



**Hon Donna Faragher JP MLC
Member for East Metropolitan Region**

7 September 2018

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Matthew

Re: Petition No. 072 – Education Funding Cuts

Thank you for your letter dated 15 August 2018 regarding Petition No. 072.

The petition, tabled on 26 June 2018 in the Legislative Council, contains 2,468 signatures. For the Committee's reference, I tabled an identical petition on 23 August 2018 which contained a further 1,355 signatures.

The petition calls for the complete reversal of all remaining education budget cuts that were announced, without consultation, by the McGowan Labor Government on 13 December 2017 including those impacting community kindergartens, Moora Residential College, Landsdale Farm School, Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre and camp schools. Like other similar petitions tabled in the Legislative Council since March 2018, the petition demonstrates the continued strong community opposition to these cuts to our State's public education system. The petition has also served to reinforce the importance of these critical education services to students and their families, teachers and local communities in both regional and metropolitan Western Australia.

Since the tabling of the petition, the Commonwealth Government has announced that it will provide \$8.7 million in capital funding to ensure the future of Moora Residential College. This is an extremely welcome announcement that fixes a terrible decision that should have never been made in the first place by the McGowan Labor Government.

Notwithstanding this welcome announcement, there are other budget cuts to our State's public education system that have not been reversed. These remaining cuts, which include those identified in this petition, continue to cause significant distress to the community based organisations and schools impacted.

Community kindergartens, for example, have long been recognised as an acceptable alternative to school-based kindergarten programmes. They are an important option for many families and have been supported by successive governments however they are now under threat.

From next year the enrolment threshold for community kindergartens to access operational funding and staff from the Department of Education will increase from 10 to 16 confirmed student enrolments. If they do not reach this number their funding will be cut, creating significant uncertainty for families and staff. Confirmed enrolments were required by 10 August 2018 and in response to parliamentary question 733 asked on 30 August 2018, it is clear that some community kindergartens have not met the new threshold. Should these community kindergartens not be able to achieve at least 16 confirmed enrolments soon, or be given an exemption, they will close.

Changing the rules without any consultation is a clear attempt by the McGowan Government to reduce the number of smaller community kindergartens. It is an unfair and discriminatory decision.


Other poorly-thought out decisions include the removal of department funding and support to the following camp schools - Geraldton, Pilbara, Point Peron, Pemberton and Goldfields – and Landsdale Farm School. In the case of Landsdale Farm School, I believe it strongly adheres to its purpose to provide “a rich and extensive learning environment for all students with an emphasis on students with disabilities” (2017 Annual Report). It provides a range of unique hands-on experiences linked to the Australian Curriculum and supports students in programmes including Animal Studies Certificate II, Business Certificate II, Animal Care and Towards Independence. The Farm School also delivers comprehensive professional development courses for teachers and educators.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to detail all of my concerns with regard to the Government’s education budget cuts within this two-page submission. I have however attached for your information a copy of two parliamentary speeches that outline some of my concerns in greater detail. I also refer the Committee to my letter dated 7 September 2018 in response to Petition No. 073 – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre.

In summary, I strongly support the petitioners’ request that the remaining cuts be reversed. Every budget cut was made without consultation with those affected and no understanding of their negative impact. As the petition states, “[a]ll of these educational facilities are of enormous value to the urban and rural communities that they service. The costs of removing funding will be of a greater social, educational and economic cost to the people and government of Western Australia in the short and long term”.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like any further information.

Yours sincerely



HON DONNA FARAGHER JP MLC
Member for East Metropolitan Region
Shadow Minister for Education and Training; Women’s Interests