



THIRTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

REPORT 27

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

**THE REMOVAL OF SENIOR SCHOOL
ALLOCATION FUNDING FOR YEAR 11 AND 12
COURSES AT 21 DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS**

Presented by Hon Giz Watson MLC (Chair)

July 2010

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

Date first appointed:

30 June 2005

Terms of Reference:

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

“2. Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations

2.1 *An Estimates and Financial Operations Committee* is established.

2.2 The Committee consists of 5 Members, 3 of whom shall be non-government Members.

2.3 The functions of the Committee are to consider and report on -

- (a) the estimates of expenditure laid before the Council each year;
- (b) any matter relating to the financial administration of the State;
- (c) any bill or other matter relating to the foregoing functions referred by the House;
- (d) to consult regularly with the Auditor General and any person holding an office of a like character.”

Members as at the time of this inquiry:

Hon Giz Watson MLC (Chair)

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich MLC

Hon Philip Gardiner MLC (Deputy Chair)

Hon Ken Travers MLC

Hon Liz Behjat MLC

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Note

The Twenty Seventh Report of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations consists of a Report of the Committee and a Minority Report of Hon Liz Behjat MLC

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.

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REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

THE REMOVAL OF SENIOR SCHOOL ALLOCATION FUNDING FOR YEAR 11 AND 12 COURSES AT 21 DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS

1 REFERENCE AND PROCEDURE

- 1.1 On 5 May 2010, the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations (**Committee**) commenced an inquiry into the removal of senior school allocation funding for year 11 and 12 courses at 21 district high schools across Western Australia. The inquiry's terms of reference are:

The Estimates and Financial Operations Committee has resolved to inquire into and report to the Legislative Council on the Government decision, announced in March 2010, to cease to provide senior school allocation funding for year 11 and 12 courses at 21 district high schools across Western Australia, with particular reference to:

- a) the decision-making process and rationale behind the decision;*
- b) the effect of the decision on the State budget, the affected students and communities;*
- c) the adequacy, cost effectiveness and social impact of the educational alternatives proposed; and*
- d) any other relevant matter.*

- 1.2 It was the Committee's intention to report to the Legislative Council in August 2010, however, the Committee resolved to bring forward its report date to 1 July 2010.

- 1.3 The Committee was of the view that it has gathered sufficient evidence to form its opinion and has, therefore, resolved to table its report as a matter of urgency to enable the House and the Minister for Education to consider the Committee's report and recommendations.

- 1.4 The Committee advertised for written submissions in the following metropolitan and regional newspapers:

- The West Australian, 8 May 2010.
- Geraldton Guardian, 12 May 2010.

- Kimberley Echo, 13 May 2010.
 - Avon Valley Advocate, 19 May 2010.
 - Merredin Wheatbelt Mercury, 19 May 2010.
 - Great Southern Herald, 19 May 2010.
 - Narrogin Observer, 19 May 2010.
 - Port Hedland North West Telegraph, 19 May 2010.
 - Advocate (Bullsbrook, Bindoon and Gingin), 19 May 2010.
 - Central Midlands & Coastal Advocate, 20 May 2010.
 - Cray Tales (Jurien Bay), 3 June 2010.
- 1.5 Details of the inquiry were also placed on the parliamentary website (www.parliament.wa.gov.au).
- 1.6 The Committee also wrote to key stakeholders seeking written submissions. A list of the stakeholders that the Committee wrote to is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.7 The Committee received 69 submissions. A list of the written submissions accepted by the Committee is set out at **Appendix 2**.
- 1.8 The Committee held public hearings in Perth, Gingin, Narembeen and Jurien Bay on 17, 21 and 31 May 2010 and 8 and 11 June 2010. A list of the hearings held is set out at **Appendix 3**.
- 1.9 The Committee regrets that time constraints prevented it from being able to visit all districts affected by this decision, however, is confident that its report will address the concerns of all the districts affected.
- 1.10 The Committee thanks the individuals and organisations that provided evidence and information for the inquiry.
- 2 THE DECISION**
- 2.1 The decision to cease the senior school allocation funding for year 11 and 12 courses from 21 district high schools in Western Australia (**the Decision**) was made by the

Government in December 2009.¹ The affected district high schools received written notification of the Decision in December 2009.

- 2.2 On 17 May 2010, the Department of Education (**Department**) provided a briefing to the Committee on the decision. The Department advised the Committee on the background to the senior school allocation funding, the rationale for the decision and its implementation.
- 2.3 The Committee was also informed of the decision by statements made by the Minister for Education in the Legislative Assembly.
- 2.4 The Department advised the Committee that the senior school allocation funding was removed from district high schools that have bus transport to a senior high school available and/or have extremely low numbers of students.
- 2.5 Eight district high schools lost their senior school allocation funding in 2010:

Wyndham District High School

Dalwallinu District High School

Mukinbudin District High School

Narembeen District High School

Quairading District High School

Brookton District High School

Corrigin District High School

*Wagin District High School*²

- 2.6 The senior school allocation funding for a further 13 district high schools was ceased for year 11 students in 2010, with funding for year 12 students ceasing in 2011. The Department advised the Committee that these district high schools have several year 11 students, have access to a bus to a local senior high school and are unable to sustain a viable face-to-face program. The phasing arrangement was intended to minimise disruption to students already undertaking senior schooling studies. These high schools are:

¹ Briefing Note to the Minister for Education from Margery Evans, Deputy Director General, Schools, Department of Education, *Provision of Senior Schooling at Non-Senior Schools (Paper 1)*, Ref: D09/0596202, 1 December 2009. The Minister approved the recommendation of the Department of Education to cease the Senior School Allocation on 8 December 2009.

² Paper tabled by Sharyn O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, Monday 17 May 2010, p5.

Kojonup District High School

Gnowangerup District High School

Southern Cross District High School

Wyalkatchem District High School

Carnamah District High School (enrol Morawa VET at Carnamah)

Dongara District High School

Boddington District High School (enrol at Narrogin VET at Boddington)

Gingin District High School

Wongan Hills District High School

Jurien District High School

Lake Grace District High School

Mullewa District High School

Roebourne District High School - deferred^{3 4}

- 2.7 The remaining 34 district high schools have retained their senior school allocations. These schools were either deemed too far from a senior high school for bus travel, or were enrolling large numbers of year 11 and 12 students, or were remote community schools.

Senior school allocation funding

- 2.8 The senior school allocation funding was provided by the Department to district high schools to support the practical outcomes of the introduction in 2006 of legislation⁵ that made it compulsory for all students to be engaged in either schooling, training or employment until the end of the year in which they turn 17 years of age.⁶

³ *Ibid.*, pp5-6.

⁴ The phasing-out of the senior school allocation funding at Roebourne District High School will begin in 2011 and continue in 2012: Sharyn O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 May 2010, p19.

⁵ *Acts Amendment (Higher School Leaving Age and Related Provisions) Act 2005*.

⁶ The senior school allocation funding was also provided to remote community schools and primary schools with secondary tops.

- 2.9 The allocation was 0.07 Full Time Equivalent (**FTE**) or 0.08 FTE for each year 11 and 12 student. The amount of senior school allocation received by each school in 2008, 2009 and 2010 is attached at **Appendix 4**.
- 2.10 In 2009, the senior school allocation provided an additional 0.08 FTE per student to 47 schools to support the educational needs of students. This equated to 46.46 FTEs totaling \$3.34 million.⁷
- 2.11 The Department advised that, in terms of the impact on government finances, the indicative target savings were articulated in the Department’s budget papers from last year. Savings were estimated at \$1.995 million over four years, comprising \$285 000 in 2009-10 and \$570 000 for each of the remaining years. That is the amount that the Department would not distribute in senior schooling allocation.⁸
- 2.12 The Department further advised that since the preliminary target was set a full detailed examination was undertaken which found that in 2009-10 the Department would not spend \$343 000 on senior schooling allocation in 2009-10, and in 2010-11 the savings would be \$927 000. The Department will continue to monitor this.⁹
- 2.13 The savings as a result of the cessation and phasing-out of senior school allocation funding in 21 district high schools is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Money saved as a result of the cessation and phasing-out of the senior school allocation

	2009-10	2010-11
Target 3% Efficiency Dividend	\$285 000	\$570 000
Actual Savings based on February 2010 census data		
Group 1: District High Schools – no senior school allocation	\$84 000	\$167 000
Group 2: District High Schools phasing out Senior School Allocation	\$259 000	\$760 000
TOTAL SAVINGS	\$343 000	\$927 000

⁷ Briefing Note to the Minister for Education from Margery Evans, Deputy Director General, Schools, Department of Education, *Provision of Senior Schooling at Non-Senior Schools (Paper 1)*, Ref: D09/0596202, 1 December 2009, p2.

