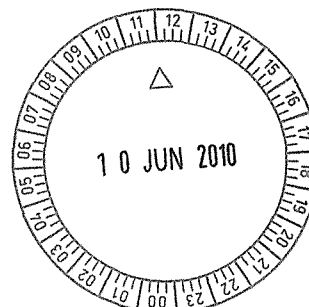


GREAT SOUTHERN
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

PUBLIC

Submission 63

Our Ref: U5:0820
Enquiries: Jessica van der Waag



8 June 2010

Ms Renae Jewell
Committee Clerk
Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations
Legislative Council
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Ms Jewell

**SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY REGARDING REMOVAL OF SENIOR SCHOOL
FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR YEAR 11 AND 12 COURSES**

Please find attached a submission from the Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) in response to the letter from Hon Giz Watson MLC, Chair of the Standing Committee Inquiry into the Removal of Senior School Allocation Funding for Year 11 and 12 Courses at 21 District High Schools across Western Australia.

Two schools in Great Southern region are affected by the changes; Kojonup and Gnowangerup District High Schools. The GSDC has compiled the attached information outlining the concerns of the community in regards to the changes.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry.

Yours faithfully


BRUCE MANNING
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Encl. Submission



Building partnerships for regional prosperity

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INQUIRY INTO THE REMOVAL OF SENIOR SCHOOL ALLOCATION FUNDING FOR YEAR 11 AND 12 COURSES AT DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS

Introduction – High Schools in the Great Southern

There are four public district high schools in the Great Southern region; Jerramungup, Gnowangerup, Mt Barker and Kojonup. Three of these; Gnowangerup, Kojonup and Mt Barker have been offering classes to Year 12 to date. Jerramungup offers a VET program for Year 11 and 12 students. There are a further three public senior high schools in the Great Southern region, two in Albany, and one in Katanning.

The Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) notes that the Great Southern schools affected under the changes to the program are the Kojonup and Gnowangerup District High Schools. The GSDC understands that there are currently 19 students across Years 11 and 12 in these schools.

Current situation

The GSDC has compiled the following notes on the concerns of the community in these towns with regard to the impact of the removal of the Year 11 and 12 funding allocations to the Gnowangerup and Kojonup high schools. These are presented against the Terms of Reference of the Standing Committee inquiry.

a) The decision making process and rationale behind the decision

The GSDC understands the removal of funding allocation applies to district high schools where there are fewer than 10 students, with the rationale that these students will have access to a greater range of opportunities and subjects through attending a school in a larger centre.

The main concern regarding this rationale from the community is that a high proportion of the students in this age cohort at these high schools are not academically focussed. The small class sizes at these schools are advantageous in providing a high level of support and supervision to the students to complete Year 11 and 12, and transition into employment within the community. In particular, Kojonup has a strong community driven program assisting students in gaining work experience and apprenticeships locally.

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

The provision of senior school classes in small regional towns can be advantageous in attraction and retention of families within the community. The GSDC understands that the perceived effects of the decision include;

1. Potential loss of students and their families from the community as they move to larger centres to attend senior school.

2. Negative impact on the ability to attract new families to the community.

3. Reduced support for students to complete Yrs 11 and 12 and transition to employment as a result of their separation from the community.

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

The GSDC understands the following three educational alternatives have been proposed;

1. Students to board
2. Students to travel to nearest Senior School
3. Students to undertake distance education

The concerns raised by the community with regard these options are outlined below. A significant concern is that the perceived negative impacts of these alternatives may result in families leaving these regional communities for bigger centres in order to maintain the family unit while students are in senior school.

1. Students to board
 - The financial impost of boarding costs may be prohibitive to some families
 - The impact of separation from the family may have negative consequences for the student and their ability to continue senior study
 - The recent closure of the Katanning Residential college will limit the options for boarding within a proximity to Kojonup or Gnowangerup
2. Daily travel to attend senior school
 - The nearest senior school is in Katanning. Students residing in town will have a round trip of over 2 hours from Gnowangerup and 1 hour from Kojonup each day.
3. Distance education
 - A high proportion of the students in this age cohort at these high schools require a high level of support and supervision to complete Year 11 and 12, and transition to employment. As distance education requires a high level of motivation on the part of the students and/or local supervision, there is a concern that this option will not be feasible for most students and their families.
 - It is not clear to these communities who will bear the cost of students participating in distance education. The financial impost may be prohibitive to some families.

d) Any other relevant matter

There are further concerns in the community of Gnowangerup of the impact of the removal of senior school funding in the context of the recent closure of the Gnowangerup Training Centre by the Department of Education and Training.

Since 2005, the Centre has operated on a daily and short term basis for training courses associated with District High Schools, TAFE etc. Concerns around the closure of the centre include the loss of the agricultural education facility for regional students, and associated employment.

The GSDC is currently liaising with the Department of Education and Training, the Shire of Gnowangerup and the Gnowangerup Training Centre Advisory Committee regarding the future use of this Centre.