, and those already living in the village who utilise the facilities of the school. A lack of new people coming into the area has a ripple effect on the Country Club, which employs locals. A downturn in locals means less people coming in regularly, which ultimately means the Club will no longer be a viable business. This also leaves no local venue for those guests visiting Wyangala Waters Holiday Park.

We look forward to hearing back from the committee on the procedures, policies and decision making process surrounding the possible closure of our precious school.

Yours Sincerely,

Robert Davis
President & Honorary Secretary
Wyangala Country Club

For and on behalf of The Board of Directors