⁸ Sharyn O’Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 May 2010, p5.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Rationale for the decision

2.14 The Department advised the Committee that there were two drivers for the decision: educational and financial.

Educational rationale

2.15 The Department submitted that:

29. *Following the implementation of the leaving age, concerns emerged about the access, choice and performance for students studying Year 11 and 12 in district high schools.*

30. *It is the Department's view, based on research in our schools and in discussion with other jurisdictions, that education provision for senior secondary school students is strengthened when the students attend schools that have the following features:*

(a) a good range of curriculum programs and course offerings. For district high schools, this in particular includes vocational programs;

(b) access to teachers with senior schooling and subject specific curriculum expertise;

(c) cohort sizes that promote a strong academic culture and social interaction;

(d) specialist facilities (eg purpose built for vocational studies, specialist media and science, design and technology laboratories and gymnasiums); and

(e) in some circumstances, access to hostel facilities.

31. *It is the Department's view and advice to parents that senior secondary students receive more choice, more support and more specialisation in senior high schools.¹⁰*

Financial rationale

2.16 The Department submitted that they already over-resource district high schools due to recognition of their geographical isolation and other challenges. This over-resourcing formed part of the consideration in making the decision to cease the senior schooling

¹⁰ Paper tabled by Sharyn O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, Monday 17 May 2010, p3.

allocation in some schools.¹¹ Over-resourcing includes not strictly adhering to the district high school classification structure and a generous staffing formula. As stated in a paper submitted by the Director General of the Department:

40. *Notwithstanding the acceptance of the premise of differential resourcing in country areas, it is the responsibility of the agency to sensibly review, make judgements and improve cost efficiency where possible. In fact, efficiency in cost per student FTE is a key efficiency indicator for the purposes of State Government financial control.*
41. *So, in keeping with this intent (alongside the educational rationale already outlined), a number of factors were taken into consideration in this decision.*
42. *Given:*
 - (a) *the Senior Schooling Allocation was considered transition funding for the purposes of introducing the new legislation;*
 - (b) *existing multipliers for Year 11 and 12 students are higher than for any other year level and that district high schools were being calculated on the higher VET rate;*
 - (c) *nearby senior high schools were and are being funded for this very purpose and that district high schools are within the accepted tolerances in the Public Transport Authority's Transport Assistance for Students Operational Policy in which "in-vehicle journey time (including transfers) is not to exceed 90 minutes";*
 - (d) *inefficiency of very high cost per student being expended at district high schools and the known inefficiency of sub-scale schools;*
 - (e) *District high schools receive considerable supplementary funding to support the differing needs of their students. Each school has the right to determine matching funds to specific needs.*
 - (f) *District high schools have access to courses provided through the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education.*

¹¹ *Ibid*, p4.

43. *Having given regard to all of the factors both educationally and from a value for money perspective, a decision was taken to reconsider the provision of senior schooling allocation to district high schools.*¹²

2.17 At the time when Government implemented the three per cent efficiency dividend,¹³ the Department advised that “*the lack of efficiency in over funding Year 11 and 12 provision in small population schools, including district high schools, was identified*”.¹⁴

2.18 The Department believed that the senior school allocation funding had met its objective and was in a position to review the funding:

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: *May I ask a hypothetical question: if the three per cent dividend had not been required, do you think that this would have been driven by the research?*

Ms O’Neill: *The decision, as I said, is driven by the research already. Would we have still made the decision? Yes. The department was still of a mind to provide very clear advice to parents about the best educational setting. We would have wanted to look at the value-for-money proposition—we are responsible for that—was this money best spent in this manner given the over and above staffing allocations and funding that district high schools already get and can use for this purpose? Given that this money had met its objective of assisting schools to implement the key leaving age legislation—so that objective had been met, the planning had been undertaken—given all of those things, we still believed that that decision was appropriate. We were in a position, even if the efficiency dividend was not there, to reconsider the best use of that funding that had been provided for transition.*¹⁵

Consultation

2.19 The Department advised the Committee that it did not consult with the school communities in relation to the decision.¹⁶

¹² *Ibid.*, pp4-5.

¹³ On 13 October 2008, the Liberal Government Cabinet endorsed the implementation of the three per cent efficiency dividend with effect from 1 January 2009: Western Australia, Legislative Council, Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, *Report on the Inquiry into Public Sector Expenditure*, Report 21, 19 May 2009, p8.

¹⁴ Paper tabled by Sharyn O’Neill, Director General, Department of Education, Monday 17 May 2010, p5.

¹⁵ Sharyn O’Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 May 2010, p7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p11.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: *In relation to the magnitude of the decision, why did you or your delegate not consult with the respective communities?*

Ms O'Neill: *The decision taken was on the basis that this funding was transition funding for the school. Firstly, we do not tend to consult with the school community on a budget for a school or a funding allocation for a school. The decision to change a school's funding allocation would not be something that we would normally consult with the school community on. That being said, secondly, the decision that was taken to remove some transition funding did not change for parents the fact that the students, if they wanted to, could stay at the district high school. The choice of going to a senior high school remained and the choice of staying at the district high school remained. Courses can be provided in both places.*

Firstly, we did not need to consult with the parents on course provision because the courses would remain and, secondly, we did not need to consult on the budget allocation because that would not be our normal way of operating.¹⁷

...

Ms O'Neill: *I think I made reference to this previously. Department's budgets and allocative mechanisms are not subject to consultation. We do not go out to parents and ask whether they think it is appropriate for us to have this allocation or that allocation; they are government policy driven and they are departmental decisions.¹⁸*

3 OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS

3.1 Whilst the senior school allocation funding was being withdrawn, the Minister for Education stated that options were still available to students. These were:

- i) to attend boarding school;
- ii) to catch a bus to the nearest senior high school; or

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p16.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p23.

- iii) to undertake a Schools of Isolated and Distance Education (**SIDE**) program or a vocational education and training program (**VET**) if they wished to remain at the district high school.¹⁹

Students may remain at their local district high school

- 3.2 The Department advised that students who wished to stay at their local district high school could do so and would continue to attract the teaching FTE allocated through the normal staffing formula.²⁰
- 3.3 Further, there was appropriate funding for programs to continue regardless of the removal of the senior school allocation funding:

***Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** You have the transitional funding—it is all there, the current status quo—if at district high schools parents think that their child has got to go to a senior high school that is a long way away—however many kilometres away—that would suggest that the transitional funding, by the evidence, was required to maintain what was in that district high school?*

***Ms O'Neill:** No. I do not believe that to be the case. It is our view that for students who remain in the district high schools there is sufficient funding—in fact, we believe there is appropriate funding because it is per capita plus the multipliers, plus the supplementation—for the schools to provide an appropriate program for the students who remain. The transition funding was to enable the school—not the students; it was not student driven, even though it was on a per capita basis. It was not money that was given to students. It was for schools to plan for the introduction, to understand the legislation, to understand notices of arrangements and to understand the legal requirements of the legislation. When that transition funding goes, there is sufficient funding in the schools for programs to be continued or to be maintained. The advice that has been given to me is that is exactly what has happened for those students who have remained in the schools.²¹*

- 3.4 Evidence heard by Committee, however, was in conflict with this advice provided by the Department.

¹⁹ Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA, Minister for Education, Western Australia, Legislative Assembly, *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, 19 May 2010, p2953.

²⁰ Paper tabled by Sharyn O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, Monday 17 May 2010, p7.

²¹ Sharyn O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 May 2010, p14.

- 3.5 The Committee heard that a number of district high schools were using the senior school allocation to implement programs and provide teaching and or supervision for years 11 and 12. Removal of this additional funding has meant that schools have had to either remove that service or reallocate funding from another program. The result is ultimately a reduction of service provided by schools due to the reduction in funding.
- 3.6 For example, Boddington District High School submitted that removal of the senior school allocation has reduced the ability of the school to provide for its years 10 to 12 students with curriculum access, in particular, course of study choices, workplace learning, and career counselling and course selection. Further, it was submitted that if they do not attract any senior school allocation next year, they would find it impossible to provide adequate FTEs to set up, train, monitor, assess and report on Workplace Learning for any year group.²²
- 3.7 The Principal at Gingin District High School advised the Committee that the decision impacts across the whole school:

***Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Just to follow on from Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich's questions, you just said that you made the decision to absorb that into the school's operating costs. How have you done that? Is that by running down your reserves?*

***Mr Brady:** It impacts across the whole school. It really comes down to a range of decisions. Last year we had a Literacy Getting it Right teacher and we had a Numeracy Getting it Right teacher. This year, we have ceased the Numeracy Getting it Right teacher and have continued with the Literacy Getting it Right teacher. Last year we provided a maths program for years 11 and 12 at the school. This year we are only providing, as Ms Behjat said, English and material design and technology woodwork.*

***Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Right, and that is as a direct result of having lost that funding?*

***Mr Brady:** It certainly is, yes. In fact the discussion I had with my Numeracy Getting it Right teacher occurred pretty much the day that I received that letter, and it was always a question of whether or not we would be able to continue that role, and it did depend on the nature of the funding that we received.*

***Hon KEN TRAVERS:** But that is flowing back into the years 8 to 10s? That is impacting on them, not just on the year 11 and 12s?*

²²

Submission No 6 from Boddington District High School, undated, p2.

