

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

**PETITION 151 — CLOSURE OF THE  
DENMARK CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
WEDNESDAY, 16 MAY 2012**

**SESSION TWO**

**Members**

**Hon Brian Ellis (Chairman)  
Hon Kate Doust (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Phil Edman  
Hon Colin Holt  
Hon Lynn MacLaren**

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**Hearing commenced at 11.30 am****COLE, MRS DIANE****Principal, Denmark High School, sworn and examined:****FISCHER, MR JOHN****Executive Director, Infrastructure, Department of Education, sworn and examined:****MILLIGAN, MR NEIL****Regional Executive Director, South West, Department of Education, sworn and examined:**

**The CHAIRMAN:** Welcome along. We have got a tight timeframe and I want to give you every opportunity to answer the questions and put a submission to us. I will go through the formal procedure that we have to do for all hearings and ask you to take either the oath or affirmation.

[Witnesses took the oath.]

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

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist the committee and Hansard, please quote the full title of any document you refer to during the course of this hearing for the record and please be aware of the microphones and try to speak into them. Ensure that you do not cover them with papers or make noises near them. As there are three of you, can you speak one at a time for the ease of Hansard. 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 evidence be taken 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. I advise you that publication or disclosure of the uncorrected transcript of evidence may constitute a contempt of Parliament and may mean that the material published or disclosed is not subject to parliamentary privilege.

Just before I ask you to open with a statement to the committee, I will just introduce the committee—we have a couple of apologies as it turns out—Hon Lynn MacLaren, Hon Col Holt and myself as chair, Brian Ellis. Apologies from the deputy chair who just had to leave and Hon Phil Edman who could not make it today. Perhaps if you can give us a statement. I noticed that you were in the gallery for the last hearing. We would like to perhaps hear from your side of the issue.

[11.30 am]

**Mr Fischer:** Thank you, chair. Firstly, the driving issue here is education. I will ask Di to give you a bit of background to the school and perhaps to give you some idea of the numbers. When the school, or this facility, opened in 2000, a master plan was prepared for the site that showed where future buildings would occur. It showed the opportunities for expansion and the best use of the site. It has already been explained that two of the buildings were retained back in 2000 because of the community interest. In some ways, that has limited the potential development of the site and the management of the site, but that is now history and from an education perspective we are now working around that. The site itself is located next to the river and has a lot of low-lying areas so the ability to fully utilise the whole site is limited by that. The master plan reflects that and I guess

when we start looking at our accommodation requirements that is the background in terms of what facilities we had available and where we could locate facilities. In addition to the permanent facilities on site, we already have seven transportables—temporary buildings that were put on site to accommodate students—so we are limited in terms of what other accommodation we can put on site. Probably critical, or interesting, to the discussion is the changing use of the school since 2000. The school initially opened up as a years 8 to 10 high school. That was expanded to years 11 and 12 in 2009.

**Mrs Cole:** Or 2008—we started.

**Mr Fischer:** 2008—I think it evolved over a couple of years with some students being there prior to that. Providing education facilities to upper high school means that you need additional facilities and different types of specialist facilities that support the curriculum required. You are aware of the decision to bring year 7s into secondary schools in 2015. The other pressure on the school is what we call the half cohort—when the decision was made to change the primary school entry age—that has worked its way through. So there is what we call a class or a cohort going through schools at the moment that will finish in 2014 and the cohort size will double. So there are two pressures in 2015: that is, the full cohort of a class year going through and the year 7s. Not only have we a short-term need or current need in terms of accommodation, a continuing need in terms of these things. Perhaps Di may want to talk about the growth and the impact that has on matters.

**Mrs Cole:** In 1999, building began on the high school site and the school opened in 2000. At that time, it was envisaged that it would be a years 8 to 10 school and that sometime in the future—plans were drawn up in 1999 or 1998 showing where the high school extension would move to—it would become a senior school.

