

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

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

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT NAREMBEEN  
TUESDAY, 8 JUNE 2010**

**SESSION SIX**

**Members**

**Hon Giz Watson (Chair)  
Hon Philip Gardiner (Deputy Chair)  
Hon Liz Behjat  
Hon Ken Travers  
Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich**

---

**Hearing commenced at 2.22 pm****WRAY, MRS PAULINE****Principal, Quairading District High School,  
sworn and examined:**

**The CHAIR:** On behalf of the committee I would like to welcome you to the meeting. Before I begin, I am required to ask you to either take an oath or an affirmation. If you want to take an oath, there is a Bible there, otherwise you can taken an affirmation.

[Witness took the oath.]

**The CHAIR:** Could you please now state your full name, your contact address, and the capacity in which you appear before the committee?

**Mrs Wray:** Pauline Wray, principal at Quairading District High School.

**The CHAIR:** What is the address of the high school?

**Mrs Wray:** McLennan Street, Quairading.

**The CHAIR:** You will have signed a document entitled “Information for Witnesses”. Have you read and understood this document?

**Mrs Wray:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** The proceedings this afternoon are being recorded by Hansard. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. If you could please assist Hansard by being aware of that microphone—you might just like to turn it slightly towards you. You can move the microphone if you prefer, whichever is easiest. I remind you that your transcript will become a matter for the public record. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during this afternoon’s proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in private session. If the committee grants your request, any public or media in attendance will be excluded from the hearing. Please note that until such time as the transcript of your public evidence is finalised it should not be made public. This prohibition does not, however, prevent you from discussing your public evidence generally once the hearing has concluded.

Thank you very much for coming this afternoon. As you are aware, the committee is inquiring into the government’s decision to cease to provide senior school allocation funding for year 11 and 12 courses at 21 district high schools across Western Australia, including Quairading District High School. We welcome your input. Would you like to make a statement? I understand that we have not received a written submission.

**Mrs Wray:** Not from myself, personally.

**The CHAIR:** Not from yourself.

**Mrs Wray:** No.

**The CHAIR:** But if there is something you would like to say by way of an opening statement, please do so.

**Mrs Wray:** Our school council did put in a submission, as did our P&C, and I think there is one from the shire as well. I think Quairading’s situation is probably similar to some of the other district high schools in that we are reasonably isolated, or distant, from the nearest senior high schools. So I guess, yes, I am here to put our case forward.

**The CHAIR:** No problem. Perhaps I will take you through a few questions, if you would not mind. For the record, I understand the school has lost its senior school allocation funding.

**Mrs Wray:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** How much money were you receiving each year for that senior school allocation?

**Mrs Wray:** Without the documents in front of me?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mrs Wray:** Some FTE, or teacher equivalent time. Off the top of my head, anywhere between 0.2 and 0.35, perhaps.

**The CHAIR:** Would you like to take that on notice and confirm that, if you would prefer.

**Mrs Wray:** Yes; I would be very happy to confirm that.

*[Supplementary Information No D1.]*

**The CHAIR:** If you could just let us know what the FTE is.

**Mrs Wray:** From 2006 forward?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, from when it was provided for each year; that would be great. What was the school using that senior school allocation FTE for?

**Mrs Wray:** We actually converted that time to teacher assistant time. The teacher assistant was required to supervise the students while they were involved in their SIDE courses. It did not provide us a full week of supervision, so for most of the students we organised work placement for them for up to two days a week. The students were able to get some work experience and complete courses in work readiness, as well as, generally, English and maths. Some of the students chose other subjects, but, yes, generally English and maths.

**The CHAIR:** What impact will the removal of the senior school allocation have on Quairading District High School?

**Mrs Wray:** It takes away that capacity that we have to put a staff member there for those students.

**The CHAIR:** Prior to the introduction of the senior high school allocation of funding did Quairading District High School offer year 11 and 12 courses to students, or was the school catering primarily for younger children?

**Mrs Wray:** Prior to raising the school leaving age, we never offered any year 11 and 12 courses that I am aware of.

**The CHAIR:** And the senior school allocation came in at that point?

**Mrs Wray:** I could not be sure exactly when the senior school allocation was provided. I was not principal at the time; I can only assume that that did happen.

