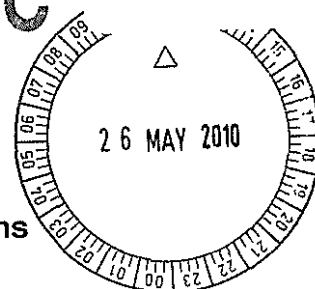


PUBLIC

SUBMISSION
Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations
Effect on Students and Communities

Re: Dongara DHS

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

Parents and affected students were not consulted during the decision making process, causing stress and anxiety on both in regards to their future schooling. We were not aware of this decision until it was reported in the media. As a parent, I believe the rationale behind the decision is based solely on the Government saving money and then putting this money back into city education, leaving District High Schools at a major disadvantage. A child should be able to access year 11 and 12 at whatever school he/she chooses too.

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

This would have little effect on the state budget, money can be saved elsewhere- such as the Perth foreshore project. The students will be disadvantaged by having to travel to their nearest high school that offers year 11 and 12, spending over two hours on a bus each day, on a major highway with increased heavy haulage and car traffic on it. Not every parent wants their child to have to do this every day of the school year. Why should they be forced to do something they do not want to do? Why is this important decision of 11 and 12 programs and they school they wish to attend been taken away from the parents and students? This added stress of travel may very well have negative effects on these students such as reduced grades, school performance, social and emotional development. Some children may be forced to board or families to leave town to access year 11 and 12 programs.

The thought of having to leave our school (Dongara District High School) has been very upsetting for my son, myself and the rest of our family. My son was diagnosed with a learning disability (Dyslexia) in 2006, since then the staff at DDHS has done everything to ensure that Mathew's dyslexia was catered for. Having small classroom sizes in both primary and high school has helped him greatly with his English skills and he has been able to have extra help and support due to the low number of students and great teaching staff. Being forced to move to a large high school with large classroom sizes and student population will have a negative impact on him, and I am certain that he will suffer both academically and emotionally by having to change schools at such an important stage of his schooling. As it is, he is already worrying about having to change schools when all he wants is to graduate from DDHS. He is able to access subjects through SIDE at DDHS if he so wishes, so he is not being disadvantaged by attending a district high school. At DDHS, the teachers and Mathew have developed a great relationship, the teachers know Mathew and what is required to help him grow both academically and socially and to cater for his Dyslexia. As far as I am concerned, staying at DDHS is in the best interests of my son.

The local community will suffer if our 11 and 12 students have to leave town to attend school. Employers will miss out on potential staff and apprentices and trainees as students may not want to move back to Dongara after they finish their schooling, thus affecting our community's ability to grow and prosper.

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

It is not adequate to expect district high school students to travel great distances on major highways to attend school if they do not wish too. My right to decide on the best education for my children has been taken away from me. Students must stay at school until year 12, so every district high school should be able to still offer year 11 and 12 programs. Removing 11 and 12 is from these schools is not a sound idea and will cause undue hardships on all concerned.

It will cause financial hardship to send my son to another high school. I will have higher school fees, uniform and travel costs, plus other sundry items. This will place a great strain on an already very tight budget. I do not think it is very cost effective to send students to another high school; these schools will receive the same funding for these extra students, so the government is not really saving any money. These schools will also have the added pressure to provide for the extra students.

The social impact is large. The extra hours required for travel will damage a student's relationships with his/her friends and family. There will be less time to spend with family and friends. Year 11 and 12 are such important years of student's school life and the time to be with family and friends is very important to allow the student to cope with the added pressure of years 11 and 12. Time to participate in activities outside school hours, such as sport, is reduced.

Concluding Comments

As a parent of one the many students that is affected by this proposal I am deeply concerned about this and the affect that is already having on myself and my son. The worry about what is going to happen next year and the thought of moving schools is an added pressure and concern we don't need. We are very happy with the school he is attending now and my son's greatest wish is to remain at his school which is providing a great education for him.

Taking away the decision about where a student is to attend school is an unfair and biased action. Parents and students should be the only ones to make this decision, not the government, who has probably never even spent time quality within a district high school to see the wonderful education programs that are being offered to our students. This would never happen in the city or large country town, so why do it to small regional towns who can least afford to lose their year 11 and 12 students? I hope this decision of removing year 11 and 12 at district high schools is withdrawn and these schools can continue to offer high quality educational programs to our students.

Brenda Carter