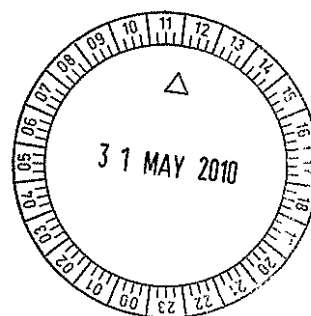
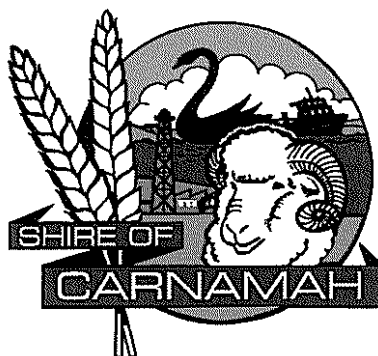


PUBLIC

SUBMISSION

to the

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

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

Submission lodged by: WILLIAM THOMAS ATKINSON

on behalf of:

THE SHIRE OF CARNAMAH

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BACKGROUND

The Carnamah District High School has a large geographical catchment area drawing high school students from Carnamah, Eneabba, Coorow and Three Springs. Prior to the *Carpenter Government's* decision that all students were required to attend school to Year 12 level, a number of students completed their education at the Carnamah District High School in Year 10 and entered the workforce.

Since the requirement for students to complete schooling to year 12, the *Vocational Educational Training (VET)* program has been successfully implemented at the Carnamah District High School. This has been an outstanding success as it has allowed students to attend school whilst transitioning into the workforce. It has provided non TEE students the opportunity to experience direct exposure to the workplace and has allowed them to gain confidence, skills and an appreciation of career and further education options.

The VET program also plays an important role in maintaining and enhancing the social and economic fabric of towns such as Carnamah and this is demonstrated in the submission.

The Carnamah Shire Council is of the strong belief that the retention of the VET program is essential to the wellbeing of the participating students, their families, employers and the social capital of Carnamah and surrounding towns.

STATEMENT OF CLAIMS ADDRESSING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE.

(a) The decision making process and rationale behind the decision

It is understood that the rationale behind the proposal to discontinue the VET program in schools such as Carnamah includes factors such as the costs in resourcing the program; students being given better opportunities to attend centres where more options might be available to them and that there would be cost savings in rationalising the program to fewer centres.

It is assumed that if the VET program was discontinued in Carnamah that the program would be delivered from Morawa.

This submission questions the validity of the rationale as it applies to withdrawing the VET program from Carnamah.

(b) The effect of the decision on the State budget, the affected students and communities

Effect on State budget:

It is the Shire's understanding that the VET program in Carnamah does not require a large investment by the State Government. It requires only between 1.5 and 2.5 teachers to administer the program.

There are currently 17 students participating in the program in Carnamah. If the program was discontinued in Carnamah in favour of Morawa, then the financial impact to the State Government would include not only the cost of resourcing the Morawa District High School with additional staff to manage the increased numbers of participants at that location, but the cost of transporting the students from Carnamah to Morawa (95 kilometres each way) each day for up to 5 days per week, depending on how the program was structured. This alternative would clearly be a much more expensive option than retaining the VET program in Carnamah and thus, would have an adverse impact on the State budget, over and above its current financial obligation.

Effect on students (and their families)

Given that Carnamah VET participants are drawn from places as far afield as Eneabba (69km), Coorow (27km) and Three Springs (23km) and that some families with VET students live some distance from those towns, several students would have travel up to an hour each way to Carnamah each day and then another hour each way to Morawa (Although it is accepted that students from Three Springs would be able to travel directly to Morawa without having to travel to Carnamah first). Hence, some students would be faced with between three and four hours travelling time each day to access a VET program delivered in Morawa. Students domiciled in Carnamah would incur travelling time of two hours each day.

The affect on students includes *loss of productive time and disruption of life/work/school balance* taken up in travelling. This in turn places further stresses on families in having to juggle the other demands on their time, including work commitments, getting their other children to school or to sporting training or events and generally further impinging on the limited hours they have to achieve an appropriate life/work balance.

The distances involved are unreasonable in terms of the time and effort required to access a VET program in Morawa.

Another very probable outcome which would adversely affect students is that if the VET program was delivered out of Morawa and it was logical to have the students placed in work environments in Morawa rather than in Carnamah, then there would be unlikely that there would be sufficient employer capacity to accommodate the additional demand for places. Thus some students who would normally find placements in Carnamah or at least closer to home *would be denied the opportunity of being placed with a host employer at all.*

If the program was administered out of Morawa and work placements were found in locations such as Carnamah, the interaction between host employers and the teachers coordinating the program becomes more remote and disjointed which would further prejudice the effectiveness of a program which is currently being very efficiently delivered out of Carnamah.

