

**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 JURIEN BAY
FRIDAY, 11 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 1.50 pm

COX, DR WALTER
Director, Ardross Group,
sworn and examined:

The CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I would like to welcome you to the meeting. Before we begin, I am required to ask you to take either an oath or an affirmation.

[Witness took the oath.]

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

Dr Cox: Yes. I have signed it and handed it over.

The CHAIR: Thank you. These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist Hansard, please try to speak directly into the microphone in front of you. 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 today’s proceedings, you should request that the committee take the evidence in closed 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 you leave this hearing.

Again, thank you for coming today. As you are aware, the committee is inquiring into the government’s decision to cease to provide senior school allocation funding for years 11 and 12 courses at 21 district high schools across WA, including Jurien Bay District High School. The committee welcomes your input. Would you like to make an opening comment or presentation?

Dr Cox: Thank you. I would like to make a few opening comments. Today you would have heard an awful lot from people saying we want the current program for district high school retained. It is absolutely critical for the quality of life for the parents and children that the current services be maintained. I want to go one step further. This community is a growing community. Not only should we talk about retaining the current services, we should actually start planning for a senior high school to accommodate the growth that this town is going to go through. I am going to provide some evidence about where that growth of going to come from. I have circulated a sheet there which lists the talking points, and I will talk to each of those points.

If we go back a little bit in history, the then state planning commission, now the Western Australian Planning Commission, undertook a planning strategy for the central coast region and identified Jurien Bay as the future regional centre of the central coast region. It identified a number of things that go along with that, including the need, in time, to build a road linking Lancelin to Jurien Bay. Of course, that road is currently under construction and will be finished later this year.

Studies that were done in conjunction with the planning for that road and subsequently have indicated that there is an expectation that the population of Jurien Bay would double in the 10 years after the road was constructed. Now the construction, of course, is running about eight years late. The road was initially planned to be built much earlier. But if we still believe those findings, then in the next 10 years we can expect the population of Jurien Bay to double from what it is now.

That is supported by a number of other planning studies that are being done or have been done. What I want to highlight is that following that central coast planning study, the local authority,

through the then shire president, was very active in encouraging developers to come to Jurien Bay. The first thing that happened is that the planners prepared for the area that was going to see future growth in Jurien Bay. It may be a bit difficult for you all to see this map, but I will have a go at explaining it. The existing town of Jurien Bay is marked in grey. You can see the street and block layout for the existing town of Jurien Bay. The structure plan that was done was effectively for the whole area from old Jurien Bay all the way to Hill River. That structure plan identifies a number of areas that are seen as future residential areas. It also identified very large areas for conservation estate by way of coastal reserves—they are marked in dark green—as well as conservation estate linking up. We are currently about here. Of course Indian Ocean Drive is this road here, with a future bypass planned. I am talking long term—20 or 30 years. In that area here, we are talking about 9 000 future residential lots. Multiply that by two point something people per residential lot, we are talking about an ultimate population for the town of Jurien Bay of about 20 000 people. We are talking, though, about 20, 30 or 40 years. We are not talking about that happening in the next year or two. To complement that, a number of sites for schools have been identified—an existing high school here, a primary school here, and new primary school sites identified all the way through the development. The development will go from north to south gradually as the market dictates. There is also a site identified for a future high school here, when of course the existing high school gets to the stage of reaching capacity. So the point I am making is that the predictions are for population growth. That in turn will feed into children going to schools. Adequate infrastructure has been planned by way of sites, and we see the senior high school at the current site as being a first step to enhance education for the community.

Now just to put some reality into it, I will talk a bit about the short term. The point I am making here that is we are now seeing what is happening in the near term as opposed to the 10 or 20-year time horizon. Again, the existing town of Jurien Bay is here, and you see the area of land that has already been planned, an area called outline development plan 1, and subsequently outline development plan 2 and outline development plan 3. I am not sure how you came into the town today, but if you came in on the road from Cervantes, you would have seen a large area with new homes under construction. To date, Ardross Group, which owns all the land south of Jurien Bay, has developed all of this area here. They have developed some 700 lots, of which about 620 have been sold. In excess of 100 houses have already been built in this area that you see here. Subject to market demand we expect there to be an extra 40 to 50 houses built each year in the near term, and of course that will escalate over time as the community grows. So there is growing evidence that the planning study that was put in place by Main Roads WA and the WA Planning Commission for population growth has a real foundation to it. We are seeing it by way of land sales, and we are seeing it by way of housing being built, and in time, of course, that will feed through in terms of population into the schools. The Ardross Group wants to support the community in terms of aspirations to maintain the current quality and quantity of services in the district high school, but also to start sowing the seeds so that we can start planning for a senior high school to ensure that we can accommodate the growth that we anticipate. That is the end of my presentation, but I would be delighted to answer any questions that members may have.

[2.00 pm]

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Mr Cox, of the 100 homes that have been built since 2005, do you have the statistics on the age demographic of the people who have been building those homes?

Dr Cox: No; I do not. I can just give you my empirical observations. but I do not think I will be able to help in terms of where I suspect you want to go; that is, adults versus children, versus other things. We do not have that information.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: I am not sure who it was earlier today but someone said it was pegged as an area for people to come and retire to up here at Lancelin. I am wondering what sort of infrastructure

you are looking for in the future as far as a “Jurientologist” perhaps becoming resident up here rather than a district or senior high school.

