



SECOND SESSION OF THE THIRTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

**REPORT OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND
PUBLIC AFFAIRS
IN RELATION TO A
PETITION ON THE UPGRADE OF THE
ALBANY RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE**

Presented by Hon Christine Sharp MLC (Chairman)

Report 9
December 2003

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Date first appointed:

May 24 2001

Terms of Reference:

The following is an extract from Schedule 1 of the Legislative Council Standing Orders:

“3. Environment and Public Affairs Committee

- 3.1 *An Environment and Public Affairs Committee* is established.
- 3.2 The Committee consists of 7 members.
- 3.3 The functions of the Committee are to inquire into and report on -
 - (a) any public or private policy, practice, scheme, arrangement, or project whose implementation, or intended implementation, within the limits of the State is affecting, or may affect, the environment;
 - (b) any bill referred by the House;
 - (c) petitions.
- 3.4 The Committee, where relevant and appropriate, is to assess the merit of matters or issues arising from an inquiry in accordance with the principles of ecological sustainable development and the minimisation of harm to the environment.
- 3.5 The Committee may refer a petition to another committee where the subject matter of the petition is within the competence of that committee.
- 3.6 In this order **“environment”** has the meaning assigned to it under section 3(1), (2) of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*.”

Members as at the time of this inquiry:

Hon Christine Sharp MLC (Chairman)	Hon Bruce Donaldson MLC
Hon Kate Doust MLC (Deputy Chairman)	Hon Frank Hough MLC
Hon Robyn McSweeney MLC	Hon Louise Pratt MLC
Hon Jim Scott MLC	

Staff as at the time of this inquiry:

Lisa Hanna, Advisory Officer (General)	Mark Warner, Committee Clerk
Rhys Brown, Advisory Officer (General)	

Address:

Parliament House, Perth WA 6000, Telephone (08) 9222 7222

Website: <http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au>

ISBN 1 9208 8603 6

Government Response

This Report is subject to Standing Order 337:

After tabling, the Clerk shall send a copy of a report recommending action by, or seeking a response from, the Government to the responsible Minister. The Leader of the Government or the Minister (if a Member of the Council) shall report the Government's response within 4 months.

The four-month period commences on the date of tabling.

CONTENTS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE	1
REPORT	1
1 REFERENCE AND PROCEDURE.....	1
2 THE PETITION.....	1
Albany Residential College	2
3 CURRENT PLANS FOR UPGRADE	3
4 COMMITTEE COMMENT.....	4
Recommendation	5
APPENDIX 1 RESPONSE FROM THE COUNTRY HIGH SCHOOL HOSTEL	
AUTHORITY DATED AUGUST 4 2003	7

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

IN RELATION TO A

PETITION ON THE UPGRADE OF THE ALBANY RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE

1 REFERENCE AND PROCEDURE

- 1.1 On June 11 2003, a petition requesting urgent upgrade of the Albany Residential College was tabled in the Legislative Council.¹
- 1.2 The petition stood referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs (Committee) under operation of standing order 134(i) of the Legislative Council.
- 1.3 On July 30 2003, a subcommittee of the Committee, comprising Hon Christine Sharp MLC and Hon Robyn McSweeney MLC visited the Albany Residential College. The subcommittee toured the facilities and met with the following persons:
- Anna Gorman, President of Parents and Friends, Albany Residential College;
 - Graeme Groves, Parent Representative on the Board of Management, Albany Residential College; and
 - Mike Schuts, Albany Residential College Manager.
- 1.4 On September 15 2003, the Committee resolved to inquire into and report on the petition.

2 THE PETITION

- 2.1 The petition requests an urgent upgrade of the Albany Residential College stating that:²

110 co-educational students have been forced to live in a facility that was built to accommodate 72 male students in 1973. The state of the accommodation and supporting facilities is well below standard and at present causes our children to live in sub-standard conditions. The contribution by the Albany Residential College to education of

¹ Legislative Council Tabled Paper 1121, June 11 2003. The petition was tabled by Hon Paddy Embry MLC.

