Hon Sue Ellery MLC
Minister for Education and Training
Leader of the Legislative Council

Your Ref: A686683 (Petition No 50)
Our Ref: 61-10474

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

Email: env@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr Swinbourn

Thank you for your letter dated 10 May 2018 regarding Petition No 50 – Moora Residential College.

The McGowan Government has been forced to review every program across every agency in order to identify savings and put the State's finances back on track.

Moora Residential College has been identified for closure due to:

- low enrolment numbers;
- the urgent need for substantial upgrades to bring this facility up to the standards of other residential colleges; and
- the availability of alternative public boarding options including at Northam, Merredin and Geraldton, as well as the Western Australian Colleges of Agriculture – Morawa and Cunderdin.

With respect to the point above about substantial upgrades, you would be aware that on 13 March 2018, I tabled in Parliament all of the building condition reports undertaken at the College since 2007. These reports provide comprehensive information on the facility, prepared by independent consultants who made multiple visits to the site. Therefore, there is no need to authorise any further independent assessments of the building, as some in the Moora community have been requesting.

Indeed, the Local Member of Parliament, Mr Shane Love MLA, himself stated during a Grievance in Parliament on 14 September 2017 that the "kitchens, bathrooms and dormitories [were] very tired, there is severe cracking in a lot of walls and some real structural deficiencies."

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In a letter to the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs dated 8 November 2017, the Member for Moore stated that, according to the Building Condition Assessment done by the Department of Finance – Building Management and Works, "Moora Residential College is not fit for purpose. Upgrade works are needed to address structural, safety, health, electrical and fire risk concerns."

As evidenced in the reports I tabled, the structure of the building is just one of the elements considered. Fire risk, electrical safety and universal access are all part of the mix of what must be considered when making a decision about the building. Specifically the various Fire Reports commissioned by the Department of Finance – Building Management and Works in late 2017 identified the need to improve:

- fire detection and warning systems; and
- egress by upgrading the emergency lighting.

To safeguard the students and staff for the remainder of 2018, these minor but essential works were done at an estimated cost of $59 000. Work was completed in April 2018. This is an appropriate response to the risks identified. There have been many figures used in media commentary about the cost of upgrading Moora Residential College (specifically the amounts of $500 000 and $1.3 million). There is no evidence or reports available to support these claims.

It is acknowledged that the closure of Moora Residential College may have some financial and economic impact on the town, but with the declining enrolments, there has been a reduction in the local spending from students and parents over a period of time. It is also noted that although education is an important industry employer in the Shire of Moora, it is significantly lower than the number of jobs provided in the Shire from agriculture. It is therefore recognised that while some of the indirect losses forecast by Lucid Economics – which authored an Economic Impact Statement commissioned by the Shire of Moora – are possible, questions remain around the assumptions of probability and the extent of the projected financial impact.

For instance, in order to support the viability of Central Midlands Senior High School during this period of transition, the Government has committed to maintaining the school's 2018 funding based on the school's projected enrolment numbers for 2018. I am advised by the Department that Central Midlands Senior High School has subsequently been allocated an additional $29 079 to meet this commitment and enable it to deliver the planned curriculum program. The Lucid Economics report assumes that no further support for Central Midlands Senior High School will occur and, as a consequence, significant financial losses will result to the Shire of Moora.

In 2018, Central Midlands Senior High School received additional funding of $288 500 via a Targeted Initiative. This is called an equity adjustment and is an interim change designed to distribute funds from larger senior high schools to small senior high schools with fewer than 500 students.

There are no plans to reclassify Central Midlands Senior High School. The school will continue to offer a range of academic and vocational programs for secondary students in Years 7 to 12, including those delivered through its Trade Training Centre programs.

The region has provided some operational response funding to the school to install up-to-date videoconferencing equipment so it can explore alternative online opportunities for senior secondary students. This will include linking up with other Years 11 and 12 students across the Wheatbelt.

The Department has developed an implementation plan for the closure of the Moora Residential College taking into account transition support for families. Families affected by the closure of Moora Residential College are receiving individual case management to plan the best possible transition focussed on continuing the students' current studies and future plans.

To ensure parents will not be out of pocket as a consequence of students changing schools, an allowance will be paid to families to cover the costs of purchasing new books and uniforms, as well as for up to three return trips to visit alternative colleges and schools for enrolment, transition and decision making. The allowance will be paid as per the Public Transport Authority's conveyance allowance rates paid to parents travelling to a bus route. This allowance is currently 20c per kilometre.