**The CHAIR:** What did you understand the purpose of the senior school allocation funding was, if you do know—perhaps you do not—when it was initially allocated?

**Mrs Wray:** Yes, I could not answer that. In my current situation I would suggest that it is in order to provide support for senior school students.

**The CHAIR:** Perhaps you might not be able to answer this either, but was the understanding of that funding that it was considered to be transitional funding, or did it have some other status?

**Mrs Wray:** I was never aware that it was transitional. I was not principal when the school leaving age was raised. No, there is nothing in my memory that would indicate that it was transitional.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** When did you find out it was going to be removed?

**Mrs Wray:** Late last year, through a letter from staffing.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** From Margery Evans?

**Mrs Wray:** Yes; once again, I could not say whose name was at the bottom of the letter.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** So was it that letter that came out in the middle of last December that was the first time you heard that it was going?

**Mrs Wray:** I had heard rumours, of course, but, yes, the black and white bit is the one you listen to.

**The CHAIR:** Does your district high school offer SIDE courses at the moment?

**Mrs Wray:** No.

**The CHAIR:** You have no students doing SIDE courses?

[2.30 pm]

**Mrs Wray:** We have eight instrumental music students. They study through the School of Instrumental Music and we use SIDE technology to do that, but, no, not as a maths unit or a science unit; nothing like that.

**The CHAIR:** Without the senior school allocation funding, will funding be sufficient to provide year 11 and 12 courses?

**Mrs Wray:** No. The funding was a small amount of funding anyway; we have never had a big group of kids in year 11 or 12, so the funding was a small amount and we considered the best use of that would be to convert that to a teacher assistant to provide more time for those students.

**The CHAIR:** How many students do you currently have enrolled in year 12?

**Mrs Wray:** None.

**The CHAIR:** What about year 11?

**Mrs Wray:** None—I could have had four, but I turned them away.

**The CHAIR:** Can you tell us about that?

**Mrs Wray:** Apart from the fact that we were not going to get any funding, my understanding was that we were not to enrol year 11 or 12 students. Two are on the participation list, so district office participation coordinators are supporting them. I suggested to one student that she try another school; I have seen her around town, so I suspect that has not happened. One student is working, through SIDE, at home.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** You have seen her around town, does that mean she would have been in year 10 last year?

**Mrs Wray:** She should have been in year 12.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** She should have been in year 12?

**Mrs Wray:** Yes.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** What would she be doing; studying at home?

**Mrs Wray:** I suspect not. I cannot answer that.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** The fact we have a—is it a law or a rule?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** A law.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** Although we have a law that everyone does year 11 and 12, she has slipped through the cracks.

**Mrs Wray:** Yes.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** How many do you think have slipped through the cracks at Quairading?

**Mrs Wray:** Certainly that one, out of those four students. Of the two who are enrolled with the participation directorate, I think one of those has received her materials from SIDE. However, it is my personal opinion that that is not going to be particularly successful with those two students.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** Where is the responsibility for what happens to those children? Is it with your school administration, the education department in Perth, or who else could it be?

**Mrs Wray:** I suggest it is a combination of myself, the district office and the education department. I am not 100 per cent exact about those policies, so I might send you to someone who knows.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** That is fair enough. How many of those students in Quairading do you think are doing home SIDE education, or who should be at school because they are of the year 11 and year 12 age?

**Mrs Wray:** There are three there on a day-to-day basis, and the fourth one, whom, I suspect, has slipped through the cracks, sort of is in and out of town.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** That is four. When the Department of Education gets information, which it compiles, about how many year 11 and 12 students are at the Quairading District High School, do you know what number they compute? Does it include those four students?

**Mrs Wray:** No. The two on the participation list are technically attached to our school but they are not technically enrolled. I am not sure whether that is exactly correct.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** I think I get the drift. They are in the four, are they not?

**Mrs Wray:** Yes.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** How many year 11 and year 12s are currently at the school now?

**Mrs Wray:** None.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** Zero; I think that is the information we are getting. But in reality there should be at least four in there somewhere who are not being picked up. Therefore, when they make a decision on the zero and zero, that is quite a different decision than you would make if there was two and two, or even one and three or something.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Before you turned them away, did you clarify the position with anybody at district office or head office, for example?