Mr Brady: Yes, that is right, and primary as well.²³

3.8 In his submission, the Principal of Jurien Bay District High School advised that:

*Next year, if we do not attract any of the Senior School Allocation, we will find it impossible to allocate adequate FTE to provide a viable Senior Schooling program that has occurred at the school over a number of years. This will also have a significant impact on the setting up, training, monitoring, assessing and reporting on Workplace Learning for any senior school students. Furthermore, the capacity to offer Cert 11 qualifications would be almost abolished.*²⁴

3.9 The Committee heard that some schools are of the view that they do not now have adequate funding to provide supervision. For example, the Quairading District High School Principal stated that:

Mrs Wray: I understand that SIDE is still available; however, the cost and the supervisions requirements for the student becomes prohibitive.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: How does the cost become prohibitive?

Mrs Wray: Unless the student is going to pay for those course fees, the school is expected to.²⁵

...

Hon KEN TRAVERS: To enrol year 11s and 12s on the current funding, you do not have enough funding to supervise them.

Mrs Wray: No.²⁶

3.10 The Principal of Lake Grace District High School advised the Committee of the impacts of the Decision on his school:

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What would be the cost for those year 11 enrolments that you would not be funded for?

Mr Boyland: Because we run a room that is not totally supervised, probably I would put a teacher in there two periods a day; one in the morning to check up on where they were going and one in the

²³ Kevin Brady, Principal, Gingin District High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 May 2010, p6.

²⁴ Submission No 23 from Jurien Bay District High School, 27 May 2010, p3.

²⁵ Pauline Wray, Principal, Quairading District High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 June 2010, p5.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p7.

afternoon to check where they are going, so about 0.4 and that teacher can also then tutor the kids. She is an experienced maths, English and S and E teacher that can tutor the kids where they are not up to speed with that and I can help them with science as the need arises—but about 0.4. I heard you talking about a special needs kid. We have a special needs kid in year 11 and we put an aide in there for about 45 minutes at the beginning of the day and 45 minutes at the end of the day to plan out his day and to check up that he has done everything and she pops back every so often. So it is about 0.4 of an aide and 0.4 of a teacher.²⁷

...

Hon KEN TRAVERS: *You mentioned the impacts for the students in years 11 and 12. Does the removal of the senior student allowance have any impact across your management of the rest of the school?*

Mr Boyland: *To a small extent because it limits the staff you have available to offer other subjects. I would like my maths teacher to teach ICT but because she is in charge of SIDE, supervises SIDE and tutors in maths, she does not have the time to do that. So my deputy takes three periods a week of ICT, which chews into his time. So, yes, it affects the management of the school a bit.*

Hon KEN TRAVERS: *The students that you have in the school doing the SIDE program without the senior student allocation, I think you suggested at one point that they are not always supervised.*

Mr Boyland: *They are not always supervised.*

Hon KEN TRAVERS: *What are the issues regarding duty of care if they are not supervised?*

Mr Boyland: *There is a teacher next door. We just cannot supervise them because we do not have the facility to supervise them. The parents are aware of that. There is nothing we can do about it. There is a duty of care teacher next door; the two doors are a metre apart. You can hear the noise. Each period, generally, someone would be in there for a short amount of time to ensure that the kids are on task. It is a problem but it is one of the things that we have to deal with.²⁸*

²⁷ Christopher Boyland, Principal, Lake Grace District High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 June 2010, p3.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p9.

- 3.11 Peter Scharf, Principal of Dalwallinu District High School, was advised by the Midlands District Education office that he was able to enrol a student into year 11 or 12, and that the school would receive a general staffing allocation for them according to formula. However, if the students were enrolled in a SIDE course, the school would not be eligible for the general staffing allocation, this allocation would be afforded to SIDE. The rationale for this was that schools are not able to ‘double dip’, as has been the case in previous years.²⁹

It has been brought to my attention that there is still some confusion regarding the allocation of staffing for years 11 and 12 in District High Schools.

Please note the following:

If an application for enrolment is made to your school from a year 11 or 12 studentd [sic] you are free to enrol them however you must understand

- 1. You will receive a general staffing allocation for them according to formula*
- 2. It is your responsibility to provide an educational programme for them*
- 3. If you choose to enrol them into a SIDE course you will not be eligible for the staffing outlined in point 1 above this will be afforded to SIDE, schools are not able to “double dip” as has been the case in previous years.*
- 4. To this point in time I haven’t provided special permission for and DHS in the Midlandss [sic] to access above formula staff for the purpose of enrolling 11/12 students.³⁰*

- 3.12 This means that district high schools are not receiving any funding to provide supervision for the children enrolled in SIDE at the school.

- 3.13 Peter Scharf also advised the Committee that he had raised this with the Minister for Education at an informal meeting and she had advised him that this was not the intention:

²⁹ Email from Kim Guelfi, Midlands District Education Office to Bab Garner; Sharon Bray; Christine Arnold; Edward de Ruiter; Lea Faifoul-Hutcheon; Fiona Yeats; Gregory Hunt; Ilona Jachmann; Peter Scharf, 6 November 2009.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

That is the sticking point that we have. Last week I was fortunate to have time to be at an informal gathering with the minister. Her minder, Kate Coughlan, was there with her. She asked me specifically about the circumstances at Dalwallinu and I said, with respect, that we do have the kids there because at the moment I have a supernumerary education assistant who is very good and has been very sound with these kids, looking after them. I have been able to absorb her into supernumerary role but that is changing as people become redeployed or retire from the school. That allocation is dropping down. She said to me—this is in front of a number of other principals—that that was not the intention of the government’s decision, that at district high schools, you would be able to enrol those students and they would have a staffing allocation. But I have here written evidence that suggests quite the contrary.³¹

...

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: *This is the first time we have seen this email from Kim Guelfi. It says that if your students are doing SIDE, DET will not give you the person who will supervise them while they do that.*

Mr Scharf: *Do you understand that when you do you a census, we have to have the kids enrolled in SIDE so that the census data is picked up by our resourcing people in Perth and they look it? Say, for example, a student in year 8 is given more FTE than a student in year 4. A student in year 11 and 12 is given more FTE than a student in year 10, so we get this allocation that is there. It is only a small amount because I have only a small number of children that we are looking after but it is enough for us to get by; we can make do. But we have to have them enrolled in SIDE to get the information from SIDE—all their teaching materials and stuff like that. So we have been in the past supporting the children by having this education assistant there and providing all the infrastructure at our expense—the computers, the software, the audio and data links that are used, the facsimile machine, the telephone; all that sort of stuff is all done by us.*

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: *So when you informally brought this up with the minister last week, I think you said she said that was not the intention.*

Mr Scharf: *That was not the intention.*

³¹

Peter Scharf, Principal, Dalwallinu District High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 June 2010, pp2-3.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: *Did she then give you an undertaking that she would go away and have a look at that?*

Mr Scharf: *No, but I did say to her: So then, minister, I can go back—I did not call her “minister”, I called her “Liz” —*

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: *It is a nice name!*

Mr Scharf: *I said, “So, Liz, what you’re saying to me is I can go back to my community and put in next week’s newsletter, which I’ll have done, that year 11 and 12s will continue to be enrolled at Dalwallinu and they will be given some support for funding for their education assistant to help them.” She said, “That’s it; that’s the intention all along” and she did say later, because she went in this informal gathering, that she had spoken to quite a number of principals and was distressed that the message that she had in the first instance was quite different from the message that we received, which is what you have there.*

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: *Thanks for clearing that up. It is a very telling set of correspondence, thank you.³²*

- 3.14 The Committee also learnt that some district high school principals believe that they are not able to enrol year 11 and 12 and are turning students who wish to enrol in years 11 and 12 away. For example:

The CHAIR: *How many students do you currently have enrolled in year 12?*

Mrs Wray: *None.*

The CHAIR: *What about year 11?*

Mrs Wray: *None—I could have had four, but I turned them away.*

The CHAIR: *Can you tell us about that?*

Mrs Wray: *Apart from the fact that we were not going to get any funding, my understanding was that we were not to enrol year 11 or 12 students. Two are on the participation list, so district office participation coordinators are supporting them. I suggested to one student that she try another school; I have seen her around town,*

³² *Ibid*, pp5-6.

*so I suspect that has not happened. One student is working, through SIDE, at home.*³³

- 3.15 The Committee heard that many parents were unaware that it is an option for them to enrol their children in SIDE at the district high school.
- 3.16 The Committee noted that some schools are having difficulty in maintaining staff to supervise under duty of care arrangements, due to the removal of the senior school allocation. The Committee also noted that the Department had stated that where the changes had unforeseen consequences they would be available to negotiate those difficulties with the school.³⁴ However, the Committee did not receive any evidence to suggest that district high schools were aware that this option was available to them.

Findings

Finding 1: The Committee finds that the removal of the senior school allocation has impacted on individual district high schools in varying ways depending on the individual circumstances of the school.

Finding 2: The Committee finds that that there was a lack of clarity provided by the Department to schools on the options available to the students and Department's intention. It was apparent from hearings held in country areas that the Department had not communicated the implementation of the removal of the funding adequately. There was discrepancy in the understanding of principals of district high schools as to the options available to the school and to the students. There was also a lack of awareness amongst district high schools that if they were experiencing difficulty, they could negotiate with the Department for assistance.

