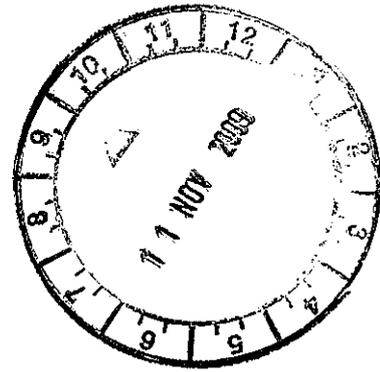


The Honourable Brian Ellis MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH Western Australia 6000



5th November 2009

Dear Mr Ellis

In regard to **Petition No 45-Esperance Anglican Community School-Registration for Years 11 and 12**

Please find attached my invited submission on this matter.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for making inquiries into this very important issue.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'L Gardiner'.

Mrs Lisa Gardiner

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Submission to Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

Petition No 45

Esperance Anglican Community School – Registration for Year 11 and 12

The Anglican Schools Commission (ASC) who owns Esperance Anglican Community School (EACS) made application to the then Minister for Education for advanced registration for a new school in Esperance. In early 2006 the Minister refused to approve the new school. In May 2006 the ASC wrote to the Minister requesting a review of her decision under Section 168 of the School Education Act.

The Review panel established by the Minister recommended that EACS be granted registration from Years 8-12. In December 2006 the Minister decided to approve the school to open in Years 8-10 but placed a condition on registration refusing to allow the school to teach Years 11-12.

In October 2008 the ASC wrote to the new Minister for Education requesting that the condition be lifted. In July 2009 the Minister advised of her decision not to lift the condition as she believed that the new school would detrimentally impact on the local Government High School. The ASC has requested a review of the Minister's decision. The outcome of that review is not yet known.

There are numerous important arguments why the Minister should lift the current condition to allow EACS to teach Year 11/12:

- The community have very clearly supported the need for a second secondary school in Esperance. This can be supported by the strength of the Petition that the Standing Committee is considering. The initial demand for a choice of secondary schools came from the community including being part of the Shire of Esperance's strategic plan. The community approached the Anglican Schools Commission requesting the ASC to open a school.
- There is currently no non-government secondary school in Esperance offering Years 11/12. A choice of education would allow families to choose the secondary school best suited to the needs of their child. Educational choice is supported by both State and Federal Governments and included in the Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26(3)). Many families currently leave Esperance prior to their eldest child commencing secondary education and other families are not willing to relocate to Esperance because no choice of secondary education to Year 12 is available.
- There are two faith-based primary schools in Esperance yet no option for families wishing to continue a faith based education through to Year 12 for their child. At present families wishing a faith-based education send their children away to boarding school or in many cases the family simply relocates from Esperance. Either option impacts detrimentally on the development of the Esperance community. All Christian Churches in Esperance strongly support the need to have a faith based education through to Year 11/12. The Esperance Ministers Network has written to both the Minister for Education and Premier urging the current condition to be removed.
- The Shire of Esperance, Esperance Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Esperance Ports and other major employers regarding the registration of EACS to Year 12 as

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critical to the attraction and retention of high calibre professionals and other workers to Esperance and thus for supporting the future growth of Esperance. These organisations and others have written to the Minister for Education and/or the Review Panel urging that the current condition be lifted. This issue must therefore be considered not just in the context of a new school but as a regional development issue for Western Australia.

- The principle of parental choice in terms of the learning environment and school context is a strongly articulated core element of government policy at national and state levels. The Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc have written to the Minister for Education confirming their support for choice and their view that the lifting of the current condition would considerably enhance the total learning resources available to the community.
- Considerable research has demonstrated that the earlier young people leave a community (for schooling/education) the less likely they are to return to that community as young adults. Currently around 20 young people a year are leaving Esperance for boarding schools and in many cases whole families are relocating to provide their children with the educational opportunities that they desire. The lack of a choice of secondary schools in Esperance is seriously impacting on capacity building within the Esperance District.
- Esperance Senior High School with around 1000 students is one of the larger government secondary schools in Western Australia and the 3rd largest Years 8-12 government secondary school in regional Western Australia. It is inconceivable that the approval of Year 11/12 at the new Anglican School will have a detrimental impact on a large established secondary school.
- Similarly with in excess of 300 students in Years 11/12 Esperance Senior High School has one of the larger Year 11/12 enrolments of Government High Schools and indeed has a larger enrolment in Years 11/12 than all Anglican Schools Commission Schools.
- In her reasons for refusing to lift the condition preventing Esperance Anglican Community School the Minister for Education indicated that none of the major projects identified for the region (the Minister named Spitfire, Galaxy and Tectonic) are sufficiently advanced to contribute to growth. This view is at odds with material provided by The Goldfields Esperance Development Commission (a State Government Agency), Esperance Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Shire of Esperance.
- Demographic data all reflects positive growth in Esperance.

It is disappointing that this issue has not been resolved at a much earlier date. Esperance is a remote community where families have no local choice of secondary education through to Year 12. Families deserve the right of choice available to them if they lived in virtually any other community of comparable size across Western Australia and indeed Australia. The community deserves the opportunity to have educational choice and therefore also assist major employers have the ability to attract professional staff to Esperance. The current situation compromises the future of the Esperance District.

This matter has not been referred to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman).

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