

SCHOOLS — CLOSURE

291. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the Minister for Education and Training:

I refer to Legislative Council question without notice 273 about school closures.

- (1) If the Department of Education does not have a watchlist of schools considered for closure, why did the minister tell the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations on three occasions during hearings into the 2017–18 state budget on 17 October 2017 that such a watchlist exists?
- (2) Was the evidence that was given by the minister on 17 October 2017 correct or was the answer to question without notice 273 correct; and, when does the minister intend to correct the record and apologise to either the standing committee or the house?
- (3) Does the cabinet-endorsed criteria for closure include student numbers; and, if so, what are the number-related thresholds?
- (4) Can the minister please table the policy of the Department of Education as well as the cabinet-endorsed criteria about school closures?
- (5) For the 2017, 2018 and 2019 school years in which the minister has presided as Minister for Education and Training, can she please identify the schools that have been proposed by the Department of Education as meeting the criteria for school closure?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1)–(2) The Department of Education provides me, annually, with the same information about school closures as was provided annually to the former Minister for Education. In fact, in response to a question I put to the former minister at the 2014–15 annual report hearings, asking for the list of schools that are on the watchlist for closure due to low numbers, this response was provided —

Answer: The Department of Education does not have a watch list. Any recommendation for closure is only made after an analysis of enrolments over previous years and the particular circumstances of each school.

If it was not a watchlist then, it is not watchlist now.

- (3) Yes. The criteria endorsed by cabinet are the same criteria endorsed by the former Liberal government cabinet and were outlined in my answer to Legislative Council question without notice 273 provided to the member yesterday. It includes consistently low average enrolments for at least two years. This is 10 students or fewer for remote community and isolated schools, 15 students or fewer for rural primary schools, and 150 students or fewer for metropolitan primary schools.
- (4) There is no department policy on school closures. The decision to close a school sits with the Minister for Education.
- (5) I have not yet received advice for 2019. In 2017 and 2018, the Department of Education advised me of the following schools that met the endorsed criteria for closure. The rest of the answer is two lists. I seek leave to incorporate them into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The following material was incorporated —

2017:

Waddington Primary School
Spearwood Alternative School
Padbury Primary School
Bentley Primary School
Westminster Primary School
Jerdacuttup Primary School
Woodanilling Primary School
Jungdranung Remote Community School

2018:

Padbury Primary School
Waddington Primary School
Westminster Primary School

Extract from *Hansard*
[COUNCIL — Wednesday, 3 April 2019]
p1920d-1921a
Hon Martin Aldridge; Hon Sue Ellery

Spearwood Alternative School
Southwell Primary School
Jerdacuttup Primary School
Babakin Primary School
Jungdranung Remote Community School