Distance required to travel to nearest senior high school by bus

- 3.17 A key element of the Decision was that students have direct bus transport to a senior high school. The Committee noted that the Minister for Education has stated in the Legislative Assembly that of the 21 schools losing their senior school allocation, all of them have existing bus services.³⁵ The Department also advised the Committee that they ensured bus services were available where required.³⁶

³³ Pauline Wray, Principal, Quairading District High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 June 2010, p3.

³⁴ Briefing Note to the Minister for Education from Margery Evans, Deputy Director General, Schools, Department of Education, *Provision of Senior Schooling at Non-Senior Schools (Paper 1)*, Ref: D09/0596202, 1 December 2009, p4.

³⁵ Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA, Minister for Education, Western Australia, Legislative Assembly, *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, 19 May 2010, p2951.

³⁶ Paper tabled by Sharyn O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, Monday 17 May 2010, p6.

3.18 However, the Public Transport Authority (**PTA**) advised the Committee that a regular bus service did **not** exist between 15 of the 21 district high schools to the nearest senior high school, being:

- Dalwallinu District High School to Moora Senior High School;
- Mukinbudin District High School to Merredin Senior High School;
- Narembeen District High School to Merredin Senior High School;
- Quairading District High School to Northam Senior High School;
- Brookton District High School to Narrogin Senior High School;
- Corrigin District High School to Narrogin Senior High School;
- Wagin District High School to Narrogin Senior High School;
- Southern Cross District High School to Merredin Senior High School;
- Wyalkatchem District High School to Northam Senior High School;
- Carnamah District High School to Morawa District High School;
- Gingin District High School to Mindarie Senior College;
- Wongan Hills District High School to Northam Senior High School;
- Jurien Bay District High School to Moora Senior High School;
- Lake Grace District High School to Narrogin Senior High School; and
- Mullewa District High School to Geraldton Senior College.³⁷

3.19 The PTA has a requirement to offer bus services for children of school age who are outside a public transport area and more than four and a half kilometres from their nearest appropriate school. Where there are insufficient numbers to justify a bus service, (that is, student numbers are less than four), a family may be offered the payment of a conveyance allowance to drive their children to school.³⁸

3.20 The PTA advised that there was no apparent demand to offer bus services between the schools listed at paragraph 3.18 above. There had been no request from the

³⁷ Paper tabled by Public Transport Authority, 31 May 2010, pp3-5.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p5, and Mark Burgess, Acting Managing Director, Public Transport Authority, *Transcript of Evidence*, 31 May 2010, p3.

Department for the PTA to provide buses to take children to a senior high school nor any similar request from students or parents.³⁹

- 3.21 The evidence received by the Committee from parents and district high school principals, however, was that they were not aware that they could request a bus service from the PTA.
- 3.22 The PTA advised that modelling undertaken on the cost of providing the additional bus services, at worst case, showed a cost of \$1.3 million per annum. It was noted that so far the eight of the 21 district high schools which have had their senior schooling allocation funding ceased in 2010 have not required a bus service.⁴⁰

Distance of travel to senior high school

- 3.23 The policy guideline as to the acceptable time limit for a student to travel to school is that an individual student should not be on a bus for more than 90 minutes in their one-way journey.⁴¹
- 3.24 The Committee heard that the distances students would have to travel to attend senior high school would significantly exceed the 90-minutes time limit, with many students already travelling longer periods to get to the district high school.
- 3.25 Rod Baker, Principal of Carnamah District High School, advised the Committee of his view on students travelling by bus to their nearest senior high school:

***The CHAIR:** Just one of a couple of follow-on ones that I have is whether you wanted to elaborate on the suggestion that the Carnamah students could travel by bus to Morawa. That was a comment you made in your submission.*

***Mr Baker:** Yes, I am happy to. I described it as a silly suggestion. To me it represented the lack of consultation. I can imagine that people probably looked on a map and saw that was a place that was in a reasonable travelling distance of Carnamah and Mullewa and so on and, "Okay; we'll go with that one." But only a handful of our kids live in Carnamah; the rest live in Three Springs or Coorow or Eneabba. They cannot travel another 50 minutes and have any sort of meaningful work program during the day. Apart from the fact that they could be travelling for up to two and a half hours on the bus, it is*

³⁹ Mark Burgess, Acting Managing Director, and Reece Waldock, Director General, Public Transport Authority, *Transcript of Evidence*, 31 May 2010, p7.

⁴⁰ Mark Burgess, Acting Managing Director, Reece Waldock, Director General, and John Bailly, Manager, School Bus Services, Public Transport Authority, *Transcript of Evidence*, 31 May 2010, p12.

⁴¹ Paper tabled by Public Transport Authority, 31 May 2010, p8.

*just not realistic. Being someone who has had 43 years in rural education, that sort of stuff really frustrates me because it just demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of the sort of issues that are relevant and important to people. That would not work.*⁴²

3.26 The Narembeen District High School - School Council submitted that:

Narembeen is situated 286 kilometres east of the metropolitan area and 75 kilometres from the nearest Senior High School. The town site is situated on the west side of the Shire which covers 3821 square kilometres.

*Some students attending the school travel by bus for 50 kilometres or more. There is currently no bus service from Narembeen to Merredin nor would one be a viable option due to the length of time spent by students travelling. The only option for students studying Year 11 and 12 is to board and live away from their family and community.*⁴³

3.27 The Committee noted that it would not be possible for a bus to travel the 167 kilometres between Lake Grace District High School and Narrogin Senior High School in 90 minutes, let alone stop to pick-up students along the way:

Hon KEN TRAVERS: *I guess this question is almost to Susan as much as yourself, John. You went through the options that are available for students if they do not go to Lake Grace. You did not mention catching the bus to a senior college. We are told that is an option.*

Mr Boyland: *Can I answer that?*

Hon KEN TRAVERS: *I would like your answer but I would also like to hear from Susan as a parent whether she sees that as an option.*

Mr Boyland: *There is no bus from Lake Grace. Lake Grace is 140 kays from Narrogin and 140 kays from Katanning. Both of them are over an hour and a half in a bus and there is literally no bus.*

Mrs King: *We are 45 kilometres the other side of Lake Grace so add another 45 kays on to that and it is just not feasible.*

Mr Boyland: *How long are your kids on the bus as they are?*

⁴² Rod Baker, Principal, Carnamah District High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 June 2010, p8.

⁴³ Submission No 22 from Narembeen District High School - School Council, 24 May 2010, p1.

Mrs King: *They get onto the bus at 10 to eight in the morning and get to school at quarter to nine, so they already do that just to Lake Grace.*

Hon KEN TRAVERS: *So they would have a bus to pick them up to get them to Narrogin. I thought that might be the answer. You say there is no bus. Are you aware that all you have to do is ask and you will get a bus put on by the PTA?*

Mr Boyland: *I did not think kids were allowed to be on the bus for an hour and a half in the morning.*

Hon KEN TRAVERS: *Ninety minutes is the peak, but it has been suggested that an option is that students can catch a bus. You are right; 90 minutes is supposedly the length of time. But are you aware that the bus is an option; that if you requested a bus, one would be put on or potentially put on?*

Mr Boyland: *I was not aware of that.*

Mrs King: *I am not aware of that but it is hard enough to organise school buses just for your little district, so I do not know how that goes.⁴⁴*

3.28 The distances between the affected district high schools and their nearest senior high school is noted in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Distance between the affected district high schools and their nearest senior high school⁴⁵

District High School	Senior High School	Distance
Wyndham District High School	Kununurra District High School	101km
Narembeen District High School	Merredin Senior High School	71km
Mukinbudin District High School	Merredin Senior High School	74km
Dalwallinu District High School	Moora Senior High School	92km

⁴⁴ Susan King, Parent, and Christopher Boyland, Principal, Lake Grace District High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 June 2010, pp8-9.

⁴⁵ Briefing Note to the Minister for Education from Margery Evans, Deputy Director General, Schools, Department of Education, *Provision of Senior Schooling at Non-Senior Schools (Paper 1)*, Ref: D09/0596202, 1 December 2009.

District High School	Senior High School	Distance
Quairading District High School	Northam Senior High School	103km
Brookton District High School	Narrogin Senior High School	69km
Corrigin District High School	Narrogin Senior High School	118km
Wagin District High School	Narrogin Senior High School	49km
Kojonup District High School	Katanning Senior High School	39km
Gnowangerup District High School	Katanning Senior High School	61km
Southern Cross District High School	Merredin Senior High School	109km
Wyalkatchem District High School	Northam Senior High School	104km
Carnamah District High School	Morawa District High School	79km
Dongara District High School	Geraldton Senior College	65km
Boddington District High School	Narrogin Senior High School	74km
Gingin District High School	Mindarie Senior College	70km
Wongan Hills District High School	Northam Senior High School	95km
Jurien Bay District High School	Moora Senior High School	118km
Lake Grace District High School	Narrogin Senior High School	167km
Mullewa District High School	Geraldton Senior College	96km
Roebourne District High School	Karratha Senior High School	39km

Impact of long bus journey on student

3.29 An option presented by the Department is that students may catch a bus to the nearest senior high school. Based on the 90-minute rule, this would see students leaving home around 7 am and returning at about 5 pm. It is the Committee's view, however, that students would need to leave home earlier than this and arrive home later. For the students this means that they may miss out on the opportunity to pursue a part-time

job and sport practice due to lack of time available, feel dislocated from their community and suffer from exhaustion due to the travel time.⁴⁶

A major concern is the time and distances involved. Long days are not conducive to effective learning, cut into study time and act as a disincentive to attend school for some. Not all students can study whilst travelling.

