

**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 FIVE

Members

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

Hearing commenced at 1.37 pm

KING, MRS SUSAN

**Parent,
examined:**

BOYLAND, MR CHRISTOPHER JOHN

**Principal, Lake Grace District High School,
examined:**

The CHAIR: On behalf of the committee I welcome you both to the hearing this afternoon. Before we begin, I am required to ask you to take either an oath or an affirmation. If you want to do an oath, there are copies of the Bible there; if it is an affirmation, we do not need to do that.

[Witnesses took the affirmation.]

The CHAIR: Could you now please state the capacity in which you appear before the committee?

Mrs King: I am a parent

Mr Boyland: I am principal of Lake Grace District High School.

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

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: The proceedings this afternoon are being recorded by Hansard, and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist Hansard, could you please be aware of the microphone and direct your comments at it. 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 and 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 this hearing is finished. Thank you again for coming to the hearing this afternoon. As you are aware, the committee is inquiring into the government's decision to cease to provide the senior school allocation funding for years 11 and 12 courses at 21 district high schools in WA, including Lake Grace District High School. We welcome your input this afternoon. We have a written submission from the school and another one, I think, from the shire. Would you like to make any opening comments or elaborate on your submission?

Mrs King: I am a mother of three daughters and we chose not to send our children away. I have an 18-year-old daughter who just finished year 12 last year through SIDE at Lake Grace District High School. She did her TEE subjects as well as a business course. She was accepted as a first round offer at university, and also at another university in New South Wales. My second daughter is currently studying year 11 at Lake Grace through SIDE, but with assistance of Lake Grace District High School. I just feel that for my children, we did not want to send them away, but I think it is better for them to go into the school. It creates discipline, plus they are interacting with peers. They do have the teachers there for support. There are examinations that have to be monitored, and I am very glad of the help there. I just think it is the best thing. We have proved it to be very successful with our eldest daughter, and our second daughter is doing very well, and I would want to do it for my third daughter as well. We are off a farm. We are 45 kilometres from Lake Grace, and it is just

too isolating to keep them home on the farm to study through distant education. Boarding school, to me, just does not seem an option.

The CHAIR: How old is the younger one?

Mrs King: She is 13.

The CHAIR: And it would be your hope that she could also do SIDE at the high school?

Mrs King: Yes.

The CHAIR: What would be the other options?

Mrs King: We would have to split our family, I would say, and I would have to go and live somewhere else or send my children somewhere else, but that, as far as I am concerned, does not seem an option. I grew up in the city. Boarding school was never something I had to cope with as a child. But coming to Lake Grace, working as a registered nurse in the hospital, I saw what it did to families, and as an impressionable young person I just thought, “Why would you send your kids to boarding school?” and that is one of the reasons why, plus I think it is important to keep your family together and be the most important influence in their lives while they are so young and impressionable.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Can I just ask about your second daughter, if I may?

Mrs King: Yes.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Is she doing SIDE at home?

Mrs King: No, at school.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: At school; okay.

Mrs King: Yes. And she is also doing her TEE subjects, and she wants to be a teacher.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Sorry; she is doing year 11 at the moment.

Mrs King: Yes, at Lake Grace District High School.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: And she will continue year 12 at Lake Grace —

Mrs King: Yes.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: — doing SIDE as well?

Mrs King: Yes.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: What makes you think that your 13-year-old will not be able to do SIDE at Lake Grace?

Mrs King: Because I have been told or seen it in the media that it may no longer be available.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: So you have seen it in the media —

Mrs King: Yes.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: — that it is not going to be available. Has anybody told you directly that it will not be available?

Mrs King: No.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: And no-one has written to you to say it is not going to be available.

Mrs King: No.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Mr Boyland, I wonder if you could provide us with some information on when you heard that the senior school allocation would not be ongoing.

Mr Boyland: Initially, early in 2009, and that is when I started writing letters to the district director and eventually to the executive director. In the first place, it was not the fact that the senior

schooling allocation was being taken away; initially it was, “You will not have years 11 and 12, or it is being considered that years 11 and 12 will be removed from district high schools.” That was the initial thing.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: That was in December.