² Ibid.

children in the Albany education district is substantial and deserves recognition by upgrading the present facilities.

- 2.2 An upgrade to the facilities at the Albany Regional College has been approved by the Country High School Hostel Authority (CHSHA).³ However, construction is not due to commence until 2006/07 (refer to paragraphs 3.1 to 3.2).
- 2.3 The petitioners desire that the upgrade commence immediately and seek to have the necessary funds made available.
- 2.4 The response of the CHSHA to the petition is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.5 The Committee was advised by the CHSHA that current indications show the residential college will have 28 vacancies in 2004 and has received 50 applications for accommodation.⁴ The Committee notes therefore, that there is increased demand for student accommodation at Albany Residential College in the short to medium term that cannot be accommodated. Students are currently being turned away.⁵
- 2.6 Parents are of the view that they have the right to choose where to send their children for high school education. The Committee was informed that they choose Albany Residential College over other colleges, such as Katanning Residential College, as Albany has more to offer to the students. This includes, for example, Albany's location by the coast, a range of sporting facilities and the choice of three different high schools.⁶

Albany Residential College

- 2.7 The Albany Residential College was originally built in 1972 to accommodate 72 students. The petitioners submit that it is not suitably equipped to house the 111 students currently enrolled - it is outdated and overcrowded.⁷ Shortcomings include:⁸
- cramped conditions;
 - transportable units are used to accommodate students;
 - limited dining area for students;

³ The CHSHA is the statutory authority responsible for overseeing the Albany Residential College. The CHSHA also oversees 7 other residential colleges throughout Western Australia.

⁴ Letter from Alan Carpenter MLA, Minister for Education and Training, August 4 2003, p3.

⁵ Letter from Alan Carpenter MLA, Minister for Education and Training, August 4 2003, p3.

⁶ Albany Residential College Parents & Friends Association, cover note to petition, May 16 2003.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ David Heaver & Associates, *Albany Residential College Redevelopment Feasibility Study*, November 18 2002, p1.

- limited internal passive recreation rooms for students;
- common facilities have been modified into rooms and dormitories;
- no separate lounge for the male students;
- not all senior students have their own room;
- bathroom facilities are outdated and require refurbishment;
- limited recreational facilities are available for student use;
- no disabled access for students, staff or visitors;
- inadequate student laundry facilities;
- inadequate appropriate accommodation for supervisors;
- inadequate kitchen preparation area and associated storage area;
- inadequate ambulance access;
- poor disposal of stormwater on site; and
- poor evacuation capabilities in case of fire and emergencies.

2.8 The CHSHA began planning the replacement of the transportable additions to the Albany Residential College in the mid 1990s. However, the Committee understands that this was placed on hold whilst a review was undertaken of the delivery of education in Albany.⁹ Subsequent to the review, the Albany Senior High School, which is adjacent to the Albany Residential College, was redeveloped (with works completed in 2002).¹⁰

3 CURRENT PLANS FOR UPGRADE

3.1 In 2002, the CHSHA commissioned a feasibility study for the redevelopment of the Albany Residential College as a 120 bed facility on its current site and a costed masterplan for the work.¹¹

3.2 The plan was accepted by the College Board of Management and the CHSHA. State Government funding for the redevelopment plan has been provided in the forward

⁹ Letter from Alan Carpenter MLA, Minister for Education and Training, August 4 2003, p2.

¹⁰ Letter from Alan Carpenter MLA, Minister for Education and Training, August 4 2003, p2.

¹¹ David Heaver & Associates, *Albany Residential College Redevelopment Feasibility Study*, November 18 2002.

estimates in the 2002/2003 budget papers with an allocation of \$500,000 for design in 2005/2006 and an allocation of \$4,500,000 for construction in 2006/2007.¹²

3.3 The CHSHA has advised the Committee that they support choice but are "... *also keen to see its facility in Katanning remain viable and continue to provide a boarding service in this location. A local boarding option makes it easier for parents and their children to keep in contact during term time and supports the Katanning Senior High School*".¹³