The Public Transport Authority has agreed to quarantine eight seats on the Lancelin to Yanchep school bus route for students who have a home address in the Lancelin area but currently attend Moora Residential College. While the establishment of new bus routes to Moora has not been proposed, extensions to current routes should see increased numbers of students attend Central Midlands Senior High School.

No decision has been made on the future use of the Moora Residential College site or the facilities.

I will take this opportunity to update you on the significant investment the McGowan Government has made in regional Western Australia in Education:

- The Government is putting education assistants back in the classroom to give more students the individual attention and support they need to achieve. Forty nine per cent of the education assistants will be based in regional Western Australia.
- We are also putting 50 more Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers into schools to work directly with Aboriginal children and their families. All of these new positions will be in regional areas.
- More teachers are being placed in schools to support students. This year, Year 11 and 12 students studying courses through the School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE) in country senior high schools have already started to receive specialised support from Independent Learning Coordinators to supervise and help them with their studies. These teachers and their students will receive specialist support from a team of Regional Learning Specialists, who will travel to those regional schools to provide specialist advice and conduct lessons with students.
- The McGowan Government is also introducing direct to market maintenance – a minor capital works model that will give schools the additional autonomy and funding pool to directly engage their own contractors for works up to the value of $20 000. This will especially benefit regional communities where local contractors can be used for significant work in schools. This model gives schools the flexibility and the assurance of an annual maintenance allocation.

- As mentioned above, smaller senior high schools are the beneficiaries of an equity adjustment. Besides Central Midlands Senior High School, funding ranging between $34 620 and $288 500, depending on enrolment numbers, has been directed to the following regional senior high schools:
  - Harvey Senior High School;
  - Tom Price Senior High School;
  - Newman Senior High School;
  - Katanning Senior High School;
  - Denmark Senior High School;
  - Collie Senior High School;
  - Manjimup Senior High School;
  - Eaton Community College;
  - Narrogin Senior High School;
  - Northam Senior High School;
  - Busselton Senior High School;
  - Cape Naturaliste College;
  - North Albany Senior High School;
  - Newton Moore Senior High School;
  - Dalyellup College;
  - Pinjarra Senior High School;
  - Hedland Senior High School; and
  - Broome Senior High School.
- We are investing in education infrastructure across regional Western Australia. This includes (with estimated total costs in brackets):
  - Cape Naturaliste College (Stage 2 – $30.1 million);
  - Carnarvon Community College (final stage – $26.6 million);
  - Kalgoorlie-Boulder Community High School ($45 million);
  - Margaret River Senior High School ($30 million);
  - Geraldton Senior College ($5 million);
  - John Willcock College ($20 million);
  - Bunbury Senior High School ($5 million);
  - Collie Senior High School ($7.5 million);
  - Glen Huon Primary School ($1.5 million);
  - Wandina Primary School (Stage 2 – $7.5 million);
  - Broome Residential College ($11.7 million);
  - Albany Secondary Education Support Centre and North Albany Senior High School ($9.8 million);
  - Broome Senior High School ($19.3 million);
  - Eaton Community College ($5 million);
  - Newton Moore Senior High School (STEM Centre – $3 million);
  - Eaton Primary School ($3 million);
  - Flinders Park Primary School ($2.5 million);
  - Mount Lockyer Primary School ($3 million); and
  - South Bunbury Primary School ($3 million).
- We also opened Rapids Landing Primary School ($17.1 million) this year, and we are making additions to City Beach Residential College ($6.4 million) for regional gifted and talented students to be able to attend schools in Perth.
- The total estimated investment in the projects listed above is $262.5 million.

The McGowan Government was elected to deliver on a jobs plan to create a more vibrant and diversified economy with a broader range of industries and jobs. This is why the new partnership between Central Regional TAFE's Moora Campus and AFGRI Equipment for the Apprenticeship program is critical. It will have a positive impact on the local community and businesses due to the increased number of people coming to Moora for training. With the Government's commitment to delivering increased regional investment, focusing on job creation and projects that drive economic growth in the regions, it is unlikely that the worst-case scenarios forecast in the Lucid Economics report will be realised.

I trust that this information confirms for you that the McGowan Government is making a considerable investment in education in regional Western Australia.

Thank you for seeking my comments.

Yours sincerely

SUE ELLERY MLC
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

5 JUN 2018