Students' ability to be involved in after school sports or activities in their local home town may well be reduced due to extra travelling time.⁴⁷

3.30 Mr Trevlyn Geiles, Principal, Jurien Bay District High School, submitted that:

The nearest senior high school (Moora) requires a return journey over 3 hours by bus. This time period is measure from the Jurien Bay town-site. A significant proportion of students travel from the outlying towns of Cervantes, Greenhead and Leeman. This will add considerably to travel time. There is no bus run available and the journey would not comply with policies governing student bus travel time. Having students travel out of town means they miss out on part-time jobs and community sport activities, feel dislocated from their community as well as the exhaustion from excessive travelling periods.⁴⁸

Committee comment

3.31 It appears to the Committee that the Department has only taken the distance between the district high school and the nearest senior high school into consideration. However, many students already travel considerable distances from their home to attend the local district high school. To require these students to then travel by bus to a senior high school would result in many students travelling for well over 90 minutes. This does not seem to have been considered by the Department.

3.32 Further, the cost of providing bus services is likely to be greater than the savings being achieved by removing the senior school allocation.

⁴⁶ Submission No 6 from Boddington District High School, undated, p3.

⁴⁷ Submission No 50 from Isolated Children's Parents' Association of WA (Inc), undated, p3.

⁴⁸ Submission No 23 from Jurien Bay District High School, 27 May 2010, p2.

Findings

Finding 3: The Committee finds that the Department did not adequately consider the ability of students to be able to meet the policy guideline that an individual student should not be on a bus for more than 90 minutes on their one-way journey to attend a senior high school.

Finding 4: The Committee finds that the Department did not adequately consider the cost implications on Government of providing a bus service for students to travel from their local district high school to their nearest senior high school.

Finding 5: The Committee finds that if a bus service was provided between the district high schools and senior high schools that currently do not have an existing bus service, this would provide a significant cost impost on the PTA. In the Committee's view this would represent a cost shift from the Department to the PTA.

Improved educational outcomes

3.33 The Department stated that one of the considerations for the Decision was that, in its view, senior students would achieve a better education outcome at a senior high school. As stated in the letter to the district high schools advising of the Decision (see also paragraph 2.15):

Research, however, shows that education provision is strengthened for year 11 and 12 students by attending senior high schools which are able to provide:

- *an increased range of curriculum programs. In particular a wider breadth of vocational programs, with appropriately qualified teachers;*
- *increased access to teachers with senior schooling and subject specific curriculum expertise;*
- *larger cohort sizes which is linked to improved achievement;*
- *improved social interaction with peers;*
- *improved facilities, particularly in the specialist areas; and*
- *access to hostel capacity.*

As a result of this, the Department of Education, in conjunction with the Minister for Education, have reviewed the provision of Senior School Allocation funding for 2010 resulting in this allocation only being provided to schools that are considered too far from a senior high school for bus travel and which enrol an educationally viable number of Year 11 and 12 students.⁴⁹

- 3.34 When queried as to what research informed this view, the Department advised that this view was arrived at from analysis of “*emergent*” internal data collected by the Department.

Ms O’Neill: The research that we would point to, the emerging research—we are monitoring this over some years—is the outcome. Students who study TEE courses and who indeed study VET qualifications, overall their academic and vocational outcomes—their qualifications overall through the WACE—are higher when they participate in a senior schooling location.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: *In a senior high school location?*

Ms O’Neill: Yes.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: *Rather than in a district high school location?*

Ms O’Neill: Yes.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: *But how would you know that?*

Ms O’Neill: We know that because we see their WACE scores and their TEE-VET qualification scores as part of their WACE. Remembering that their tertiary entrance rank is now a combination of academic and vocational, the overall median TER is higher for students when they study in senior high schools than when they take senior schooling studies in district high schools.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: *But you have only had that for two years. Is it not since 2006 you have had the students in senior high schools?*

Ms O’Neill: Students in senior high schools?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: *Sorry, in district high schools.*

⁴⁹ Letter from Margery Evans, Deputy Director General, Schools, Department of Education, to affected district high schools, 11 December 2009.

Ms O'Neill: Yes; and that is why I said we are monitoring it, because it is emergent data. But it is true to say that over some years we have had a handful of year 11 and 12 students who have studied in district high schools because of personal or family reasons. That is why I was cautious. I do not want to overstate that as a piece of research. It is something that we are monitoring, but it is clear to us thus far, emergent, that where students study, for all of the reasons that we have outlined, in a senior high school, to date it appears that their median TER, or the median TER of those students, is improved, as I might say is NAPLAN years 3, 5, 7 and 9. We are talking secondary, so year 9.

Given the focus of this inquiry is years 11 and 12, what we are saying is that we see some emerging trends that concern us—which is why we were looking at the data in the first place—about year 11 and 12 students studying in schools that have small populations of senior schooling studies and courses.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Just one last part on that, Director General, because there may be advice. I accept what you say, but is it possible to table the research so far, because I can imagine a natural bias. Those who are academically interested will tend to go to the high school, and those who are not are not going to go to the high school at this stage of their development. They could well grow, as they do often grow, beyond that. I would be interested in seeing the basis of that research, if I could.

Ms O'Neill: Before I speak to that request, I think it is really important that I ensure that committee members understand that students are not stopped from going to the district high school; in fact, many of the students studying VET will be studying at their district high school, enabling them to do the sorts of things you are talking about in the community, so that opportunity has not been diminished, and they will be doing it in concert with their local senior high school. The reason why I said on a couple of occasions that the data is emergent is that it is internal, although I am not saying that we will not share it. It is not listed as high-powered research as such; it is us analysing our results *et cetera*, and it forms one part of the range of factors that I have outlined to the committee in terms of consideration, so I would implore the committee to use it in that context. What we have is an analysis of year 11 and 12 data, which we will provide. Naturally, there are some outliers and exceptions—for example, Manjimup which, year by year, performs at a very high level in years 11 and 12 on the league table. That is why I am being

ever so cautious about the use of that data; it was one piece in a jigsaw of information that we used.

...

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: *Finally, just on that point: as a layperson reading the letters that have gone out to the district high schools, one of the paragraphs is a little misleading, given how you have explained it. To me, it says pretty authoritatively that research shows that education provision is strengthened for years 11 and 12. If it is emergent, that is quite different to what those words suggest.*

Ms O'Neill: *If I could respond to that: yes and no. What I mean by that is that what is not emergent is the research that exists about students having access to teachers who are subject-specific trained. That is not emergent; that is well-documented for teachers in senior high schools who are subject-specific, discipline-based teachers in chemistry, physics and what-have-you. In district high schools, we have generalist teachers taking on courses. That quality teaching, subject specific knowledge, is well-documented, so when the letter says that a range of things are well-documented, that is why I keep saying the TEE/VET performance is one piece of a range of information. That letter does not refer to the TEE/VET performance piece of research on its own for the purposes of the letter; the letter was referring to the research generally about specialist facilities and specialist teachers et cetera. That is what it is referring to, not just this piece of information that we are talking about now.*

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: *I am getting a bit more confused as time passes. First of all we are told that the decision was made based on research, and upon closer examination we are told that the TEE/VET performance is one part. I am assuming that that is the research component that you are talking about when you make reference to this decision being made or driven in part by research.*

Ms O'Neill: *I am happy to clarify it again. When we talk about research, as I have pointed out in my statement, there are a range of things: there is students' access to specialist knowledge through specialist teachers; there is access to specialist facilities; there is access to the range of curriculum offerings. What I can provide the committee with later is a comparison for some schools between the curriculum offerings for years 11 and 12 in a district high school versus the curriculum offerings for years 11 and 12 in a senior high*

school. That plus the small piece of information we are focusing more intently on right now forms the total bucket of research.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: *I am wondering, Ms O'Neill, whether you can provide for the committee concrete evidence of how you actually got to this decision in respect of these 21 schools that are now going to be affected, because it all sounds a bit vague to me, I have to say. Is it possible for you to provide concrete evidence to the committee on how you—I am assuming that you made a decision and then gave it to the minister, or perhaps it was the other way around; I do not know, but I suspect it was you as the Director General—had your staff look at a range of things and made the decision that perhaps this should be put to the minister. I just wonder whether it is possible for the committee to have access to those pieces of information that you used as the basis for the decision that you made. Is that possible?*

Ms O'Neill: *The department undertook this, as I have described, the examination of a range of information, and I will seek to provide the information as it stands to committee. To restate: it is not one report; it is not one piece of research. It is hours of discussion based on various pieces of information, as I have said, educationally and from a value for money perspective.⁵⁰*

- 3.35 The Department provided the Committee with a 'Five Year Summary Sheet' for each secondary school with enough eligible year 12 students to validly report performance, and advised that:

There is no meaningful data that compares senior secondary performance in district high schools. Only Kununurra and Bullsbrook District High Schools have sufficient numbers of students to meet the minimum required to make reporting on performance statistically meaningful. In these two schools, the secondary parts of the schools operate, in effect, like a senior high school.⁵¹

- 3.36 The Committee noted that the Department was unable to provide a document that outlined their research and demonstrated their analysis.