Mr Boyland: No, in about March last year. Finally, in December last year, after writing a number of submissions, I had a letter from the district director and I also had a meeting with the district director, who told me that I would be allowed to enrol years 11 and 12. The year 12 students only would receive the senior schooling allocation; the year 11 students would not. I had made it quite clear to my district director prior to that that whether we got the senior school allocation or not, I would be enrolling those kids because of the special circumstances, and if I had to bear the cost, I had to bear the cost.

[1.45 pm]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What would be the cost for those year 11 enrolments that you would not be funded for?

Mr Boyland: Because we run a room that is not totally supervised, probably I would put a teacher in there two periods a day; one in the morning to check up on where they were going and one in the afternoon to check where they are going, so about 0.4 and that teacher can also then tutor the kids. She is an experienced maths, English and S and E teacher that can tutor the kids where they are not up to speed with that and I can help them with science as the need arises—but about 0.4. I heard you talking about a special needs kid. We have a special needs kid in year 11 and we put an aide in there for about 45 minutes at the beginning of the day and 45 minutes at the end of the day to plan out his day and to check up that he has done everything and she pops back every so often. So it is about 0.4 of an aide and 0.4 of a teacher.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: And have you been advised by the department or the district director that the school may have to pick up the cost or partial cost of SIDE on a per student basis?

Mr Boyland: No.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: You have not?

Mr Boyland: No.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Okay. I am just wondering whether it is possible for the committee to have access to the correspondence between yourself and the district director —

Mr Boyland: I will try.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: — in respect to how the correspondence has flowed so we can get a sense of time frame and a sense of, I guess, clarification which was sought by you, so we can make some assessment about the clarity and what was returned to you in terms of the information?

[*Supplementary Information No C1.*]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How would you describe the communication of this policy decision between the department district officer and yourself as the principal of the school?

Mr Boyland: Initially, it was a discussion between myself and the district director that this could happen. I then wrote an email and did not get much of a response to that. I put in another email and got verbal responses to that. A third email I sent, they said, “We’re waiting for a decision from Perth.” I then put my thoughts into an email to Colin Pettit and —

The CHAIR: Could you tell us who he is?

Mr Boyland: He was an executive director and now he is the executive director, rural and remote schools. I had a friend who worked in his office and I used to ring the friend every week to say, “I haven’t heard anything. I haven’t heard anything.” Eventually, I got a message back from Colin

saying, “Your district director will contact you in December.” I had a letter and a conversation with the district director about the fact that—she realised that we were going to enrol the kids—the year 12s would be supported through the senior schooling allocation and the year 11s would not. So one small school in 600, I do not think the communication was that flash but I do not think that I could have expected too much more.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Are you half expecting that next year they will just tell you to can your SIDE program?

Mr Boyland: No, I am expecting them to say you can enrol the kids but it will be at your own cost.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: So you were specifically asking in those letters whether or not you would be allowed to enrol kids in SIDE or asking what was happening with the program?

Mr Boyland: I was saying that these are the specific kids that we have and these are the specific kids that we want to or are going to enrol next year. Basically, are we allowed to, I guess, was the tenor and then what support were we going to get.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: So that was independent of any reference to SIDE; this is really just about whether the school could service year 11 or year 12 students, regardless of SIDE. So SIDE is not the issue.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It is the senior school allocation.

Mr Boyland: The senior school allocation, yes.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The reason I ask and I want to be clear about that is because our understanding is that the decision was taken as part of the budget process at the beginning of 2009 for the 2009–10 financial year, so it is interesting that you were someone who was directly asking the question and not getting an answer, even though the decision had actually been taken, as far as we are aware.

Mr Boyland: I think maybe they were looking at—this is my own thoughts—specific cases like ours. They did take into account last year’s year 11s who are this year’s year 12s; they did not want to interrupt their education by saying that they had to go away.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: To continue from where Hon Ken Travers was, the year 10s that you have now, how are you dealing with them? Are you discouraging them from considering year 11 or are you saying just continue and we will just take you on?

Mr Boyland: There is only one year 11 who is probably going to stay; he is one of the members of our Filipino family. He has older brothers in year 11 and year 12. I cannot categorically say that he will stay, but I believe that is their intention. All the other year 10s are going away and I have no problem with that.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: How many year 10s do you have?

Mr Boyland: There are eight year 10s and seven of them are going away.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Had they always planned to do that?

Mr Boyland: Yes. There are only specific kids and specific families who want their kids to stay, and I think we should look at those.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Why do you think that they all want to go away? What is stopping them from considering Lake Grace as the alternative for year 11 and 12?