Currently seventeen Year 11 and 12 students participate in a VET program coordinated by the Carnamah DHS and the program is strongly supported by local businesses and government agencies within the Shire. These students learn valuable *on the job* skills and gain experience which often leads to permanent placement in the workforce. Many are taken on as apprentices and eventually become fully qualified in their respective trades.

A principal concern is that if the current viable VET program delivered out of Carnamah is supplanted with a program as far distant as Morawa, then the impact on many families will be such that they would relocate, in most cases, to the Perth metropolitan area. A compounding consequence of this would be that there would be a marked decrease in not only high school/VET students, but of primary school students as well. This would further diminish the viability of the Carnamah District High School and the entire community, from a social and economic perspective.

Effect on the community

The effects on the community from withdrawing the VET program from Carnamah would be many fold and include:

- The further diminishment in school numbers (previously referred to) as some families would relocate to the Perth metropolitan area or major regional centres.
- The consequent diminishment of the social fabric of Carnamah and other affected towns due to population loss. This would include reduction in numbers participating in sporting activities, service clubs and volunteer organizations such as local bush fire brigades and the St John Ambulance Association. Reduced numbers means reduced viability and the eventual demise of these organizations which affect not only local communities but the wider regional communities. The loss of young people creates a demographic imbalance in these rural areas with a disproportionate percentage of aged people and a significant under representation of young adults.
- Businesses, government agencies and other employers would be deprived of the opportunity to train and employ successive generations of workers as once young people leave country areas for educational purposes, they rarely return. This in turn affects the capacity of businesses to maintain their current levels of service and to expand, as potential young employees and trainees end up in the Metropolitan area or larger centres.

(c) The adequacy, cost effectiveness and social impact of the educational alternatives proposed.

The impact of the educational alternatives proposed are considered to be as follows:

Withdrawal of TEE courses from Carnamah District High School:

Given the limited range of subjects that would be able to be offered and the difficulty in attracting teachers, the rationale for discontinuing Year 11 and 12 TEE subjects is understood and acknowledged by the Carnamah Shire Council.

VET Program:

The following points reiterate the main concerns regarding the withdrawal of the VET program from Carnamah in favour of another centre such as Morawa.

- It is highly unlikely to be cost effective due to the increased costs incurred in transporting students long distances to access the program, the requirement to increase teacher resources at Morawa and the fact that the cost of currently delivering the program out of Carnamah is not cost prohibitive.
- The likelihood of finding placements for VET students in the workplace if the program was centralized in Morawa would be much more difficult (due to finite capacity) and if placements were found in or near the students place of origin, the program would be more difficult to administer from Morawa, than from Carnamah.
- The welfare of VET students having to travel extended distances to access a VET program would be prejudiced.(Long commuting times, fatigue, unproductive time spent travelling) There would also be some impacts on their families who would need to further adjust their already finely tuned life/work/family balances to accommodate the changed VET arrangements.
- Some families would in all probability, relocate to the Perth metropolitan area or to a larger regional centre with the resultant diminishment of the social and economic environment of Carnamah and surrounding towns.

CONCLUSION

The Carnamah Shire Council has welcomed this opportunity to make a submission to the *Inquiry Into The Removal of Year 11 & 12 Courses at District High Schools*. It has contained the substance of its submission to specifically addressing the impacts that would be associated with the removal of the VET Program from the Carnamah District High School, although believes that the same impacts would also be likely to be sustained if VET programs were removed from other District High Schools.

The VET program at Carnamah is very functional. It is well patronized and strong linkages have been developed between the school and host employers. The majority of the Year 11 and 12 students participating in the VET program in times before education to Year 12 became mandatory would have left school at the end of Year 10. They would try to find jobs/traineeships/apprenticeships locally. In some unfortunate cases, some found themselves unemployed and socially disengaged.

The VET program at Carnamah is cost effective in that it does not require significant resources and it would be less costly than if the program was delivered out of Morawa or another centre in the region.

The wider social and economic consequences of withdrawing the VET program from Carnamah can be accurately predicted. Young people and in many cases, their families would relocate to the city or large regional centres. The viability of sporting clubs, community organizations and local businesses would be detrimentally and severely impacted. Young people would be denied the employment opportunities that they are aspiring to in their home town. Employers would be deprived of the opportunity to train and employ young people and maintain the skill base required to maintain the viability of their businesses.

The Carnamah Shire Council commends this submission to the *Standing Committee On Estimates And Financial Operations*. The author of the submission, Bill Atkinson, would be pleased to provide further information and to meet with the Committee either in person, or by teleconference to expand on the contents the submission as required.



BILL ATKINSON

27th May 2010