

## Hon Jacqui Boydell MLC

Member for Mining and Pastoral Region

Our Ref: 180418/AW

10 May 2018

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC  
Chairman  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Postal address: Parliament House 14 Harvest Terrace I West Perth WA 6005  
Email: [env@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:env@parliament.wa.gov.au)

Dear Mr Swinbourn,

### **PETITION NO 059 – CLOSURE OF REGIONAL SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL OF THE AIR**

I refer to your letter dated 11 April 2018 and thank you and the committee for the opportunity to make a submission as the tabling Member.

The petition calls for the McGowan Government to reverse a range of cuts to regional education that were announced in the lead up to Christmas last year. Some of these cuts have since been reversed, specifically Northam Residential College and the Schools of the Air.

Since these cuts were announced in December, there have been a series of community demonstrations. The Moora community held a rally on 2 January 2018 in Moora, which was attended by some 500 people. This was followed by another rally at Parliament House on 12 March 2018, with some 200 in attendance and with the support of a convoy of 20 large trucks traveling from Moora.

The Country Women's Association organised a protest march from their headquarters in West Perth to the front steps of Parliament on 12 February 2018. This was the first time in the organisation's 94 year history that they have shown any form of political activism. Additionally, a camp school rally was held in Bunbury on 20 April 2018, attracting about 100 camp school supporters. This ongoing campaign shows that these cuts to essential services in the education portfolio remain a matter of extreme importance to the people of Western Australia.

On Tuesday, 13 March 2018, I moved a motion calling on the McGowan Government to honour its November 2016 policy position that commits to providing "a quality education to Western Australian children and young people regardless of where they live" by reversing all the outstanding cuts made to the regional education portfolio. This motion was overwhelmingly supported by all Legislative Council Members with the exception of Labor Members, which signals the importance of the matter to the wider community, beyond regional WA.

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**THE NATIONALS** *for Regional WA*

The anger that is currently felt within the community is as much about the decisions themselves as the decision making process. Despite making the decision to close Moora Residential College, the Minister for Education and the Premier have so far refused to visit the facility and meet with the community and the Shire of Moora in Moora.

Similarly, despite announcing the decision to close camp schools, a parliamentary question asked on 14 March, 2018 has revealed that the Minister for Education has only visited one camp school – being Goldfields Camp School on 2 March 2018 – which was months after the decision to close the 6 camp schools was made. The Government discourse shifted from closure to privatisation, which has left the community unsure of what the future holds.

There also continues to be considerable anger about the closure of Moora Residential College as debates centre on mistruths and misinformation about repair costs. While on 6PR, the Premier revealed that \$8.7 million was needed to make the building fire safe, despite fire safe reports revealing that amount was just \$580,278.

The community remains angered that despite repeated requests for an independent assessment to be conducted and an assurance by the Minister for Education during LC Estimates last year that this was taking place, an up-to-date building assessment of Moora Residential College has not been conducted.

It is apparent that the communities impacted by these closures feel that there has been a number of failures in the decision-making process, including a lack of transparency, an absence of on-the-ground consultation, and inadequate assessment, given the seriousness of the decisions being made.

Despite being 5 months since the McGowan Government announced these decisions, this issue does not appear to be subsiding. There is no doubt the government's reputation has been impacted, both in the way decisions were made and how community concerns are being dismissed.

I suggest that a parliamentary inquiry gives impacted communities an avenue to get their concerns heard. It also provides an opportunity to investigate these concerns in a by-partisan way, engaging independent experts in the process alongside community and other representatives to consider and make assessment of the concerns being raised.

I strongly suggest that a parliamentary inquiry would go a significant way in restoring regional communities' faith in the State Government's decision making processes.

I look forward to your favourable consideration given the seriousness of the matters raised in this petition.

Please note, this matter has not been presented to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman).

Yours sincerely



Hon Jacqui Boydell MLC  
**MEMBER FOR MINING AND PASTORAL REGION**