

Friday 15th June 2018

The Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC
Chairman
Standard Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
4 Harvest Tce
West Perth WA 6005

Dear Mr Swinbourn

Petition No. 068 – Rossmoyne and Willetton Senior High Schools

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission regarding my petition concerning the cuts to Rossmoyne and Willetton Senior High Schools.

Please find my submission enclosed.

Yours sincerely

Dr Gaelia Hunt. BVMS

CC: The Hon Simon O'Brien MLC, Member for South Metropolitan Region

As a mother of two children living in Willetton, I was compelled to initiate a community petition after learning what effect the State Government's cuts are having on Willetton Senior High School. The Labor State Government has made a number of cuts to Willetton SHS that will affect the education of my children. The greatest impact will result from the decision to cut \$1,145 for every student over 1,200 students, which I've been told translates to an approximate cut of \$1.3 million per year to Willetton Senior High School. At nearby Rossmoyne Senior High School, I believe they are having to contend with an approximate cut of \$1 million per year to their ongoing funding.

It's hard to convey in words how much more support was provided to my children to help with their learning difficulties following the introduction of the Student Centred Funding Model several years ago. My 14 year old has dyslexia & has struggled with literacy throughout his schooling. The increased funding meant that he was provided with literacy support that has dramatically improved his development. For the last 3 years of high school he has not had to study a foreign language, instead receives extra English based around a dyslexia friendly program in a smaller class size. He has also been able to be in a modified HASS classroom with a slower paced program & greater assistance. My 12 year old has verbal dyspraxia & mild Autism. He struggles with anxiety over ANY literacy task but fortunately he too does the special English classes. The funding allowed both of my children to finally start to see success in these modified courses in smaller classes, which has had a profound effect, not just on their literacy but also their confidence. The introduction of the Student Centred Funding Model was a godsend for our family.

Following the announcement of the funding cuts, I was informed by the school that much of this significant support would be removed as they no longer had the essential funding. My older child no longer gets support for HASS & won't get additional English support after this year. My youngest son isn't even studying HASS as the school no longer has a suitable program to enrol him in as the HASS special program was cut. He now only receives extra English support due to his Autism diagnosis which gets him individual funding. This is grossly unfair as my children's development is being compromised for political expediency.

The Student Centred Funding Model is based on equitable funding and is designed to provide extra assistance to those who need it, like my two children. Just because they attend a school with a larger population, it doesn't mean they are worth less than those attending smaller or even moderately sized schools. While smaller schools have challenges, larger schools have their own unique challenges and reducing their funding limits their ability to deal with those challenges. Without that extra support, those students who need assistance may get lost in the system and struggle.

It is remarkable that this decision has been made given that both the Student Centred Funding Model and the federal GONSKI model were specially devised following many years of public debate and were designed to ensure that every student received the same amount of Government funding towards their education regardless of the school they attended. These recent funding cuts mean that children attending Western Australia's largest schools are receiving less funding for their education than students across the state. I just don't understand the rationale of this Government to step away from the premise of equitable funding after many years of public debate.

Unfortunately these cuts have not been isolated, with Willetton SHS also having to contend with the cancellation of the \$11.78m Stage 3 of the school's rebuild, leaving it stranded. While my children did not attend the school when the decision was made to rebuild the school, it was very much welcomed by my family as I knew they would inevitably go there and there was a real need to invest in the school's facilities.

To that end, two stages of the rebuild have been completed. The problem however is that the school's classrooms were not included within stages 1 or 2, leaving staff and students in decade's old demountables filled with asbestos. I have been informed that it was necessary to leave the classrooms until the later stages given the constraints of rebuilding a school while it is still operating. I believe this was never seen as a problem at the time of planning given the school would be completely rebuilt, with no one expecting the funding to be removed mid-rebuild. Failure to build these classes leaves my children attending classes in poor quality buildings in which they swelter in summer & freeze in winter, further hindering their educational progress.

While the Government has stated that \$52m is enough for one school and that it's time to invest in other schools, this decision not to finish the project was never expected and is to the detriment of the school's community.

Both Rossmoyne SHS and Willetton SHS are well-known public schools, and have forged successful reputations. This is why many people move to live in our community. Their position as leading public schools has not been an accident and it has taken years of hard work by staff, students and the entire school communities to build their successful reputations. I know these schools have invested in extra support services and human resources that has helped create and foster strong successful cultures, and I am very worried that these services are now at risk.

These two schools are leading public schools and something that we in the community are extremely proud of. Unbelievably they both produced the two Beazley Medallists in 2017, a major feat for the public education system. Despite their great performances, both schools ensure attention is provided to every student regardless of their academic performance, and reducing the funding risks that.

If the Government believes they need to further support smaller schools, then they should identify alternative funding sources and not compromise other schools. It shouldn't be a zero sum game.

I implore the Legislative Council to call on the Government of Western Australia to reinstate the funding so that students attending both Rossmoyne and Willetton SHS can continue to receive the quality education they deserve. Please don't put our kids at risk.