

Community Kindergartens Association WA
c/- PO Box 543
Kalamunda WA 6952
<http://www.cka.asn.au/>

Sept 11, 2018

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC
Chair Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Legislative Council Committee Office
18 – 32 Parliament Place, West Perth

Dear Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC,

Petition No. 072 – Education Funding Cuts

I write on behalf of Community Kindergartens in Western Australia in opposition to the Department of Education's funding cuts, with particular reference to the change in minimum enrolment threshold for Community Kindergartens.

It is the position of the Community Kindergartens Association (CKA) that the minimum enrolment number remain at the historical quota of ten students.

Community Kindergartens are a significant asset to both our education landscape and local communities in Western Australia and deliver an experience that cannot be replicated in school based Kindergartens. They add value that extends far beyond the provision of 15 hours of kindergarten education per fortnight for kindergarten aged children.

Community Kindergartens add vibrancy to their local community. In addition to providing a valuable kindergarten option to children of kindergarten age, Community Kindergartens participate in activities which benefit the wider community. These include holding events, forming links with other community organisations, mobilising volunteers and participating in community projects. Furthermore, Community Kindergartens provide a pathway for parents to be active contributors in the primary schools their children subsequently attend. The skills, understanding and momentum they take from being active within a Community Kindergarten regularly translates into value for the primary school.

At Community Kindergartens parents are provided with an opportunity to utilise existing skills and develop new ones by participating in the Parent Management Committee. It is not unusual for a stay at home parent (often female) to join the committee and utilise their (frequently professional) skills to the mutual benefit of the Community Kindergarten and themselves. Facilitating this participation is aligned with initiatives that are actively promoted by other government departments and add value to our entire community. Working parents also donate their time, energy and skills for the benefit of the kindergarten and community. The opportunity for parents to contribute in this way, take on leadership positions and be part of an active community provides a wide array of benefits to the parent body, Community Kindergarten and the wider community.

Whilst Community Kindergartens enhance their communities in many ways, their core purpose is the provision of exceptional kindergarten education. It is widely understood that parental involvement in a child's education is one of the highest predictors of a child's success. Parental involvement is not only encouraged, but required in order for Community Kindergartens to operate and they continue to thrive on this passion and involvement.

We note that Government's rationale for increasing the threshold to 16 enrolments is to bring the average per-child cost of Kindergarten in a Community Kindergarten to a level closer to the average per child cost of Kindergarten provision in public schools (Hansard, 11 April 2018, pp. 1803 - 1804).

Based upon an analysis of publicly available figures for 2018 (Hansard, 11 April 2018, pp. 1764 - 1765), the CKA submit that the average per child cost of delivery of Community Kindergarten in Western Australia is currently less than the new upper per-child cost limit. In 2018, the actual funding allocated to each child in Community Kindergarten is approximately \$7064, compared to an upper per-child limit of approximately \$8430 (average actual cost per-child in a Community Kindergarten class of 16 children). This already represents a saving of around 16%. Analysis of the 2015, 2016 and 2017 figures yields similar results. We are available to further discuss these calculations as required.

The funding cuts were announced in December 2017. Given the Community Kindergarten enrolment application closing date of late July, the announced changes came into effect for Community Kindergartens immediately. A 60% increase in enrolments does not occur without a change in strategy and it is unreasonable to expect to see results of this magnitude in such a short period of time.

Previous experience has shown that Community Kindergartens regularly have a greater number of enrolments at the commencement of the academic year than received by July-August of the previous year (the existing cut-off date for funding approval.) Even with promotional campaigns run by Community Kindergartens, a significant proportion of families are not aware of the requirement to enrol their child in a kindergarten program so far in advance of their commencement. It is flawed to assess a Community Kindergarten's financial viability based on enrolment numbers 6 months prior to the commencement of the academic year.

Community Kindergartens provide numerous benefits to kindergarten children, their families and the communities in which they operate. The value of the sense of community and belonging children and families gain from attending a Community Kindergarten cannot be underestimated.

We urge the government to reverse the decision to increase the enrolment threshold.

Kind regards,



Kelly Muller

President

Community Kindergartens Association WA