Dr Cox: Okay. Let us keep a balance about these things. We do have evidence of the type of people who are buying land from us. That gives you some indication of whether it will be young people or retirees. The answer is a combination of the two, so let me just give you some empirical evidence and please do not hold me to the nearest percentage.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: No; your observations.

Dr Cox: The observation from our sales is that about a third of the buyers are people who are buying to build a future holiday home, which, in time, may well become their retirement home. About a third of the buyers are people from the existing town of Jurien Bay who want to upgrade and build a brand new house to suit their lifestyle, so there is no net gain in population at all. The other third are people who have aspirations of moving to Jurien Bay for lifestyle reasons. A number of those—I cannot quote the exact number—are people who have young families or growing families, and will move. The interesting part is that in the existing town of Jurien Bay we already have a number of people who work in mines and operate fly in, fly out. They drive to Geraldton and to Perth as they do their rotation. The recent sales we have had indicate that one in three buyers from us are people who do not yet live in Jurien Bay but, in fact, work on mines and see Jurien Bay as an ideal place for their families to grow up. Usually the male moves out for one, two or three weeks at a time to operate on the mines, but the family lives here. In the main, those people seem to have young children.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Great. Let us hope that nothing happens to the mining industry.

Dr Cox: To answer the other side of the equation, which is the specific question you started with, in terms of retirees, the council of course has a proposal for an aged care facility through the RSL. We have a large site, which I can show on the plan, for aged care accommodation to accommodate up to 300 units of aged care. Yes, there will be a whole series of services required in the future to accommodate those people. But for the purpose of today I am focussing on the fact that people are coming with children who will feed into the school.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Thank you.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: My question will not have any impact upon the actual conclusion of this because I can see the growth prospects clearly. I presume that quite a few of the houses will be unoccupied, apart from the holiday seasons and so on, at least initially

Dr Cox: If we talk about the existing about 100 new homes that have been built in an estate called Beachridge—it is all part of Jurien Bay—my judgement is, based on driving through the area, that at least 90 per cent of those are occupied. They are either people who have moved from the existing town and upgraded their accommodation into a brand new home, or are people who have moved into Jurien Bay and are living in Beachridge. Only about 10 or so of those houses are for people who come there for holidays only. As further supporting evidence, we are currently building five houses for GROH. They will be occupied by public servants who work in Jurien Bay.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How important is a good education facility to the success or otherwise of the sale of the lots you have?

Dr Cox: I spent some time in the sales office to get a handle on the sorts of people who are interested in buying land in Jurien Bay. The most common question from younger people coming into the office is about the school. If they do not come from Jurien Bay but come from elsewhere, they want to know whether there is a school here, what sort of levels, the quality of the education. For young people coming in, it is one of their decision points: is there a school, what quality of education, how far does it go? If it does not accommodate their needs or aspirations, they make a decision about buying elsewhere. That is a reality of life. People make choices based on education facilities available. It is also a case of—this is more us as company—for a community to grow you

have to have access to good quality education. It is not about just a high school; it is also in time about adequate technical and further education-TAFE-systems because we as a company and other companies are talking about tourism facilities in the town to accommodate people, which means we need staff, trained staff and some local facility to provide that skills training for future employees of those facilities. Ultimately, of course, if we now start thinking about Jurien Bay in 20, 30, 40 years' time being like a Busselton or a Geraldton, because that is about the size we are talking about, we then have to start thinking about setting some land aside for a university campus just like Geraldton has, a starter campus. You cannot have all the courses there but at least you can do nursing and teaching there. Again, we have to plan for the future to accommodate people. If people see it as a plan and as a commitment, they can then make decisions with a degree of certainty. If on the other hand, in light of the current uncertainty, when we talk to people, we now have to honestly say there may not be a district high school in years 11 and 12 in two years' time. That in fact frightens people.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: In promoting the proposal, I am assuming you will have met with representatives from the education department. Are they aware of the proposed sites for the schools under your plan?

Dr Cox: We, the local authority or the Wheatbelt Development Commission have met with all the agencies of government at various times to talk a little bit about the grand plan. They are all aware of what I have just covered and they are all, in their longer term planning, starting to think about it. It is like anything else, though—a chicken and egg situation—do you build the hospital first or do you wait until you have got the patients. It is a case of yes, they are aware of the fact that there is growth on the horizon. I am not so sure how quickly they are able to incorporate that into their short-term planning to ultimately build the infrastructure that is required, but they are certainly aware.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Your message is that it should be sooner rather than later?

Dr Cox: We are realists. It is a case of wanting facilities there in time as people need them, so we have talked to the health department and the health department has talked about future medical services for the town of Jurien Bay. As the population grows, we expect services to be provided. Those are the same expectations we have of the education department in that it is planning for the future. Again they want to see, putting it crudely, bums on seats to accommodate their plan.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Thank you for that.

The CHAIR: I think that might have exhausted our questions. Thank you very much, Dr Cox. You will receive a transcript which you can check. Thank you very much for your time this afternoon; it has been very useful

Dr Cox: You are welcome; thank you

Hearing concluded at 2.09 pm