- 3.37 The Department's assertion was challenged in a number of submissions received by the Committee.

⁵⁰ Sharyn O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 May 2010, pp8-10.

⁵¹ Supplementary Information A2 provided by the Department of Education, 3 June 2010 (private document).

3.38 The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of WA (Inc) submitted that:

Over the years there have been numerous reports and studies into rural and remote education in WA, including and not limited to the Tomlinson Report (1994), Rural and Remote Advisory Council (RREAC) Summary Report (October 1998) and Country Roads – Pathways to Better Education and Training for Rural and Remote Western Australia (2000-2003).

The research does not indicate that district high schools are unable to provide an appropriate delivery of service or that students are significantly better off by being transferred to senior high schools and there are no recommendations to this effect.

There is concern that by withdrawing access to the local school some students will not be provided with an educational program that is suitable for their particular circumstances and needs.

A bigger schools does not mean bigger results.⁵²

3.39 The Western Australian District High School Administrators' Association queried the research and the correlation between school size and school performance.⁵³ As stated by Peter Scharf, Principal, Dalwallinu District High School, a member of the executive of the Western Australian District High School Administrators' Association:

I would also challenge the following statement that is made in this letter from Margery Evans —

- *larger cohort sizes which is linked to improved achievement;*

If any of you care to follow the MySchool website, and plot—I can provide this to you, should you choose, because we have already done it—there is no absolutely no correlation whatsoever between the cohort size and achievement. In fact, we have data that suggests quite the contrary. If there is any trend at all, it is that a smaller school is able to have far better outcomes. We are only talking about NAPLAN, but that is the measure that people are using at the moment.

⁵² Submission No 50 from Isolated Children's Parents' Association of WA (Inc), undated, p2.

⁵³ Submission No 56 from Western Australian District High School Administrators' Association, 31 May 2010, p4.

The CHAIR: *Can I just clarify that? That counter information, that the small schools provide a good or less legal outcome, where is that data?*

Mr Scharf: *You can take it straight off the MySchool website. That is all we have done. I am a member of the WA District High School Administrators Association. I am part of the executive. We read that and all of us know our own schools and we know our neighbouring schools pretty well. We thought that it did not make a lot of sense because we know that schools like Boddington and Donnybrook had won literacy prizes, and we knew that they had done outstandingly well. Our concern was whether it was going to stand up. Since then we have been slotting in how we are comparing as a system, the district high schools, with the senior high schools. Data that we have so far suggests that the transition from years 7 to 9 is best held in the district high school rather than children going off to a senior high school from their primary school. We have better data.⁵⁴*

- 3.40 Gingin District High School Principal, Mr Kevin Brady, stated in evidence to the Committee that he believed while senior high schools may be better socially for a student, senior high schools did not necessarily provide better educational outcomes:

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: *Do you support Margery Evans' view that education provision is strengthened for year 11 and 12 by attending senior high schools?*

Mr Brady: *We have discussed this at the District High School Administrators Association. Our view is that in fact district high schools are able to provide a good program. There are issues in relation to social interactions for year 11 and 12 when the cohort is very small. As you can see, our cohort is around 30–29 at the moment—so it is not tiny. For most able students, where there is a senior high school close at hand, I would certainly be saying to the students, if that is a viable option, that a senior high school may be more appropriate, not necessarily because they achieve better outcomes, but because they are socially in a group of students that are of like age. To translate that then and say that that means that we cannot achieve outstanding outcomes in a district high school, that is not the case. We can achieve outstanding outcomes in a district high school, and have in the past. So really it comes down to a question of*

⁵⁴ Peter Scharf, Principal, Dalwallinu District High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 June 2010, p3.

*parent choice and how far they are prepared to drive their children and the access they have to senior high schools.*⁵⁵

- 3.41 The Principal of Lake Grace District High School advised the Committee that, in his experience, he could see no difference in the education that district high schools offer, as long as the student wants an education:

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: *Mr Boyland, given that you have worked in senior high schools and now you are in a district high school and given that this policy decision is predicated on a view that senior high schools offer better opportunities, greater socialisation et cetera, what is your professional opinion about the basis upon which this decision has been made?*

Mr Boyland: *I do not think that that always holds true. Each individual child is an individual and I believe that there are some kids who get as good an education at a district high school as they can get. There are some kids who will not. But I think there is scientific data that says that kids do not have to go to a senior high school to get a good education; they can get a good education at a district high school. As you say, most of my time, apart from six years, has been at senior high schools. I was principal at Leinster District High School in the 1990s, now I am at Lake Grace; I see no difference in the education they offer. As long as the kid wants an education, D highs are just as good as a senior high.*⁵⁶

- 3.42 The Committee accepted that there may be some educational benefits for the majority of students by attending a senior high school. However, this also depends on the individual circumstances of the students. There are clearly a range of circumstances where a student will have better education outcomes by completing years 11 and 12 at their local District High Schools.

- 3.43 As stated by the Principal of Carnamah District High Schools:

Different students from different backgrounds with varying abilities and expectations, will progress well in different educational settings and not all are suited to the big school scene. We should never lose sight of the contribution that small schools, including district high

⁵⁵ Kevin Brady, Principal, Gingin District High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 May 2010, p7.

⁵⁶ Christopher Boyland, Principal, Lake Grace District High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 June 2010, pp7-8.

schools, continue to make in the provision of education across this vast state.⁵⁷

3.44 The Great Southern Development Commission submitted that:

The GSDC understands the removal of funding allocation applies to district high schools where there are fewer than 10 students, with the rationale that these students will have access to a greater range of opportunities and subjects through attending a school in a larger centre.

The main concern regarding this rationale from the community is that a high proportion of students in this age cohort at these high schools are not academically focussed. The small class sizes at these schools are advantageous in providing a high level of support and supervision to the students to complete Year 11 and 12, and transition into employment within the community.⁵⁸

3.45 Of major concern to the Committee are the students that are unlikely to be fully engaged in the school system. The concern is that these students are unlikely to go to boarding school or travel long distances on a bus to attend school, and are at risk of being lost from the education system. This concern was expressed to the Committee by a number of district high school principals. For example:

Communities served by two district high schools at Gnowangerup and Kojonup have been adversely affected by the decision to cease the senior schooling allocation funding. These schools have been successful in improving education transitions for young people in their communities identified as at risk of disengagement by providing tailored innovative programs. Without the support of the senior schooling allocation, these schools would have been unable to implement the programs in the first place; the removal of senior schooling jurisdiction has brought them to an end.⁵⁹

3.46 Kevin Brady, Principal, Gingin District High School, stated that:

One of my major concerns is that there is a small number of our students who are marginally engaged. They are students who we spend a great deal of time trying to engage in schooling. These students come from among the poorest families in the community. They have often the lowest commitment to education among many of

⁵⁷ Submission No 19 from Carnamah District High School, 24 May 2010, p4.

⁵⁸ Submission No 63 from Great Southern Development Commission, 8 June 2010, p1.

⁵⁹ Submission No 59 from Great Southern Employment Development Committee, 31 May 2010, p3.

*the families in this community. My concern would be that were the school to cease operation of its year 11 and 12 program, these students would not go to other schools and would be left behind by the education system. That is of great concern to me, and it was one of the reasons why the school council made the decision that we would have to continue to offer year 11 and 12 programs, because in fact those students would be so severely disadvantaged in the event that we did not offer those programs at the school, notwithstanding that with the loss of the senior school allocation, that will impact on our programs that are provided and our other support programs that are provided in the school.*⁶⁰

- 3.47 The Committee noted that the increase in school leaving age was implemented to target the small percentage of youth that were not engaging with the education system. However, the impact of the removal of the senior school allocation appears contrary to this intention. Any reduction in the ability of these students to undertake years 11 and 12 sees an increase in the risk of these students being lost from the education system. The flow-on effects for these at-risk students is often limited employment prospects, possible criminal/antisocial behaviour, and increased risk of mental illness.⁶¹

Purpose of the senior school allocation funding

- 3.48 The Department advised that the senior school allocation was intended to be transitional funding for district high schools to assist in the planning required for transition and to support the introduction of the new legislation. This funding was in addition to the normal staffing allocation received by district high schools for year 11 and 12 students.⁶²
- 3.49 The Director General of the Department advised the Committee that it was not intended, at the time the legislation was introduced or any time since, for district high schools to become year 8 to 12 senior high schools.⁶³
- 3.50 The Committee sought clarification from the Director General on what the senior school allocation was used for:

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: *I want to wrap up the thing that I heard before. The transitional funding was more for administrative education for the management of the school, not for the education*

⁶⁰ Kevin Brady, Principal, Gingin District High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 21 May 2010, p3,

⁶¹ Submission No 35 from Wheatbelt Development Commission, 31 May 2010, p3.

⁶² Paper tabled by Sharyn O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, Monday 17 May 2010, p3.

⁶³ Sharyn O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 17 May 2010, p3.

component going down to the students in those district high schools. Is that pretty right?