Mr Boyland: I guess because we do not have the numbers to run a course; the kids have to do it through SIDE. They have had numbers there before. I have been there only two and a half years, but they have had 11s and 12s before.

Mrs King: Hmm, they have in other years but earlier on.

Mr Boyland: The last couple of kids who went through in 2007–2008 were special needs kids and they did their work through SIDE. Prior to that I have not made myself aware; I am just simply there now and servicing my community. The fact that kids cannot travel on a daily basis to a senior high school really is one of the things that makes me do that. There will not be a huge number of kids in the future. There may be one or two year 11s and 12s, but at the moment we have seven in there.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Just going back to Sue, when your daughters were going through, how many peers did they have?

Mrs King: Katelyn, my eldest, she was the only one until the Filipinos. Then we had in year 12 —

Mr Boyland: Trent.

Mrs King: Trent Roper was a special needs child, really, but she was the only one really doing her TEE studies.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: And she is the one who went off to university?

Mrs King: Yes. She has not gone, she is having a gap year, but she was accepted. This year because of the extra Filipino children in the town, there are seven in the SIDE room altogether. Some of those girls are doing the same subjects as my daughter, which is always helpful, even though they are doing it through SIDE. Then because we have a specialist maths teacher at the school, she has been able to give a bit of time and help the kids as well, which has been a real plus, and then, of course, John is a science teacher and he has been able to help as well and we really appreciate that.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: You have seven 457 students?

Mr Boyland: Five 457 students, one special needs and Krystal, who is Sue's daughter.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: But out of the total school population there are five 457s?

Mr Boyland: Sorry, no, there are 16 457s in the school.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Is that number likely to grow?

Mr Boyland: No, well, I do not believe so. They were brought in to work for CBH and I think CBH has got their four workers out of it, so I do not believe so.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: The current year 8, 9 and 10s, some of their subjects are delivered through SIDE?

Mr Boyland: No, that is all face to face.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Okay. So the 16 457s, you have five of them in year 10, did you say?

Mr Boyland: No, we have five of those in year 11 and 12; two in year 12 and three in year 11.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: So then you have 11 in year 8, 9 and 10?

Mr Boyland: No; from preschool, 3s, 5s, 7s.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: So long-term, the 457s will be there for three years?

Mr Boyland: I do not know that. That is their contract, I believe, but I also know that they are going for permanent residency.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: They are trying for PR?

Mr Boyland: Yes. They have been going off and having medicals recently.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Once they gain permanent residency status, they would qualify for that allowance that they do not qualify for at the moment—it is just while they are on the 457 visa?

Mr Boyland: Yes, but bear in mind a number of the families have multiple kids in year 11 and 12, so they would be sending two kids away if that was the story. But some of the kids have been there for not even 18 months, and I think there is an appetite among the parents to not send them away.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Have they integrated well into the school community and the general community?

Mr Boyland: Different ones in different ways, but yes.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Would it be fair to say, Mr Boyland, that the 457 students, if SIDE were not offered at that school, would really practically have very few other options?

Mr Boyland: They would have no options. They could do SIDE at home, but our SIDE room is set up with a computer each, a direct telephone line to SIDE, supervision —

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Would it be also fair to say that doing SIDE at home in a non-English speaking family would also disadvantage the students in terms of the level of support that they could get and therefore the educational attainment that they could achieve?

Mr Boyland: Very much so, yes; very much.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Could you see another solution whereby the 457 students could stay within their community with their family and complete their educational qualifications to the end of their twelfth year without the provision of SIDE?

Mr Boyland: No. We do not have the facilities at school to do it; they need that SIDE. Some of them are not doing TEE subjects; one of them is doing a certificate of general education for adults, so they need that through SIDE.

The CHAIR: There are just a few questions that we are asking of each of the principals. How much money were you receiving each year as the senior school allocation funding?

Mr Boyland: I cannot give you an absolute money value, but last year it was 0.24 of a teacher's time. This year it is 0.16 of a teacher's time. Now 1.00 is a full-time teacher, so 0.16 is about two-thirds of a day; 0.24 is about one and a bit days, which if you equate a teacher's salary is about \$72 000, that is about —

The CHAIR: FTEs are fine; that is a good comparison.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is what you are receiving because you are getting it for only the two.