**Mrs Wray:** The student who is on SIDE, I was given permission—for want of a better word—to enrol that student on the understanding that there was no support in terms of teacher time or —

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Who gave you the approval to do that on that condition; In other words, enrol the person knowing very well that nothing is being offered, really?

**Mrs Wray:** The advice was not to enrol them, it was, “You would be best not to enrol them because you do not have any support; however, if you feel that you can support them, then that may be an exception.”

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Who gave you that advice?

**Mrs Wray:** That was director of schools in a phone conversation.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Who is that?

**Mrs Wray:** Kim Guelfi.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** The district director of schools?

**Mrs Wray:** Yes.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** Was that in writing, or a phone conversation?

**Mrs Wray:** In conversation.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Did you think it was a bit odd?

**Mrs Wray:** In what respect?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Basically saying enrol them, but on the understanding —

**Mrs Wray:** No; I will clarify that again. The advice was not to enrol them, the advice was —

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Better not enrol them.

**Mrs Wray:** — that it was probably best not to enrol them; however, if you feel you can support them, then consider that decision.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** All right. But you obviously felt that you could not support them because they are out somewhere and they are not in the school?

**Mrs Wray:** This particular student was —

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Has gone off for a work placement?

**Mrs Wray:** No, no, this particular student was looking at doing a few more SIDE units than we normally cater for—four, if I remember off the top of my head. She had a very proactive grandmother who was prepared to work hard to make her do her year 11 and 12 course work; often students do not have that support at home.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** So what did this individual end up doing?

**Mrs Wray:** She is working at home on SIDE.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** She is doing it at home?

**Mrs Wray:** Yes. I have already had her in the school for exams, so she is completing her work, from what I gather. I would say that she would be the exception to the rule in terms of home schooling, and she is a short way into her course. I hope she does well.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** She is doing year 11 now, and is she planning to do the same for year 12; she will do that at home?

**Mrs Wray:** Because she is with grandma, it is a “we’ll see how we go with year 11” type situation.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** Has Kim Guelfi, in any of his conversations with you, said that you are not to offer year 11 and 12 SIDE subjects to any students in the future at Quairading District High School?

**Mrs Wray:** Not that I recall.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** The year 8s, 9s and 10s at the moment at the school, if any of those students decide they want to do subjects by SIDE in year 11 and 12, will they be able to do that at Quairading District High School?

**Mrs Wray:** I do not know.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** Why do you think you do not know that?

**Mrs Wray:** Because of the situation we are in at the moment.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** It just has not been made clear to you by the Department of Education of Kim Guelfi that SIDE is still available; you just do not get the senior school allocation.

**Mrs Wray:** I understand that SIDE is still available; however, the cost and the supervisions requirements for the student becomes prohibitive.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** How does the cost become prohibitive?

**Mrs Wray:** Unless the student is going to pay for those course fees, the school is expected to.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** Have you got something in writing that tells you Quairading District High School has to contribute to the cost of SIDE courses being offered?

**Mrs Wray:** No.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** So what are you basing that on when you say there will be a cost to the school?

**Mrs Wray:** That would be my understanding.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** What are you basing that understanding on; a conversation, again, with Kim Guelfi?

**Mrs Wray:** No. I cannot remember exactly where that came from—it could be anywhere. It could be at a recent conference, it could be conversations with colleagues.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** Or scuttlebutt, as we have heard earlier as well?

**Mrs Wray:** Perhaps if you asked me that question again I would say that I will wait and see.

**The CHAIR:** If there are students enrolled in year 11 and 12 doing SIDE, would they not get some base funding as well?

**Mrs Wray:** For staff?

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Is there not a —

**Mrs Wray:** It is my understanding that that is the senior school allocation. That is my understanding.

**The CHAIR:** That is it?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** You would get the standard FTE for an extra student in the school though, would you not? You would get the standard allocation. If you have 127 students and you go to 128, you would get an extra allocation to your school.