Ms O'Neill: It is fair to say that it was used for both. Flexibility was given for schools to decide how that funding was best used. Some schools used that funding to access programs—for example, working with a local business. I would not want to say it was used solely for administrative purposes. Schools could use it to work out how they were going to start providing programs, if they needed to. It was transition funding and it was understood, given all the other funding sources, that they would be able to sustain the programs they set. That funding was not there forever.⁶⁴

- 3.51 The Committee heard in evidence from a number of district high school principals that they were unaware that the senior school allocation was transitional funding. The district high schools believed that the funding was provided to help them implement years 11 and 12 due to the increase in the school leaving age. There was no indication to these schools that the funding would not continue.
- 3.52 Peter Scharf, Principal, Dalwallinu District High School advised the Committee on his understanding of the purpose of the senior school allocation funding:

The CHAIR: Okay. When the funding was set up—the original purpose of the senior school allocation funding—do you have an understanding of what that was set up for?

Mr Scharf: When it was first set up?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Scharf: Yes. My understanding was that it was to assist in the provision of services for children, particularly as they were moving from the previous leaving age of 15 to the leaving age of 17.

The CHAIR: Were you advised at that point that it was transitional funding?

Mr Scharf: No. There has been no mention of transitional funding. I think you will find, if you look back at the material, that district high schools have been operating year 11 and 12 courses of their own volition for at least probably the best part of 20 years, if not more.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p15.

The CHAIR: *We have been advised by the department that the money was allocated to assist in the planning required for transition and the support for the introduction of the new legislation. Does that reflect your understanding?*

Mr Scharf: *The transition to the new legislation, from what I would believe, would imply that we are legally or formally now keeping our students on in our schools for year 11 and 12, not a transition away from having year 11 and 12 in our schools. Why would you give more money to shut something down? My understanding would be, or has always been, that it was to assist us in—the things I have talked about before, and Ljiljanna recognises this—we have done these courses on an informal basis, responding to communities and to the needs of the kids who are there, and we have been able to get some funding through staffing. We have never had curriculum access. There is another factor there too, which is called curriculum access. Curriculum access is additional staffing. That has not happened for the district high schools that I have been involved with. A senior schooling allocation was a smaller amount than the curriculum access, as I recall, but the whole concept of it was that we were going from this informal ad hoc arrangement where we would take on some children, we would look after them, and, yes, we would sort of find some time somewhere, and we would find a room to say, “Here is a building that we can put these kids into and now we can put in proper support for those children.” In our circumstances, that would be an education assistant level 3, which means that that person would have duty of care for those children and has elected to take on that responsibility, so we have full-time support for those children. An education assistant is worth as much as a teacher as far as I am concerned, in a personal way, but in a monetary way, if I trade in one teacher I can get two education assistants, roughly. If I have been given a 0.5 full-time equivalent of a teacher, I can make it into one full-time education assistant. I can get a little money from here, there and somewhere else and make it up to a full-time role. That is what we have been doing—creative ways of solving the problem. My understanding is that this transition that the committee has mentioned is to move from an ad hoc arrangement to a formal arrangement because there is additional funding, therefore guaranteeing that I can say, “Beauty, I can put in an education assistant full-time,” and that was my understanding.*

The CHAIR: *You did not have an understanding at some point that the funding would be ceased?*

*Mr Scharf: Not when it was first put in.*⁶⁵

- 3.53 Further, the Committee did not receive any written documentation that clearly demonstrated that the allocation was only intended to be a transitional payment. The only document provided by the Department to demonstrate this was an excerpt from the Budget Overview, Learning and Training Guarantee, which shows that additional staff and programs for 16 and 17 year olds, of which senior school allocation is a part, had an allocation for the years 2005-06 to 2008-09 but no allocation in the 2009-10 budget.
- 3.54 The Committee heard that schools used the money provided to them through the senior school allocation to appoint additional teaching staff, or to employ education assistants. Some schools converted the grant into contingencies. With the use of the senior school allocation, district high schools have developed comprehensive and innovative programs to meet local needs and which have been well received. In many of the communities, the district high school and local business have put considerable effort into VET programs, leading to ongoing employment opportunities for the students.

Finding

Finding 6: The Committee finds that there was a lack of clarity provided by the Department to schools on the nature and the purpose of the senior school allocation.

Boarding school

- 3.55 The Committee learnt from evidence received that the choice offered to parents to send their children to boarding school was not well received by the communities affected by the decision.
- 3.56 Boarding school was neither a financially viable nor socially desirable option for many families for the following reasons:
- Not all parents want to send their children to boarding school.
 - Not all parents can afford to send their children to boarding school.
 - Not every child is suited to a boarding environment.
 - The students attending a district high school have already chosen not to take the path of boarding.

⁶⁵ Peter Scharf, Principal, Dalwallinu District High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 11 June 2010, pp4-5.

- The impact of separation from the family may have negative consequences for the student and their ability to continue senior study.
- Availability of places at public boarding schools and hostels was uncertain.

3.57 Boarding also presents some parent with additional material costs, even where direct boarding costs are partially or nearly fully covered by government in their living away from home programs. In some cases, regional families find these too hard to meet. These additional material costs include the cost of students and parents travelling home or to the boarding school for visits, uniforms and funding for extracurricular activities.

3.58 The Narembeen District High School - School Council submitted that:

Due to the current financial climate, families are finding it more difficult to find the additional funds to send their children away to school for their Senior Schooling. Even with the Isolated Children's Allowance and other concessions this still does not make it a viable comparison to an education at their current school.⁶⁶

3.59 The Country Women's Association Western Australia submitted that:

BOARDING: *The added expense for most parents would be approximately \$8,000 (after AIC and state boarding allowances) if the student stays at a Country High School Hostels Authority Residential College, plus the cost of new school uniforms and personal linen requirements. Families who prefer their child to live at home and be educated in their local community have already chosen that option.⁶⁷*

3.60 Wongan Hills District High School submitted that:

Without access to Year 11 and 12 programs at a District High School the impact on the students is considerable. The assumption is that these students many of who are from low socio-economic or from Indigenous backgrounds would board as they are eligible to access the State funded Isolated Children money. Should they wish to take this option there will be significant additional costs for the State and the families themselves in order for these students to access alternative education away from their local community. It is also problematic, as for example, many of these families do not own or have access to transport and would have to rely on public transport

⁶⁶ Submission No 22 from Narembeen District High School - School Council, 24 May 2010, pp1-2.

⁶⁷ Submission No 26 from Country Women's Association Western Australia, 28 May 2010, p2.

*which is very limited in a small community town such as ours. Remedying this would be an additional cost for the State to bear. These at risk families live a day to day existence where financially planning for their child to exist as a boarder is not feasible.*⁶⁸

Committee comment

- 3.61 The Committee noted that the cost of sending a student to a public boarding school is, in the majority, paid by government.
- 3.62 The Committee noted that should students from district high schools take up places at public boarding schools, this would significantly add to government costs. This cost to government would be greater than the cost of the senior school allocation funding.

Social impact of decision

- 3.63 Concerns were expressed in a number of submissions about the broader social impact of the decision.
- 3.64 The primary concern was that district high schools not offering years 11 and 12 may influence people's decisions to live and work in a town. The provision of senior school classes in small regional towns is advantageous in attraction and retention of families within the communities. If a district high school cannot offer years 11 and 12, there is the potential loss of students and their families from the communities as they move to larger centres to attend senior school. There is also a negative impact on the ability to attract new families to the communities. This will, in turn, have a flow-on impact on the local economy and social fabric of the community.
- 3.65 The Country Women's Association Western Australia submitted that:

***FAMILY RELOCATION:** Families who do not wish their children to travel longer distances on school buses, or live away from home during years 11 and 12, will move away from their current community in search of better education opportunities. Similarly, families may no longer consider moving to localities where there is no education provision for their student child.*

*This will impact on regional development, reduces services including health care professionals and could result in labour shortage for local industries and businesses.*⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Submission No 25 from Wongan Hills District High School, 26 May 2010, p2.

⁶⁹ Submission No 26 from Country Women's Association Western Australia, 28 May 2010, p2.

3.66 In their submission, Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt Inc stated that:

*The implications for Wheatbelt communities are great. The availability and quality of educational options is a major influence on decisions about where people with families will live. Parents need to consider how they are going to cater for their child's educational needs and if they cannot be met in the town where they live then there is the potential for them to move their family to somewhere with better opportunities. This will have a serious impact on the growth and development in the region, as without a certain mass of population industry and employment will decline, service provision and amenities will become less feasible and communities will continue to deteriorate.*⁷⁰

3.67 In his submission, the Principal of Mukinbudin District High School stated that:

*The effect on the students and their local community however, may be considerable. These students currently play a large part in the social fabric of the community and the impending loss of the students to the community could be devastating.*⁷¹

3.68 These concerns were especially relevant to Jurien Bay and Boddington, towns which are currently experiencing large population growth which is projected to continue into the near future. It is surprising to the Committee that the Department would remove the senior school allocation funding from towns whose populations are expected to double within the next ten years.