3.4 The CHSHA further advised the Committee that other residential colleges, such as in Katanning, Esperance and Narrogin, have ample capacity to provide for students living in and around those areas. These other colleges will all have the capacity to accommodate students unable to gain places at Albany in 2004.¹⁴

3.5 The CHSHA does not have any indication that, for the long term, demand will exceed the 120 bed capacity of the Albany Regional College:

*The sudden increase in demand for places in 2004 is not related to any increase in the boarding population in the Great Southern, but rather a shift in preferences away from Katanning and the more expensive boarding options in Perth.*¹⁵

4 COMMITTEE COMMENT

4.1 The Committee believes that there is a strong case to bring forward the funding and construction of the redevelopment project.

4.2 The Committee is of the view that the Albany Residential College is a well regarded college, but is adversely affected by sub-standard facilities and overcrowding. Furthermore, the Committee notes that the demand for residential accommodation for country high schoolers in Albany is greater than the availability of places.

4.3 The Committee is of the view that the viability of other residential colleges (such as Katanning) should not be used as an excuse to not expedite upgrade of the Albany Residential College.

4.4 The Committee considers that the redevelopment plan for the Albany Residential College should proceed before the budgeted construction date of 2006/2007. The Committee believes that this should occur in 2004.

¹² Letter from Alan Carpenter MLA, Minister for Education and Training, November 3 2003.

¹³ Letter from Alan Carpenter MLA, Minister for Education and Training, August 4 2003, p3.

¹⁴ Id.

¹⁵ Ibid, p4.

Recommendation

Recommendation 1: The Committee recommends that the redevelopment plan to upgrade the Albany Residential College begin in 2004. If this is not possible the Committee recommends that the responsible Minister provide a detailed explanation to the House.



**Hon Kate Doust MLC
Deputy Chairman**

Date: December 19 2003

APPENDIX 1
RESPONSE FROM THE COUNTRY HIGH SCHOOL
HOSTEL AUTHORITY DATED AUGUST 4 2003

APPENDIX 1
RESPONSE FROM THE COUNTRY HIGH SCHOOL HOSTEL
AUTHORITY DATED AUGUST 4 2003



Minister For Education and Training



Our Ref: 60518-DO03/125589



Hon Christine Sharp MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Dr Sharp

Thank you for your letter dated 8 July 2003 regarding Petition No. 28 – Upgrade of Albany Residential College.

Please find attached a response from the Country High School Hostel Authority to the Subcommittee's questions and some further information from the Authority relating to the issues raised in the petition.

Yours sincerely

Alan Carpenter MLA
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- 4 AUG 2003

PUBLIC

12th Floor, Dumas House, 2 Havelock Street, West Perth, Western Australia 6005
Telephone (08) 9213 6800 Facsimile (08) 9213 6801 Email: alan-carpenter@dpc.wa.gov.au
web address: www.wa.gov.au

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition No 28 – Upgrade of the Albany Residential College

The Albany Residential College was originally built to accommodate 72 students.

In response to increasing demand for student accommodation at Albany in the mid-1990's, an architect was consulted to advise on the extent to which the common facilities (e.g. ablutions, dining room, recreation, study and other common rooms) could accommodate additional students. The architect, Mr Ian Watson, had previously worked for the Authority, including a dormitory conversion and other improvements to the Albany Residential College. As such he was aware of the building codes, health requirements and other necessary considerations relating to student residential accommodation.

Mr Watson was subsequently engaged to undertake some modifications to the common facilities and to link some transportable accommodation onto the original building. These modifications increased the facility's boarding capacity to 104 students.

The Authority's planning in relation to the replacement of the transportable additions, was put on hold when the Education Department implemented a strategic planning process that involved a review of the delivery of education in Albany. The review was undertaken in conjunction with the Albany Shire Council and the University of Western Australia. Consideration was given to the use of the district education office for tertiary education, the residential college as a district education office and the relocation of the Authority's boarding service to a new 'greenfield' site.

Ultimately, the University utilised other premises and the Education Department decided to redevelop the Albany Senior High School adjacent to the residential college. That work, which was completed for the commencement of the 2002 school year, included substantial enhancements to the school's recreation facilities which were also to be made available to residential college students.