In 2008, we began our first lot of year 11s. Now this was done with a lot of community consultation. From 1918 when Albany Senior High School was built, the community of Denmark had a long history of every child who went on with education—a lot did not in the early days—went to Albany Senior High School. When I became principal in 1996 I started to see a real need for country kids to be able to stay at home and go to school. Our population extends from Walpole over. While that was reasonably comfortable for the kids who lived in Denmark to get the 7.30 bus to Albany and come back at 4.15, for those kids who lived in Nornalup, Peaceful Bay, Walpole and other parts of the west on farms, even a farm 30 kilometres out of Denmark, the parents had to bring the kids into Denmark to catch the 7.30 bus. It also takes kids out of our community, constantly. There are those who board, and some kids from Walpole still choose to do that, but the after-school sports, the work and all those things that are part of the community were lost because of that drift to Albany.

When we first started talking to the community about having years 11 and 12 at the school, there were the no-sayers and a year of momentum happened and changed and in 2008 we began. We began with something like, I think, 32 students in year 11. Now we lose very, very few students. Our first TEE group went through in 2009 and in that year we were in the top 50 schools in the state, and that against all the private schools et cetera. So the Denmark community, through supporting us and establishing a senior secondary, was very, very pleased with the outcome. Last year, again, we were in the top 50 schools. So in three years we have been in the top 50 schools in the state. Something like 45 per cent of our students got an ATAR of over 80. For a small school, we are doing extremely well. Part of the success is the effort that my teachers put into after-school workshops, extra classes, weekend things. It is a part of the community. We run specialist basketball programs. We have a graduation that 600 people come to. We are a large part of and are involved in the community.

With that growth, we added another 34 classes. For example, in the sciences you add biology, human biology, psychology, chemistry and physics in years 11 and 12, and immediately your needs change for what needs to happen in the school. So the growth has been there.

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**The CHAIRMAN:** While we are on that, can you remind me: what are the student numbers at the school?

**Mrs Cole:** We are at 280. I have a chart. Can I pass that to you?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes; just table it. And a copy for Hansard.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** They were ready for that question!

**Mrs Cole:** Because of the small cohort, we have only 32 students currently in year 10, but when they finish in year 12 we will immediately go up to about 400 by 2016. So we will continue to need space. When the lease was taken out with DEIC and Green Skills managing the centre, at that stage there was always the notion that the school would not expand beyond years 8 to 10. People could not see it. These developments have been quite rapid and reflect the changes in the school leaving age and all those sorts of things. Up until the new buildings started, we were able to keep the kids pretty much in the heart of the school and the CSL was, you know, down the space a bit. But with the new buildings, we are going to be a few metres apart—at most about 20 metres. It is a small road width. I can talk to you about the road too. So that is part of the thinking and the need to expand. I want my kids to have the best opportunities. Living in the country should not mean that you cannot do certain things. We are realistic about what we can offer, but being able to utilise the CSL building will also give us the ability to expand what we can offer in terms of the arts. With the building project, because we have only two science classrooms currently, the whole block, which is six classrooms, will be turned into five science facilities and one general-purpose classroom. In order to do that, the builder has said that we needed to move completely out because it is far more economical to get in an electrician to do all the work or whatever is happening in the building rather than have the students on site. Given that I have no extra space and that I already have seven demountables, and given that we are also worried about proximity issues, the CSL was a logical conclusion.

**Hon COL HOLT:** Is that it?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are there any other comments?

**Mr Fischer:** The last comment Di made has been a part of our discussions with DEIC and Green Skills and is really to do with the proximity of, I guess, the people who visit the CSL centre and the school. The centre provides dormitory accommodation and so people who may come from anywhere in the world visit the site. Managing who is on site and whether they are appropriate is certainly a challenge from a principal's perspective. The question about how close people are and how much control we can exert on people who come on to a site is, I think, critical.