**Mrs Wray:** I cannot answer that exactly.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** It is reflected in that.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** With regard to these four students, someone is breaking the law—I just do not know who it is. I do not want to intimidate you in any way, but someone is actually breaking the law. If we are going to have a real law that everyone does year 11 and 12, someone has to be accountable for that to happen.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** Are the parents ever held accountable?

**Mrs Wray:** Are you asking me?

**The CHAIR:** We should know—we passed the law!

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** There has to be accountability, but the funding to be available to do it.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** It is different if there are no options at school.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** That is right; that is what I am worried about, Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich. I am worried about the option that is available so that they can be funded.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I think the government is —

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** I just want to be sure that the funding is available to ensure that all year 11s and 12s can get to school if that is what the law is. Can you shed any light on that at all?

**Mrs Wray:** Once the school leaving age was raised and district high schools were put in the position whereby they were to provide for year 11 and 12, in my community in particular the expectation then developed that we would provide year 11 and 12.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** That is fair enough, yes.

**Mrs Wray:** Without funding, it does make it very difficult

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** It is not possible in fact, unless you provide an inferior education.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Or, as I think the witness has indicated to us, you break your duty of care by not having the students supervised.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** That is the more detailed part of the explanation.

**Mrs Wray:** That has certainly not been the case in our school; students have always been supervised. If you are talking about the girl I have seen in town, I would say she is not supervised—luckily she is not enrolled in my school.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** No, I am talking about students enrolled in your school. If you have a student enrolled in your school, you will ensure they are supervised.

**Mrs Wray:** Yes.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** To enrol year 11s and 12s on the current funding, you do not have enough funding to supervise them.

**Mrs Wray:** No.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** That is the dilemma for a principal in terms of breaking the law. Do you enrol the students knowing that you cannot properly supervise them, or do you say you are not going to enrol them? You are clearly given the option of enrolling or not enrolling, as a principal—sorry to take over the questioning, Phil.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** No, please; that is fine.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** It seems to me that with this change in the removal of the senior school allocation, the issue has been put back on to the principal to make the decision as to whether they take the students or not in year 11 and 12. Is that correct?

**Mrs Wray:** In that particular case, yes, it did become my decision.

[2.45 pm]

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Has there ever been any clear articulation from the department about the rules in respect of what you can and cannot do with the enrolment of years 11 and 12?

**Mrs Wray:** I do not think so.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I do not think so either, based on the evidence I have heard so far. Apart from the letter last year, I want to know whether there have been any formal written instructions given to you as a principal on how to deal with the question of the enrolment of years 11 and 12.

**Mrs Wray:** Not that I recall.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** What is the communication method that is used by the department to guide you on what you should do with years 11 and 12?

**Mrs Wray:** I am not sure if there is a consistent communication method. A lot of our communication comes through Edemail, which is a consistent weekly information communication.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** Or phone calls?

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** Or direct conversations you would have with the district officer?

**Mrs Wray:** The director of schools.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** In the course of the withdrawal of the senior school allocation, and the provision of this so-called transition funding, was there any consultation with you at all about that? Were you ever asked your view about what would happen to your school as a result of withdrawing the senior school allocation funds?

**Mrs Wray:** No, not regarding the withdrawal of funds.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** Therefore the implications of what would happen as a result of that would not be known?



**Mrs Wray:** I guess not.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** We have had three written submissions come to us from the Quairading area, from the P&C, the school council and the Shire of Quairading. All three of those submission say, in similar words, that the children who are forced to study at home find it very difficult to maintain focus and motivation. They tend to fall through the cracks, finding mischief to entertain themselves during the day. Obviously, if all three people who made submissions felt strongly enough about this to put it in their submissions, this is creating a problem for the people of Quairading. What sort of mischief are we talking about that these people are getting themselves into, and is there now a law and order problem arising in Quairading because of these people who have fallen through the cracks?

**Mrs Wray:** I would not suggest that there is a law and order problem. However, a couple of the students we are talking about have a tendency to stir, for want of a better word; I am not quite sure how one would explain it.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** Are they part of a transient population in Quairading, or families that have been in the town for some time?

**Mrs Wray:** These two are not transient. They have been in town for a while.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** What sort of mischief are they getting up to?