In 2002, the Authority commissioned architect Mr David Heaver to undertake a feasibility study for the redevelopment of the Albany Residential College as a 120 bed facility on its current site and to provide a costed masterplan for that work.

This plan was accepted by the College Board of Management and the Authority and formed the basis of the Authority's submission for funding for the redevelopment of the residential college. In keeping with the normal scheduling process relating to borrowings for capital works, provision has been made in the forward estimates in the 2002-2003 budget papers for the redevelopment of the Albany Residential College with an allocation for design in 2005-2006 and an allocation for construction in 2006-2007.

.../2

- 2 -

In late 2002, the College Board of Management requested permission from the Authority to make some minor adjustments to increase the residential college's boarding capacity to 111 students. Approval was granted on the basis that the College Board of Management, which included elected parent representatives, was confident that the common facilities could still meet students' needs.

The petitioners mainly come from Cranbrook, Tambellup and Tenterden. As such, they live closer to the Katanning Residential College and the Katanning Senior High School, both of which have ample capacity to provide for students living in this area. For a variety of reasons they want their children to have access to the education services in Albany. Reasons given relate to the sexual abuse of students perpetrated by a former Manager of the Katanning Residential College in the 1980's and a belief that the schools in Albany have more to offer than the local Katanning Senior High School. Further, there is a preference for the support for out of school activities, recreation and shopping.

The Country High School Hostels Authority supports choice, but is also keen to see its facility in Katanning remain viable and continue to provide a boarding service in this location. A local boarding option makes it easier for parents and their children to keep in contact during term time and supports the Katanning Senior High School.

The Authority also provides a boarding service in Narrogin and this is another option for families in the Great Southern.

The following provides some comparison data on the Authority's residential colleges.

College Location	2004 Boarding Capacity	2003 Enrolment	Previous 5 Year Average Enrolment
Albany	111	111	101
Esperance	94	74	78
Geraldton	120	115	106
Katanning	104	29	41
Merredin	82	35	59
Moora	59	59	43
Narrogin	250	221	245
Northam	46	44	44
Totals	866	688	717

The recent upgrade to the Albany Senior High School has increased the number of government school students seeking accommodation at the Albany residential college. Current indications show the residential college will have 28 vacancies next year and has received 50 applications for accommodation in 2004. As the above table indicates the Katanning, Narrogin and Esperance residential colleges will all have the capacity to accommodate students unable to gain places at Albany in 2004.

.../3

- 3 -

A further issue in relation to this petition is that under a longstanding agreement, the Albany Residential College also provides for non-government school students who attend St Joseph's Secondary College. One of the transportable units attached to the residential college was funded by St Joseph's. Apart from these 12 beds, isolated government school students have enrolment priority over isolated non-government school students. This has not been a concern as in some years as over 40 St Josephs' students have gained accommodation at the College. However, the higher demand from Albany Senior High School students is seeing a reduction in the places available to non-government students.

As expected, parents of non-government school students, including those from the Cranbrook, Tambellup, Tenterden area, are very anxious for the redevelopment of the residential college as a 120-bed facility to go ahead sooner than scheduled.

It needs to be recognised that the boarding industry operates in the context of the boarding allowance arrangements. These allowances are valid at any residential college or boarding school. The *Isolated Children's Parents' Association* has long lobbied for these arrangements rather than have the allowances restricted to the nearest appropriate boarding facility/school.

It is accepted practice for parents to book many years ahead at more than one boarding provider if they are keen to gain entry to a preferred provider. On this basis a boarding provider can see many years ahead that demand is strong and can plan extensions as needed and affordable. Until this year, all of the indications at Albany have been that a 120-bed facility will adequately meet the demand. The sudden increase in demand for places in 2004 is not related to any increase in the boarding population in the Great Southern, but rather to a shift in preferences away from Katanning and the more expensive boarding options in Perth.

Responsible Officer	Contact No.
Jim Hopkins	9264 5434
Director	
Country High Schools Hostel Association	