**The CHAIRMAN:** A quick question: is that as it is now or after expansion—the building being too close?

**Mr Fischer:** Both comments, chair. I think the standards that apply to how we manage people coming onto school sites have changed since 2000, when this occurred. There has been quite a discussion within education about how we manage sites like this and for this particular site we have been discussing what is and what is not appropriate. Given that the building program brings buildings closer to the centre makes it more critical. At the moment, the school is in some ways partially divorced from the CSL—that is, it can be separated in some way—but with the new building program is quite close proximity between the new facilities and the CSL.

**The CHAIRMAN:** What is the budget for the new building program?

**Mr Fischer:** It is a \$7 million program.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Was there any thought of a different plan—going up? Why are you going out? Why are you expanding that way? I mean, plenty of schools build up instead of expanding out. I ask the question because it is an obvious consideration. Have you had other plans?

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**Mr Fischer:** The original master plan—we are still working to the original master plan and are building on the sites that were originally identified in 2000. As I mentioned before, there is limited space on site that can be utilised. Because these buildings have been left where they are, they have impeded some of the opportunities for managing the site in the best way. But the master plan recognises proposed buildings. You mentioned going up, but that is another nine per cent cost.

**Mrs Cole:** Where we are is a very wet area and the current buildings are steel frame with fibrocement cladding to make a light impact on the land. The new buildings will also be light impact rather than, you know, heavy buildings.

**Hon COL HOLT:** What you are saying is that you are working off a master plan developed in 2000.

**Mrs Cole:** yes.

**Hon COL HOLT:** We have already heard evidence about the changing nature of Denmark and the growth, and you never went back to revisit those master plans? Since 2000? Given what changed from 2000 to this time, that there was a real community investment into the Centre for Sustainable Living, and changes in demographics and potential to expand into a 11–12 school, you never actually went back and revisited the master plan to take those into account?

**Mr Fischer:** It depends on what we understand as a master plan. The master plan identifies the locations of facilities as a space on the ground. It does not necessarily describe the content or those other sorts of things—it is the work of the current architect to say this is where we can locate facilities and this is what those facilities can accomplish. There is not a lot of opportunity on that site.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Can I ask —

**Hon COL HOLT:** No; I need to explore this because I need to know how you took into account the changing use of the building that was originally going to be demolished and is now used as a community and educational asset. How did you take that into account when planning any expansion? Or was it never taken into account for any expansion?

**Mr Fischer:** The original master plan showed that it would have removed all the traffic facilities—the parking—to where it is currently located. At the moment, the traffic roads go through the site. Under the original master plan, that would have been located at the front of the school as most schools are currently planned. You separate the traffic drop-off areas to the front of the school and the parking areas are removed so that when kids or anyone come on to the site they can move. We have a facility now with parking, buildings, road and more buildings so you cannot avoid the traffic nature of the site.

**Hon COL HOLT:** Maybe I am not making myself totally clear. I understand the educational drive for making the school site the best that it can be for the school kids. What I am saying to you is there is obviously a real change in how the community perceives the Centre for Sustainable Living and its role in the community. How was that taken into account? There are community needs about education, but how was the community need about the centre taken into the master plan or development or expansion of the site? Was there any?

**Mr Fischer:** The current master plan shows that facility to be remaining.

**Mrs Cole:** The other thing is I guess the use of the word “community”. Now you can say, “Oh, the community wants this, or the community wants that.” It is kind of a bit of a motherhood word. There are many, many people in our community who want to see the school expand and are quite happy about what is happening at the moment. There are people in our community who are not very happy about it. But I do not think we can brush community with one stroke. I have had no letters of complaint from any community member. I have had no community member come to see me to tell me that they are upset. The shire will also report exactly the same. Now, Denmark is a community

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where there is always lots of argument about things. A few years ago we had an argument about where the hospital was going to be located. There were arguments on the Greens side that it should not go where it currently is. The community is very happy, I would think, from my experience—I have lived in Denmark for 17 years; I am not an Education blow-in, I am part of that community—with the site of the new hospital. We went through I think it would have been something like two years of angst over the arguments that were going on in town.

