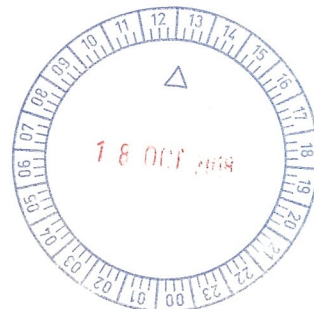




**Hon Sue Ellery MLC  
Minister for Education and Training  
Leader of the Legislative Council**

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Your Ref: Petition No 72  
Petition No 73  
Our Ref: 61-12692

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC  
Chairman  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Parliament House  
4 Harvest Terrace  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

  
Dear Mr Swinbourn

Thank you for your letters dated 7 and 13 September 2018 regarding Petition No 72 – Education Funding Cuts and Petition No 73 – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre.

The State Government is committed to budget repair measures and this has necessitated an assessment of all activities and expenditure.

As you would be aware, the State Government announced the closure of Moora Residential College in December 2017 due to low enrolments and facilities that required substantial upgrades. In September 2018, the Federal Government pledged \$8.7 million for the upgrades required at the college, allowing it to remain open. The State Government will continue to fund the recurrent costs of the college.

Some families have chosen not to return to the college in 2019. Students who transition to another school will have out-of-pocket costs reimbursed.

Community kindergartens were informed in December 2017 that, from 2019, the threshold number of enrolments required for them to receive operational funding and staff from the Department of Education would increase to 16. This change will bring the cost of Kindergarten provision at community kindergartens closer to the cost in public schools. In response to requests from the parent management committees of Byford, Glen Forrest, Mount Helena and Kindaimanna community kindergartens, I have granted one more year for them to transition to the new enrolment threshold. Each of these community kindergartens will be funded to operate in 2019, and the requirement for a minimum of 16 enrolments will apply from 2020.

The Department recognises community kindergartens as a legitimate alternative to Kindergarten provision at school, and for as long as sufficient numbers of families choose to enrol their children at community kindergartens, the Department will provide them with staff, operational funding and curriculum support.

With regard to your concerns regarding the programs at Kiara College and Kelmscott Senior High School, there are no current plans to close the farms at Kiara College and Kelmscott Senior High School. They will continue to be used as a resource for the delivery of curriculum and training programs for secondary students, including science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs.

Family Support WA has been selected as the preferred proponent to operate Landsdale Farm School. It has committed to continuing the provision of programs and opportunities for students and members of the community with disability, while maintaining access for the general public. Family Support WA also intends to develop additional education programs that link farm activities with the Western Australian curriculum.

Family Support WA has proposed a small increase to farm entrance fees for public school students and the general public. Its proposed change to a cottage-based fee structure for accommodation, rather than a per-head structure, will have little to no impact on affordability. The Department of Education acknowledges the concerns of both the Western Australian Gould League Inc (WAGL) and the general community regarding the decision to cease annual grant funding to the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre (HLWC).

The contribution of the WAGL in supporting curriculum implementation in Western Australia, including STEM, through the programs run by the HLWC is recognised. The Department has made the difficult decision to reduce and/or cease funding to a number of external organisations. In the case of funding for the HLWC, the decision was made to progress a new funding agreement for one year, concluding on 31 December 2018.

The Department approached Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) regarding support for the WAGL, and CVA indicated that it was willing to look at potential support for the HLWC site through its Rio Tinto Earth Assist program.

The City of Stirling was also contacted by the Department regarding funding support for the HLWC, but the City of Stirling has indicated that it is not currently in a position to provide such support.

Fairbridge WA Inc has been selected as the preferred proponent to operate the six camp schools that were available for lease. Fairbridge WA has committed to providing programs similar to those currently on offer at each campsite, with no increase in cost to public school students for accommodation and meals. I have been advised that future cost increases will be in line with yearly CPI increases.

I understand that monitoring of community satisfaction for both Landsdale Farm and the six camp school sites, including occupancy rates and ongoing affordability for public school students, will occur through annual reporting requirements included in the conditions of the Lease Agreement for each site.

Thank you for your representations on behalf of your constituent.

Yours sincerely



SUE ELLERY MLC  
**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

15 OCT 2018