



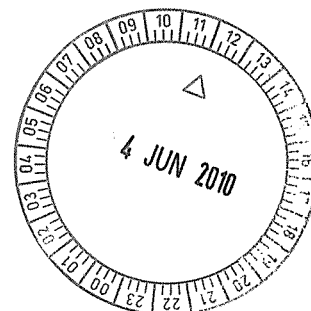
Department of
Education

Wyndham District High School
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Principal: Mr Mark Williams

55.
Wyndham
District High School



PUBLIC



Hon Giz Watson MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations
Legislative Council
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear The Hon Ms Watson

Inquiry into the Removal of Year 11 and 12 Courses at District High Schools

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission regarding the relocation of Year 11 and 12 programs from Wyndham District High School (DHS) to Kununurra DHS.

I have been Principal at Wyndham DHS since the commencement of the 2010 school year. The relocation of the Year 11 and 12 programs from Wyndham to Kununurra was in place for the commencement of the 2009 school year and as such I was not privy to, or part of, the process that ultimately led to that decision.

I have sought information from staff who were involved in the initial discussions and the decision making process, their recollections of what took place form part of this submission.

Comments regarding the effect of relocating the Year 11 and 12 programs from Wyndham DHS to Kununurra DHS from the beginning of 2010 are submitted for your consideration in my current role as Principal of the school.

Decision Making Process

Early in 2008 initial discussions were held between the Kimberley District Education Office and staff from the school about the possibility of relocating the Year 11 and 12 programs from Wyndham DHS to Kununurra DHS.

The rationale behind the possible relocation of the programs was due to the relatively small cohort of students in Years 11 and 12 at Wyndham DHS. With small student numbers it was becoming increasingly difficult to provide a broad range of academic and vocational programs to meet individual student needs. Kununurra DHS with a large cohort in its secondary school and a wide range of courses of study was considered an attractive alternative especially given the relative closeness of the two towns – 100kms apart.

The school was asked to gauge parent reaction if the proposal went ahead.

Subsequently a parent/community meeting was held where the proposal to move the Year 11 and 12 programs to Kununurra DHS was outlined. Parents were informed

that students would have the option of being bussed to and from Kununurra (a 200km round trip) each day or staying at the planned Kununurra Secondary Hostel.

Kununurra DHS has a significant senior school cohort and accordingly offers a comprehensive and broad range of academic and vocational pathways for Year 11 and 12 students.

In October 2008 the Principal, Secondary School Deputy Principal and other members of the school administration team from Kununurra DHS visited Wyndham and met with school staff, parents and students. Topics of discussion included the programs of study available at Kununurra for Year 11 and 12 students and to outline the facilities and support available at the school.

In November 2008 Wyndham DHS staff, parents and students travelled to Kununurra to see first hand the Kununurra DHS campus and to have a closer examination of the programs available to students who were likely to enrol at the school.

Later in November a vote was taken the result of which, led to the decision that from the commencement of the 2009 school year all Year 11 and 12 programs would be relocated from Wyndham DHS to Kununurra DHS. There were two votes against the decision.

All students in Years 11 and 12 would be assisted to enrol at Kununurra DHS and would be bussed to and from Kununurra each day.

In the meantime planning for the construction of the Kununurra Secondary Hostel had commenced with the hope that Aboriginal students (the hostel is for Aboriginal students only) would be able to stay at the Hostel during the week and be able to travel home to Wyndham on the weekends.

Effect of the Decision

2009

From February 2009 the daily bus service commenced between Wyndham and Kununurra.

Any new enrolment applications for Year 11 and 12 students at Wyndham were re-directed to Kununurra and assistance was offered to facilitate the enrolment.

Initially 12 students caught the bus which departed Wyndham at 6.30am and arrived back in the town at approximately 3.30pm each day. The student numbers remained constant for Term 1 but declined steadily throughout the year.

Reasons cited for no longer catching the bus included the length of the day and difficulty in taking part in extra-curricular activities as well as the down-sizing of the bus which went from a 55 seat Inter-City coach to a 24 seat coach that was not considered to be of the same standard.

2010

At the commencement of the 2010 school year 3 students were regularly catching the bus to and from Kununurra.

In February the Wyndham Secondary School Deputy Principal, School Based Attendance Officer (SBAO) and Participation Co-ordinator visited a number of parents of Year 11 and 12 students in an effort to encourage students to enrol at Kununurra.

In early March a meeting was held in Wyndham between the Administration teams of both schools to address issues concerning enrolment and to further refine protocols to assist parents wishing to enrol students at Kununurra.

In April Wyndham DHS established a "wrap around" service for Year 11 and 12 students. The School Based Attendance Officer visited parents of non-attending Year 11 and 12 students and informed them of the programs on offer in Kununurra. The parents and students were then transported to Kununurra to facilitate enrolment, view the school's facilities and visit the newly built Kununurra Secondary Hostel.

This service is now standard procedure for the school when students of Year 11 and 12 ages either come to Wyndham DHS seeking an enrolment or if they are known to be in the community but not currently attending school.

Adequacy, Cost Effectiveness and Social Impact of the Educational Alternatives Proposed

The decision to relocate the Year 11 and 12 programs from Wyndham DHS to Kununurra DHS was made to provide better access to appropriate programs of study for Year 11 and 12 students. With a small cohort of Year 11 and 12 students at Wyndham it was becoming increasingly difficult to provide a wide range of subjects, both academic and vocational, to cater to student needs.

Kununurra DHS offers a large secondary school setting with a broad range of programs of study available for students whether they choose an academic or vocational pathway.

As discussed, Wyndham DHS has maintained contact with families of Year 11 and 12 students and offers an ongoing service to assist in enrolment application processes at Kununurra DHS.

With regards to the social impact of the relocation of the Year 11 and 12 programs this is a question for the students and their families to be asked. As the students are no longer attending Wyndham DHS it is difficult to make a judgement on any social impact of the relocation of the Year 11 and 12 programs.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "M.S. Williams", with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

MARK WILLIAMS
PRINCIPAL

31 May 2010