Mr Boyland: You get 0.08 FTE per student and we are getting it for only the two this year. Last year we got it for three.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: All right, because in the submission from the shire it says 0.6 of an FTE.

Mr Boyland: I have not seen that. Can you read that to me, please?

[2.00 pm]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It says —

It is clear that it will continue to provide limited in person teaching to those Year 11 and 12 students that require this level of support regardless of whether the small amount of funding (0.6 FTE) it currently has is withdrawn or not.

Mr Boyland: It is 0.16. He has made a mistake because he got that figure from me. I did not get to read that.

The CHAIR: Can you clarify what the school is using that senior school allocation funding for?

Mr Boyland: To supervise the kids; to provide maths tuition; to provide English tuition; to invigilate tests, exams and things like that; to ensure that kids are up-to-date with all their work and assignments and tests are done on time and things like that.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Directly on from that question, why would a school consider that to be a temporary allocation fund if that was the purpose of it?

Mr Boyland: I do not understand what you mean.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: You have 0.16 FTE for the purpose you described and, as I understand, there is a perception that this senior school allowance was of a temporary nature.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Transitional.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Beg your pardon, “transitional” is the word I am looking for.

Mr Boyland: We have been told it is transitional this year. For 2010 we have been told that that is transitional. We have been told in a letter that that will not be given to us next year.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Okay, but up to this time it has not been regarded as transitional.

Mr Boyland: No. I regarded it as, I guess for want of better words, a done deal. Each year we would get 0.08 for each secondary child it seems.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Based on how you described the application of that FTE, it appears that would be a recurrent cost as long as you had year 11 and 12s doing their courses and using SIDE. So your understanding is that it is only transitional as of 2010, not transitional from the point of view of converting the district high schools into schools that should be taking years 11 and 12 from 2006.

Mr Boyland: I was not in a district high school in 2006. I was in a senior high school so I did not regard it as transitional at all.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Just a point of clarification: can you remember ever coming across any correspondence from about 2006 that indicated that this is a transitional arrangement?

Mr Boyland: No.

The CHAIR: That has probably answered the next few questions about the transitional nature of that. Also, for clarification, can you give us the total number of students who are currently enrolled in year 11?

Mr Boyland: Five.

The CHAIR: Year 12?

Mr Boyland: Two.

The CHAIR: How many students are currently enrolled in year 8, 9 and 10 respectively, if you can do that in your head?

Mr Boyland: Year 8 has three, year 9 has 10, and year 10 has eight. Year 8 is the half-cohort but it is a tiny little half-cohort.

The CHAIR: What are the options available to students who want to undertake year 11?

Mr Boyland: The options in reality are to leave the town and go to a senior high school. They can do SIDE at home or they can attend Lake Grace District High School and do SIDE through us. They are really the only options. The other option does not involve education. They can get an exemption and go out and work, as long as the employment has some sort of training aspect to it.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Mr Boyland, given that you have worked in senior high schools and now you are in a district high school and given that this policy decision is predicated on a view that senior high schools offer better opportunities, greater socialisation et cetera, what is your professional opinion about the basis upon which this decision has been made?

Mr Boyland: I do not think that that always holds true. Each individual child is an individual and I believe that there are some kids who get as good an education at a district high school as they can get. There are some kids who will not. But I think there is scientific data that says that kids do not

have to go to a senior high school to get a good education; they can get a good education at a district high school. As you say, most of my time, apart from six years, has been at senior high schools. I was principal at Leinster District High School in the 1990s, now I am at Lake Grace; I see no difference in the education they offer. As long as the kid wants an education, D highs are just as good as a senior high.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Are there any students in Lake Grace who are doing SIDE outside the school?

Mr Boyland: I do not believe so.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Are you aware of any other schools, in your discussions with your colleagues, with students doing SIDE education outside their schools in their homes?

Mr Boyland: There was one in Wagin last year. There is a family that do their entire education through SIDE at Arthur River. Apart from those, no.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: The interest I have is that I am not sure whether those numbers have been counted in the school system and therefore they are a leakage out of the district high school system.

Mr Boyland: We had a family of six that were in the district high school system. They were younger than year 11 and 12 but they have gone totally to distance education through a private school in Albany.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: So that is another example.

The CHAIR: Just on the question of the cost of SIDE courses, we have been given to understand that schools are now going to be asked to pay for 25 per cent of the cost. How will that go in your school? Will the school be able to afford to cover that portion of the SIDE?