[11.50 am]

The state government has also vested with the community, the old hospital, for a community resource centre. Therefore, a lot of people in the community are actually benefiting by that hospital site being developed for community resource. I think that many of the people that would have used the CSL in the past for community activities will now be able to use the community resource centre. Now we are in a hiatus period at the moment where changes are still being developed on that site, but that will be a wonderful area for the community. It is right in the centre of town.

**Hon COL HOLT:** I understand why you are talking about community, community and community, but that is not the purpose of this questioning. This is a failure, in a way, of community consultation and community planning in terms of that centre and that expansion planning. At some point in time when you started thinking about expansion and the master plan, there would have been some questions about how the Centre for Sustainable Living fits within that expansion. There must have been at some point in time that discussion happened. From our view point, we are getting a bit of angst from the community about it. I am really asking: how was that taken into account? When you started the expansion plans, the master plan, the implementation, you got the funding to do it, how was that consideration from your view point, if it was ever done—I assume it must have been done—portrayed to the tenancy and the Centre for Sustainable Living? That is what I am asking. It is not about who the community are. This is that planning process and that consultation as we deliver better educational outcomes. What happened? There seems to be a gap.

**Mr Fischer:** I think you are talking about the sequence of events that occurred up to the announcement of the building program. When the building program was developed and the scope of that was seen—I mean, all those buildings are on the site away from the CSL. A building issue can happen independent of the CSL. The question then came about: how can we deliver that building program and accommodate the future needs? That is when this other question came up and that is when we asked the question about the lease. Is there a live lease, or what does it mean in terms of that discussion? Our advice was that lease had expired and that we were on now a monthly arrangement. So the conversation we had with the CSL was in that context. Back in October when the principal met with the DEIC and explained what was happening at the school, she said this is our understanding of the lease and this is how we think we can best accommodate the needs of the school.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** On what basis did you allocate the \$7 million to the Denmark High School expansion? How did you know that you needed \$7 million?

**Mr Fischer:** We do a fair bit of work on all our schools in terms of the type of facilities that are required to deliver the curriculum agenda.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** For instance, did you calculate land value in that area or did you just look at the facilities like you needed a science lab et cetera, or did you look at actually the site itself and what would be required—filling in the wetlands, changing the parking?

**Mr Fischer:** When we get our architects on board they do exactly that. We say, “We have got a particular facility that has deficiencies in these particular functional areas.” They are missing a science area or a teaching area or whatever. We give that to our architects. They work with the existing plans. They look on site to see where they can build, accommodate. Internally it is an

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iterative process about we know that we need to provide these types of facilities so that the school can deliver a curriculum outcome. How can we get those facilities on site?

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Mr Fischer, at what point did you begin costing what would be required to expand the high school as a monetary figure?

**Mr Fischer:** Look, I am not quite sure of the exact timing, but we would have had plans back in 2009, 2010. We would have been starting to explore what we could do. I think these funds were announced in the 2010–11 budget, if I have got my timing right.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** At that time, did you open discussions —

**Mr Fischer:** Sorry, the details were in the 2011–12 budget in terms of the \$7 million, but I think it was flagged during that 2010–11 year that there would be some funding for regions—that was in royalties for regions—and then the details for those programs were announced in the 2011–12 program.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** When you were looking at Denmark High School and what you were going to do there—I assume it was at least back in 2010 when you started look at that site—did you open a dialogue with the Centre for Sustainable Living about the potential future expansion of that area and how they might play a role in it?

**Mr Fischer:** I do not believe we did. We would have been at that stage exploring what building works we could do because there would not have been any guarantee of funds at that stage. We would rarely talk even to a school about funding until there is some certainty of that funding. We would have been exploring what could have been done, but not necessarily looking at—I mean, we have got longer-term plans for a lot of our schools. Not all of our schools, but a lot of our schools will have longer-term plans, but we would not have entered into dialogue about the implications of that until we have got some certainty about the timing of those sorts of things. Otherwise —

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Pardon me for interrupting you, but you did not enter into dialogue about developing those plans with the current users of that property and how they could perhaps do a staged transition. If you did intend for them to go off to the resource centre, there was no —

**Mr Fischer:** No, I think —

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Because originally the lease was a 15-year lease. So, you would imagine that there would be some transition plans from 2015 maybe, but it seems to me that it does not sound like they were involved in the planning of the development and the \$7 million.

