

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

INQUIRY INTO THE REMOVAL OF YEAR 11 AND 12 COURSES AT DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS

Christopher John BOYLAND (Principal, Lake Grace District High School)
Bradley WATSON (Chairperson Lake Grace District High School Board)

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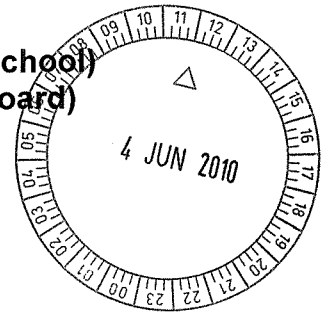
Terms of Reference:

a) the decision making process and rationale behind the decision;

It is obvious that the initial decision made to remove Year 11 and 12 courses from District High Schools was made on economic grounds. The decision to remove these courses seems to be part of the cuts made to meet the 3% efficiency measures expected from each Government Department. Whilst the decision may be sound on economic grounds, it does not seem to be based on the educational and welfare needs of students in some or all of the District High Schools affected.

When the decision was first mooted, schools were informed that they would be able to present their individual cases, this information would be taken into account and there would be consultation before the final decision was made. The Principal wrote three letters to the District Director and one to an Executive Director explaining the special circumstances of students at Lake Grace District High School. These included Family, Financial and Social reasons why students could not attend other schools. Lake Grace District High School is 140 km from the nearest Senior High School that offers Year 11 and 12 courses and there is no daily bus service, meaning the students would have to leave home, or the families would need to relocate, for them to attend this school. There was no consultation apart from these submissions. The school was informed late in 2009, in a letter from the District Director, that in 2010, it would be supported for Year 12 students but not for Year 11 students. In 2011 and beyond, the school would receive no support for any Year 11 or 12 students. If the school chose to enrol Year 11 or 12 students, support for them would have to come from the normal school staffing allocation.

The administration of the school made the decision to enrol seven students, five in Year 11 and two in Year 12. The students are also enrolled at the School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE), from which they get the majority of their instruction. Lake Grace District High School provides a room for the students, a computer each, a dedicated telephone line to SIDE, supervision and tutoring for the students in their subjects. Two of the students also attend some of our Vocational courses. School staff members also invigilate tests and examinations and ensure that assignments



are submitted on time. The school gets minimal staffing allocation for these services, which the students and their parents see as necessary support.

b) the effect of the decision on the state budget, the affected students and communities;

While the state budget may gain from the decision, the impact on the students has been minimal, while the impact on the school has been significant. Because the school enrolled these students, with minimal Department of Education support, the students have been able to continue their education as they and their families want. The school has had to use its limited staffing resources to provide the support and supervision for the students. This has impacted on the curriculum that can be offered to the other students at the school. The community has not been greatly affected as the students are still in the school.

The students who wanted to be enrolled at Lake Grace District High School in 2010, and their families either did not want to, or could not leave the town to continue their education. Of the seven Year 11 and 12 students who have enrolled at the school in 2010, one did not wish to leave her family. She could have studied through SIDE at home on the farm, but this would have severely limited her contact with her peers. Another student had been badly bullied at other schools and could not cope with being separated from his parents or be comfortable in a larger school. The remaining five students are children of 457 Visa workers. These workers do not receive Isolated Students' Allowances and therefore could not if they wanted to, send their children to a boarding facility. Two of these families have two students each in Years 11 and 12. The families had been in Australia for less than twelve months, and to separate these students from their families could have been catastrophic. Because of the rules governing 457 Visa workers, these families were not allowed to leave the town to find work in a larger regional town where Year 11 and 12 courses are offered at the local school. Thus the school's decision to enrol these students.

While the community has not been affected by the Department of Education's decision, if the school had not enrolled these students, some of the families or parts of the families would have been forced to leave the town thus taking people out of the community and out of Lake Grace District High School. This would have made the school less viable and lessened the width of the curriculum it could offer.

c) the adequacy, cost effectiveness and social impact of the educational alternatives proposed;

As there are no daily school buses to a town with a Senior High School, the Department of Education's educational alternatives for these students were to:

- study through the School of Isolated and Distance Education at home, or
- enrol in a Senior High School that offered Year 11 and 12 courses.

While these two alternatives seem adequate they do not meet the needs of the students described above.

While the alternatives may seem cost effective, once the payment to parents of Isolated Students Allowances is taken into account, there would appear to be no monetary savings. The Isolated Students' allowance is almost equivalent to the Curriculum Access allocation given to schools for these students.

The social impact of the alternatives proposed could be significant. When students and or families leave small country towns, there is an economic impact as well as a social impact. The smaller population means less children in the town's school and sporting teams as well as less adults in the adult sporting clubs and teams. There are also less people supporting local businesses and this affects the amenities available in the town. The social impact of this decision adds to the drain of the population from isolated country towns like Lake Grace, where District High Schools are located

- and**
d) Any other relevant matter.

Nothing.

Appearance before the committee;


I, Christopher John Boyland, Principal of Lake Grace District High school would be happy to appear before the committee.

Signed by:

Bradley Watson, Chairperson, Lake Grace District High School Board

 _____ Date 31/5/2010

Christopher John Boyland, Principal, Lake Grace District High School

 _____ Date 31/05/2010