**Mrs Wray:** I would call it stirring; teasing other students and creating a presence.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** Are they encouraging other students to not attend school?

**Mrs Wray:** I would suggest that that is the case, yes.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** “Wag school with me today; let’s go off and do something.”

**Mrs Wray:** Yes, and wanting to fight—that sort of thing.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** Generally being disruptive to the school community?

**Mrs Wray:** Yes.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** May I ask: are they Indigenous?

**Mrs Wray:** These two particular students are, but it is not particularly pertinent to Indigenous students in Quairading.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** There is a peer pressure that can be applied, especially amongst the Aboriginal culture of that area.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I just want to go back to the issue of enrolment and non-enrolment. When you took the decision last year to not offer year 11 and 12 courses, was your district director aware that you were taking that decision?

**Mrs Wray:** I do not think I rang him specifically and said that I was not going to enrol any year 11 and 12 students. I was keen to actually see how things went. There may have been some support offered at the beginning of the following year.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** If you were keen to, why did you not?

**Mrs Wray:** Why did I not enrol the students?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Yes.

**Mrs Wray:** The two girls who were already enrolled in the school from junior school, I kept them on the enrolment and then approached the participation directorate early in the year when it became obvious that we would not be able to provide for them.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** The participation directorate does not offer schooling. There are participation coordinators, I think they are called, who are there to work with students and parents

to try to get those students into some form of education and to maintain them in the education system. Is that correct? It is not like they are providing an education service, they are just working with the families.

**Mrs Wray:** Yes.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Where are they working? Where are they trying to get those kids back into education? Is it through your school, through Northam Senior High School, or some other high school?

**Mrs Wray:** My understanding is that the plan is for them to work at home and have some work placement as well.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Right. Who will manage the work placement?

**Mrs Wray:** The participation directorate. That is my understanding.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** But that is not normally the participation directorate's role, is it, to manage work placements?

**Mrs Wray:** Did the member mean who manages them at the workplace?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Who manages organising the work placement and maintaining the link between the education system and the workplace to ensure that the workplace is performing the function it is supposed to as part of the overall education of that student.

**Mrs Wray:** The participation directorate with support from Youth Pathways. I am not sure if that is a statewide organisation.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** The participation coordinators would not be based in the town, though—they would not have the community links to the local business that your school would have, would they?

**Mrs Wray:** No. Sometimes that might be a good thing!

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** The option of bussing to Northam Senior High School—do you know if that has been considered as an option for these students?

**Mrs Wray:** No. The girl who is working at home through SIDE, she has come to Quairading to live with her grandmother, so I assume they were not interested in bussing to Northam or Merredin. In my personal opinion, it just would not work for the two girls who are working through the participation directorate, had they the capacity to request a bus.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** It is a bit far. They used to board at Northam from Quairading.

**Mrs Wray:** Yes.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I want to make sure I understand this. This is not a judgement, it is for me to understand how you made the decision. A number of other principals have said that they do not have the ability to supervise, but that they still want to involve the students. I want to fully understand why you did not take the same decision as those other principals.

**Mrs Wray:** Each student, of course, is an individual case and each decision is made after weighing up the capacity of the student, knowledge of their background, and whether they will potentially have behaviour issues. I guess lots of things are taken into consideration when making a decision, apart from the ability of the school to supervise.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** But some of those issues come back to that duty of care issue, to a degree, so you need to make your ability to manage duty of care issues as a principal part of your assessment as to whether you can do it within your existing school funds. Your view was that without that senior school allocation, you could not manage the duty of care issues—is that a fair assessment?

**Mrs Wray:** Not necessarily just duty of care issues; also support for other students. For example, if I were to put our year 11 students in with another class, there is an equal duty of care to the other students as well, to ensure that they are getting the best they can.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** In that sense, it is duty of care across the whole school.

**The CHAIR:** I think that might be it. Thank you very much for your time this afternoon; we really appreciate it. You will get a copy of the transcript, so if there is anything there that does not reflect what you said, you will have a chance to correct it.

**Mrs Wray:** If I want to erase any of it!

**The CHAIR:** I never said that! Not exactly.

**Hearing concluded at 2.55 pm**