**Mrs Cole:** Can I show you something? I am a teacher, so I have visuals. This is a plan of the site that was done in 2000. It was done by Green Skills and it has been on public display in Denmark in a gazebo as you walk around the river of the future development of the area and the school. The red area there, which is drawn, is very clearly marked as the location of the future site of the school. It is a very narrow block of land. Part of it is boarded by the river, the other part by the road. There is no choice but to go further down this way. So, this is the CSL. This is always going to be—I think the department has been very generous with the community in allowing the lease. It was something like \$100 a year. There was no malice or intention to do anything but support the community.

We did not know when the school would expand. So, in hindsight you could say, “We should have done this. We should have done that,” but we never knew. In that intervening time the CSL or Green Skills have come to me and said, “Can we have a bit of land there that you are not currently using to have a veggie garden?” or, “Can we do something with the wetlands?” They were not wetlands before; they were paddocks from the old ag school. When the new buildings happened, they were basically a sand pad. So, the wetlands were created by Green Skills, but always on the understanding and the knowledge that that is where the new school would go. I have correspondence where I have said to people who wanted to put in a garden, bush tucker or whatever, “This at one stage—I do not know when—will be part of the school. I will allow you to

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use this as a community goodwill gesture but you must understand that at some point in time we are going to get that development.” I did not know it was coming. I was away on long service leave. When I got back, I was reading one of the school newsletters. It was just wonderful.

**Hon COL HOLT:** I do not think that is the issue though.

[12.00 noon]

**Mrs Cole:** No, but, the issue has become—because it was never real before. When we got a plan, the first plan we got of where the new design and technology building was going—we have not had a proper design and technology building as yet. We have had an old shed from the old ag school days. Our library is currently 150 square metres. For a district high school, the minimum is 270. The new library that we will get, which is a wonderful learning facility for our children, is 480 square metres. I think Louise spoke earlier—we are not getting huge facilities that are going to be a huge a number of rooms. We are getting real facilities for the first time. It was not a mischievous or negative thing that was happening. It evolved in the same way that some of the other things have evolved. Some of the things that have evolved, having those old buildings there has created an absolute traffic hazard for my school. I have trucks barrelling through between my D&T centre and the rest of the school. We have huge parking issues.

I guess if you had a crystal ball that it could all be done ahead of time, maybe, but there is no malicious attempt.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Thank you for the map. I love maps.

**Mrs Cole:** Yes, so do I.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** The visuals do make a difference. One of the first things I tried to do was look at your map and see how close the facility is to the school, because I think that does help us make a decision.

My last question, before we get back to Colin, is about the lease. In the original lease we heard this morning that there was a clause which said there would be 18 months’ notice before the end to really—I think, initially the thought was there would be a refurbishment program. So, in this case was 18 months’ notice given?

**Mr Fischer:** It is really an exit clause in case there is a need to demolish those buildings. In that situation there is an 18-month warning of that, and that is assuming that the lease is live. When we sought advice about the condition of the lease, we were advised that the lease actually had not been renewed, so that first option had not been taken. So, it was effectively on a month-to-month basis. I guess, theoretically, we could have said, “You’ve got a month to get out.” Di argued that, “Look, there is no need to get them out immediately, but we can give them X amount of time,” and that time was based on when we anticipated the building program would commence, and so there would be some disturbance on-site, and so there was nine months given. That is why the nine months is different to the 18 months, but it is related to having a lease, which is understood to be on a monthly basis. So that was why that period was selected.

**Hon COL HOLT:** My question is on the lease as well—a question from a department viewpoint and a local viewpoint. Your view of the lease is that it no longer exists because it was not signed. That advice has been given. From a departmental view, is there any recognition about what work has occurred on that site by the people who are leasing it at the moment or not leasing it?

