



BUNBURY CATHEDRAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

28 October 2021

Ref:MOB:4981

The Chair
Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Assembly
Western Australia

Email: <mailto:lapac@parliament.wa.gov.au>

The Chair,

Submission – Student Transport Assistance Policy framework inquiry

Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School (BCGS) is making a submission to the Student Transport Assistance Policy framework inquiry (the inquiry) specifically addressing from the Terms of Reference:

- a) the eligibility criteria for students to qualify for transport assistance, including:**
- i. nearest appropriate school;**

The current policy and eligibility criteria do not allow parents and students access to appropriate school choice, “lumping” Non-Government schools together as a group. This is in stark contrast to the different categories of Government school that are recognised, allowing “Specialist” programs to be a differentiating factor of choice for students, but **only** in the Government school sector.

The policy and criteria need to recognise the differences between all schools and allow students choice of the most appropriate school for their needs. The policy and criteria also need to allow Non-Government schools recognition of “Specialist” status for unique program options and combinations that are not available at other schools.

I present two specific examples that impact on bus transport arrangements for students who attend Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School.

Example 1.

Georgiana Molloy Anglican School (GMAS) is currently considered by the policy and criteria to be the “same” as Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School. As a consequence, when GMAS was opened 12 years ago, students from the Margaret River/Busselton region were no longer deemed eligible to use School Bus Services (SBS) transport to BCGS. A grandfather clause was implemented to allow existing students to attend, however in 2016 SBS cancelled the route and redeployed the bus elsewhere. Following this, BCGS has been forced to provide two 57 seat buses, on which parents now pay for their students to be transported to school.

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Georgiana Molloy Anglican School is fundamentally different to Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School.

GMAS is a systemic Non-Government school, part of the Anglican Schools Association (ASA), governed by the CEO from the Perth Diocese Office. The governance sets strategic direction for the 18 schools in the system, the fee structure, annual budget, and the range of subjects available to students. Fees are low, class sizes are high, there is not a large co-curricular program and the school offers no senior secondary specialist courses.

BCGS in comparison is a truly independent Non-Government school, governed by its own Board, comprising community, parent, and Bunbury Diocese representation. The school is high fee, to allow for the provision of small class sizes and the widest breadth of subject choices in the southwest region, comprising both ATAR and General SCSA subject options, certificate and diploma courses, and a full range of vocational offerings as a foundation member and part owner of the Bunbury Regional Trade Training Consortium (BRTTC). This range of subjects is simply not matched in regional Western Australia. The School is also a certificated Cambridge School, offering ICGSE and other Cambridge examinations, a member of the Round Square Association (RSA) offering a range of opportunities very few schools can in the areas of Internationalism, Democracy, Environment, Adventure, Leadership and Service.

Students who choose BCGS for their education do so for the range of high-quality opportunities that are simply not available at GMAS.

Example 2.

Manea Senior College is currently considered a “Specialist” offering, allowing any student in the southwest access to SBS transport to attend the school. This “Specialist” status is by virtue of their published Health and Medical Specialist course, and the senior college status.

Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School runs provides four (4) Specialist programs for Senior Secondary students (Years 10, 11, 12), in the areas of Medical and Allied Health, Engineering, Creative industries and Vocational Education. A feature of the specialist programs at BCGS is the assigning of an industry mentor for each student, and participation additional out of school events, courses, and certification.

Of our highest performing students, we had six (6) students offered direct entry into the Doctor of Medicine program at UWA (out of 72 places in the state), four (4) students into the Masters of Professional Engineering, and four (4) students into Bachelor of Philosophy Honours degree program. Our vocational pathway students achieved 17 certificate II, 10 certificate III, and 2 certificate IV qualifications, setting themselves up for traineeships, apprenticeships, the workforce, and alternate pathway entry to university. A number of these students have gone straight into apprenticeships and traineeships, with partner organisations here in the Bunbury region, and employment both here and in Perth.

In 2017 Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School applied to the Department of Education to be recognised as a Specialist School in the four areas of Medical and Allied Health, Engineering, Creative Industries and Vocational Education. This request was denied, as there is not currently a process for Non-Government schools to gain recognition or certification in this area. Additionally, it was noted that the only formal process for Government Schools to become a “Specialist” school, is a statement of intent from the Principal.

This situation is inequitable and disadvantages student choice to access the most suitable educational offering for their aspirations and future.

Summary

I ask the inquiry to carefully consider how regional students are currently being disadvantaged in terms of equitable access to choice of education, through the implementation of current transport assistance policy and criteria by School Bus Services. Regardless of parental income or status, all regional students should be afforded the same access to their choice of school, regardless of the school being in the Government or Non-Government sector.

I would welcome the opportunity to give further information to the inquiry and will happily travel to Perth to consult with the committee in person. Please let me know if I can assist in this way.

Yours Sincerely



MR MATTHEW O'BRIEN
Head of School