Mr Boyland: It depends on whether we are given the senior school allocation. If we had the senior school allocation, I guess it is giving with one hand and taking away with the other. If we did not get the senior school allocation, we would not be able to do that at all. I have not heard that that will happen to district high schools. I have only heard that happening to senior high schools that run courses on their own but have certain kids doing certain courses through SIDE.

The CHAIR: To clarify that, the source of your information is?

Mr Boyland: Scuttlebutt among principals, I guess.

The CHAIR: It seems to be the common source of it!

Mr Boyland: No district high has information on that. I have talked to people at SIDE; they have told me that no decision has been made on district highs, but senior highs have definitely had correspondence about that. I think it is \$1 000 per student per subject. Going back a bit, if we get a senior school allocation, that is probably about \$5 000 per student, which is 0.08 of a teacher probably, which you could use towards that but you would not want to. While I am on that I will go on to another point. To send kids away, not our 457s but Krystal and Katelyn, the government would pay the parents the isolated students—I do not know what it is called—to send their kids away. They are saving money by these kids not going away; they are not paying that to the parents at all and they are not giving it to the school, so that is a big saving of money. If that money came to the school to allow us to staff that room and help these kids that would be one way of looking at it.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I guess this question is almost to Susan as much as yourself, John. You went through the options that are available for students if they do not go to Lake Grace. You did not mention catching the bus to a senior college. We are told that is an option.

Mr Boyland: Can I answer that?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I would like your answer but I would also like to hear from Susan as a parent whether she sees that as an option.

Mr Boyland: There is no bus from Lake Grace. Lake Grace is 140 kays from Narrogin and 140 kays from Katanning. Both of them are over an hour and a half in a bus and there is literally no bus.

Mrs King: We are 45 kilometres the other side of Lake Grace so add another 45 kays on to that and it is just not feasible.

Mr Boyland: How long are your kids on the bus as they are?

Mrs King: They get onto the bus at 10 to eight in the morning and get to school at quarter to nine, so they already do that just to Lake Grace.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: So they would have a bus to pick them up to get them to Narrogin. I thought that might be the answer. You say there is no bus. Are you aware that all you have to do is ask and you will get a bus put on by the PTA?

Mr Boyland: I did not think kids were allowed to be on the bus for an hour and a half in the morning.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Ninety minutes is the peak, but it has been suggested that an option is that students can catch a bus. You are right; 90 minutes is supposedly the length of time. But are you aware that the bus is an option; that if you requested a bus, one would be put on or potentially put on?

Mr Boyland: I was not aware of that.

Mrs King: I am not aware of that but it is hard enough to organise school buses just for your little district, so I do not know how that goes.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: You mentioned the impacts for the students in years 11 and 12. Does the removal of the senior student allowance have any impact across your management of the rest of the school?

Mr Boyland: To a small extent because it limits the staff you have available to offer other subjects. I would like my maths teacher to teach ICT but because she is in charge of SIDE, supervises SIDE and tutors in maths, she does not have the time to do that. So my deputy takes three periods a week of ICT, which chews into his time. So, yes, it affects the management of the school a bit.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The students that you have in the school doing the SIDE program without the senior student allocation, I think you suggested at one point that they are not always supervised.

Mr Boyland: They are not always supervised.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: What are the issues regarding duty of care if they are not supervised?

Mr Boyland: There is a teacher next door. We just cannot supervise them because we do not have the facility to supervise them. The parents are aware of that. There is nothing we can do about it. There is a duty of care teacher next door; the two doors are a metre apart. You can hear the noise. Each period, generally, someone would be in there for a short amount of time to ensure that the kids are on task. It is a problem but it is one of the things that we have to deal with.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Some schools use some of their senior student allowance to employ teacher aides. It would not be enough to do that anyway, would it?

Mr Boyland: No.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Teacher's assistants I think they are called now.

Mr Boyland: Education assistants.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time this afternoon; we really appreciate you coming in.

Mr Boyland: I will talk to Renae about that correspondence and see if I can lay my hands on it.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, if you can find that.

Mr Boyland: I cannot promise it.

The CHAIR: That is okay. A copy of your transcript will be forwarded to you for any proofreading. Thank you again for making the time available to come across this afternoon, we appreciate it.

Hearing concluded at 2.14 pm