**Mr Fischer:** There is no doubt that the buildings had significant changes from back in 2000, and a significant amount of money has been spent on that. I guess the reason we are sitting down with DEIC and Green Skills is to see what can logically be done to recognise the work that has been done. The work has been done to facilitate the use of their building. It does not necessarily represent a great asset for education. It has not been turned into a good classroom type of thing. It has been set up and developed as a facility that the CSL is utilising. Notwithstanding that, we are exploring

to see whether we can do something. We are caught in between, I guess, our legal advice, which says that we do not have a lease agreement, except we only have to give them a month. I guess you are asking about almost a moral recognition. We are exploring that. That is perhaps all I can say today.

**Hon COL HOLT:** Let us take it back to 2003 or until the lease was signed. There was a recognition at that point in time from Education that the building could be used for this other purpose. Even though it might not have met educational outcomes per se, for the education department it still was a recognition through that lease and the improvements that have been done to the building saved it in the first place, I think. Even though that is a pain now for you guys, I think you will probably recognise some sort of asset.

**Mr Fischer:** When you read the lease it basically says—this is 2000–2003, that period when it was still developed—“Here are some facilities.” There was a community group that wanted to develop those. The lease, if you read it, says, “Look, there could be a risk that you may not be able to get all the approvals and do all the things you want,” and they wore that. They were able to get it past that point. I do not think that we saw that the building was going to be redeveloped as an educational asset ever, but the CSL has turned it into an asset to the community.

**Hon COL HOLT:** I think it was great for the committee to say, “We really value the buildings”, a great move by the education department to say, “Hey, let’s try to work with you to utilise that”—an excellent thing. I just think it seems to have changed a little from the department viewpoint about that original intent about how it might be utilised. I need to come back to the local question about the lease signing and non-signing has been a bit of a debacle, has it not, really? I would really like to hear your view of this, because there were Education representatives—and it may well have been you, Di—on that committee at the time that did not sign it or were not vigilant enough to sign it or whatever. I am really interested to see how that happened.

**Mrs Cole:** I think it comes back to the department not looking to be harsh with community groups. There were probably four occasions when the rent was never paid and it was caught up. The department was not looking to be negative or harsh with a community group, but our needs have changed. I was unaware that the process had not been done. When it was due in 2008, I was not on the executive of it. I do not attend all meetings. I have gone through recently and had a look at the minutes of meetings where it has been raised that the rent has not been paid this year and we did not pay last year’s as well.

Also the CSL opened. We have now had over 10 years of seeing it in practice. For my parents and my kids, there has not been any great outcome. If this was a great education facility, my kids were getting huge amounts of education on sustainability. I counted up the number of hours of contact with the CSL over that period of time. It is not many. The sorts of activity are often tree planting, which I think is great for kids to do, but this is low level. This is not rich learning happening. If I sent a letter home to my parents and said, “Ask your children how many times they have been in the CSL over the last five years of schooling”, they have not been in there. I know that there are good things that happen, and I have offered that those things can keep happening. If they are having an energy expo on the weekend, I will make the facility available. I am more than happy; I do that with lots of community groups. But it comes to the sticking point about the location of unknown people on the site. I think that Green Skills, who manage the centre, are wonderful people doing a really good job, but human frailty is there. Like we have issues about traffic coming through the school. I had to put in a serious incident report. One of my deputies was nearly run down the other day. This is a road that buses come in; kids leave the school. I try to manage it. Despite the fact that Green Skills will say to their people, “You can’t park down there. You can’t drive through the school. Our agreement with the department is to park up in the car park”, these things still happen. We have issues with people smoking on site or wandering into areas where they should not be—not all the time. But when I can see it from my point of view as someone who has responsibility for the kids’

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welfare, once these buildings are so close, human error is there. I know someone can look in on the site, but I would rather not be in a position of having unknown people, unknown criminal check backgrounds on something that I am responsible for and for the kids safety and wellbeing.

[12.10 pm]

**Hon COL HOLT:** So from a person who is embedded in the community, how do you view the community input, investment—both funding and emotion invested into the centre—and compensation for such or recognition of that from an education department viewpoint and someone embedded in the community?

**Mrs Cole:** I would like to see more money made available for perhaps not necessarily relocation in accommodation, because I do not think that is going to happen, but the Green Skills will move into a new environment centre. I know that Terry Redman—in the paper; I am not making it up—has said that he would be more than happy to make recommendation to royalties for regions to enable that to happen. We have the community resource centre. As I said before, community is a very broad word that is used as a tar brush. It does not necessarily reflect those that benefit. I think my parent community is very clear that they do not want that happening.

**Hon COL HOLT:** Do you see the community investment into the centre, whoever the community is—I am not questioning who it is—or do you recognise that there has been a community investment into the centre or not?

**Mrs Cole:** I see it as a government investment; that the money came from Lotterywest and the department of environment and something else. But most of the money that has gone into the centre has been government money. I think the FRRR might have had a small input too, but mostly Lotterywest. As a taxpayer and a member of my community, I know that more government money is going to go into redeveloping the hospital site and other facilities in our community. I do not feel that, while I will support whatever happens, it should not just be that—I do not know how to say it. But the money is there and it has been spent, and I appreciate what has happened. I agree that there should be more support for particularly Green Skills in our community to have an appropriate accommodation centre, but I do not know that it has to be this continuous thing when there is something else that could be developed in terms of the hospital site. I would fully support funding for all the community groups. Some of them have already moved into that facility.

**Hon COL HOLT:** From my viewpoint, community investment is just a means to the end. There is a whole thing about community capacity that goes into any of the development.

**Mrs Cole:** That is right.

**Hon COL HOLT:** That is really what I am talking about here. The government funds were put into that centre for the purposes of the environment centre, and that is what it is for. There was a recognition, a decision to do that investment for that regional outcome. So if there is going to be some sort of change or move, then there has got to be some recognition that that investment from government, facilitated from the community, has been put into that centre. I do not see any problem with that. I understand what you are saying—it is government money. But it is just a means to an end.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We are going to wind up, because we had a limited amount of time. I would thank you for coming. Both hearings have given us a bit of background. I am probably more interested in the future. I think that is what we are here for and what the petition was about. It does appear to me as though at least something is happening in communicating now. I would encourage both parties to keep meeting and consulting. To me, it seems like the Centre for Sustainable Living has provided a service to that community. If they can be accommodated in such a way that they can continue, I would hope that the education department could provide that. But at least now it seems like, as opposed to the original communication they got, there is a better line of communication.

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You can tell me if I am wrong on that, but it did not appear to be a very good communication at the start.

**Mr Fischer:** We do not claim that our communication has been fantastic through the process. I think that when the letter was first presented to them, the initial response was not a letter back to us but a notice in the newspaper. I think that things disappeared pretty quickly in terms of that communication. That does not make it right for them or us. I am just saying, and I agree that we can do better in talking with them.

I guess from the education perspective, there are probably three things. One, are saying, look, there is need for some facilities on site. Two, we are concerned about the proximity of the management of who is on site and how that is done. Three, we are quite prepared to talk about the ongoing use of that facility out of school hours—in other words, solving that proximity issue so it can continue to be used as a community resource, however managed. We are not opposed to that at all. In fact, we are saying that not only that, the facilities of the school also could be available, if that was one. As I said, we think we have got some responsibilities in terms of how we manage those that come on site. The advice that we have got from DEC is saying that their business model struggles under that limited scenario. Anyway that is something they may have to explore. I think we perhaps have moved from a “goodbye” to try to present something that meets educational requirement and perhaps the community requirements.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much. I do hope the hearings have facilitated a better outcome than the way it was heading anywhere. I am sorry that we will have to call it to an end, but we have run out of time.

**Hearing concluded at 12.16 pm**

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