3.69 At the hearings held by the Committee in the regional towns, it was clear to the Committee that there was broad based support from the communities for district high schools and considerable community awareness of the negative impact it would have on their towns if their local district high school did not offer years 11 and 12.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The Committee identified that the removal of the senior school allocation funding from 21 district high schools has raised a number of issues that requires addressing by the Government.

4.2 The Committee noted that the Department had undertaken no consultation with schools and their communities prior to the Decision being made. In the Committee's view, this decision should have involved consultation and taken into consideration that each community is different. Decisions about access to education and training for

⁷⁰ Submission No 48 from Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt Inc, undated, p2.

⁷¹ Submission No 31 from Mukinbudin District High School, undated, p1.

senior students at district high schools should be made on an individual basis. Without such consideration, the potential impact of such a decision on the students, schools, parents and communities in the affected districts cannot be known.

- 4.3 The Committee finds that the Department has communicated the Decision to the affected district high schools and communities poorly, resulting in confusion amongst principals, parents and the community about what the Decision meant and what options were available.
- 4.4 The Committee finds that the briefing note provided by the Department to the Minister for Education⁷² did not accurately outline all of the issues involved.
- 4.5 The Committee finds that the Department failed to analyse the overall State Budget implications to Government of the Decision. The cost savings to the Department are minimal and far less than the costs that will be imposed on other departments to provide bus services and subsidise children living away from home.
- 4.6 The Committee noted that the removal of the senior school allocation funding was part of the three per cent efficiency dividend. The Committee noted that the Government has repeatedly stated that the efficiency dividend will not impact on ‘service delivery’ or ‘front line services’. The Committee finds that the removal of the senior school allocation is impacting on the delivery of years 11 and 12 at district high schools.
- 4.7 The Committee noted that the stated intention of the removal of the senior school allocation was to improve the educational outcomes for students. However, the Committee’s evidence has shown that this has not been the case for students wishing to undertake years 11 and 12 at their local district high school. This is contrary to the Minister for Education’s statement that:

*the decision to cease the senior school allocation at 21 district high schools was made for educational considerations, not financial considerations. Any financial saving that can be then put into other schools is minuscule in the scheme of the entire education budget. There was an educational rationale for this decision, and we want to improve the educational outcomes for as many students as we possibly can.*⁷³

- 4.8 The Committee is concerned that as a result of the decision, there will be students who will not complete year 12.

⁷² Briefing Note to the Minister for Education from Margery Evans, Deputy Director General, Schools, Department of Education, *Provision of Senior Schooling at Non-Senior Schools (Paper 1)*, Ref: D09/0596202, 1 December 2009.

⁷³ Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA, Minister for Education, Western Australia, Legislative Assembly, *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, 19 May 2010, p2953.

- 4.9 The Committee is of the view that the senior school allocation funding should be re-instated at the 21 district high schools immediately.
- 4.10 The Committee is of the view that the Department, whenever it reassesses funding to schools in regional and rural areas, must take into consideration:
- a) whether there is actually any savings to the overall State Budget;
 - b) the broader economic and social consequences of the decision; and
 - c) whether access to, and equity and excellence in, education for all students will be upheld.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education immediately re-instate the Senior School Allocation funding to the 21 district high schools from which it was removed.

Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the Department of Education when considering funding changes to schools in rural and regional areas take into consideration:

- a) whether there is actually any savings to the overall State Budget;
- b) the broader economic and social consequences of the decision; and
- c) whether access to, and equity and excellence in, education for all students will be upheld.

Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that the Department of Education review the provision of years 11 and 12 at district high schools to ensure that the education programs provide access to, and equity and excellence in, education for all students.

C. Watson

**Hon Giz Watson MLC
Chair**

Date: 1 July 2010

APPENDIX 1
LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS TO WHOM THE COMMITTEE
WROTE

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS TO WHOM THE COMMITTEE WROTE

Stakeholders
Hon Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA Minister for Education
Wyndham District High School
Dalwallinu District High School
Mukinbudin District High School
Narembeen District High School
Quairading District High School
Brookton District High School
Corrigin District High School
Wagin District High School
Kojonup District High School
Gnowangerup District High School
Southern Cross District High School
Wyalkatchem District High School
Carnamah District High School
Dongara District High School
Boddington District High School
Gingin District High School
Wongan Hills District High School
Jurien Bay District High School

Stakeholders
Lake Grace District High School
Mullewa District High School
Roebourne District High School
Wyndham District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Dalwallinu District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Mukinbudin District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Narembeen District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Quairading District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Brookton District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Corrigin District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Wagin District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Kojonup District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Gnowangerup District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Southern Cross District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Wyalkatchem District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Carnamah District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Dongara District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Boddington District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Gingin District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Wongan Hills District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Jurien Bay District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Lake Grace District High School Parents and Citizens' Association

Stakeholders
Mullewa District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Roebourne District High School Parents and Citizens' Association
Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Inc.
Western Australian Council of State School Organisations (Inc.)
State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia
Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia
Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley
Shire of Dalwallinu
Shire of Mukinbudin
Shire of Narembeen
Shire of Quairading
Shire of Brookton
Shire of Corrigin
Shire of Wagin
Shire of Kojonup
Shire of Gnowangerup
Shire of Yilgarn
Shire of Wyalkatchem
Shire of Carnamah and Eneabba
Shire of Irwin
Shire of Boddington

Stakeholders
Shire of Gingin
Shire of Wongan-Ballidu
Shire of Dandaragan
Shire of Lake Grace
Shire of Mullewa
Shire of Roebourne
Ngnowa Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation
Joorook Ngarni
Badjaling Community
Quairading Aboriginal Progress Association
Sea Brook Aboriginal Corporation
Kojonup Aboriginal Corporation
Gnowangerup Aboriginal Corporation
Billinue Community Aboriginal Corporation
Beemurra Aboriginal Corporation
Gascoyne Development Commission
Goldfields Esperance Development Commission
Great Southern Development Commission
Kimberley Development Commission
Pilbara Development Commission
Mid West Development Commission
Wheatbelt Development Commission

Stakeholders
South West Development Commission
Peel Development Commission
Kununurra District High School
Central Midlands Senior High School
Merredin Senior High School
Northam Senior High School
Narrogin Senior High School
Katanning Senior High School
Morawa District High School
Geraldton Senior College
Mindarie Senior College
Clarkson Community High School
Karratha Senior High School

APPENDIX 2
LIST OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

No.	Submission	Date
1	Andrew and Karen Mitchell Private Citizens	15/05/10
2	Gavin Treasure Chief Executive Officer Shire of Morawa	19/05/10
3	Kevin Brady Principal Gingin District High School	21/05/10
4	Sylvia Kelly Gingin District High School Chaplain's Committee	21/05/10
5	Cr Shane Love Shire President Shire of Dandaragan	19/05/10
6	Lee Jones Hogg Principal Boddington District High School	21/05/10
7	Peter Scharf Principal Dalwallinu District High School	24/05/10
8	Christine Arnold Principal Narembeen District High School	25/05/10
9	Ian R Mortimore President Narembeen District High School Parents and Citizens' Association	23/05/10
10	Greg Johnson Principal/Licensee Ray White Works, Jurien Bay	17/05/10

No.	Submission	Date
11	Lyndal Rowe Private Citizen	26/05/10
12	Brenda Carter Private Citizen	26/05/10
13	Trudy McClurg Private Citizen	26/05/10
14	Geof Lee Private Citizen	26/05/10
15	Sandez Peaker Private Citizen	26/05/10
16	Bill Atkinson Chief Executive Officer Shire of Carnamah	31/05/10
17	Colleen Bennier President Carnamah District High School Parents and Citizens' Association	27/05/10
18	Eddie Piper Acting Chief Executive Officer Shire of Yilgarn	24/05/10
19	Rod Baker Principal Carnamah District High School	24/5/10
20	Mark Bellemore Business Proprietor Jurien Bay	28/05/10
21	Lil Harper President Southern Cross District High School Parents and Citizens' Association	28/05/10
22	Kellie Mortimore Elected Member Narembeen District High School - School Council	24/05/10

No.	Submission	Date
23	Trevlyn Geiles Principal Jurien Bay District High School	27/05/10
24	Kylie Catto Acting President The Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc.	27/05/10
25	Ilona Jachmann Principal Wongan Hills District High School	26/05/10
26	Anne Gething General Secretary The Country Women's Association of Western Australia (Inc.)	28/05/10
27	Sean Fletcher Chief Executive Officer Shire of Lake Grace	31/05/10
28	Maree De Lacey Chief Executive Officer Peel Development Commission	28/05/10
29	Peter Lyons Vice Chairperson/Acting Secretary Jurien Bay Chamber of Commerce	27/05/10
30	Belinda Buitenhuis President Jurien Bay District High School Parents and Citizens' Association	27/05/10
31	Edward de Ruiter Principal Mukinbudin District High School	31/05/10
32	Laura Hooton School Council Chairperson Jurien Bay District High School	30/05/10

No.	Submission	Date
33	Andrea Bear Secretary Wongan Hills District High School Parents and Citizens' Association	31/05/10
34	Dr W J Cox Director Ardross Group of Companies	31/05/10
35	Wendy Newman Chief Executive Officer Wheatbelt Development Commission	31/05/10
36	John Boyland and Bradley Watson Principal and Chairperson of the School Board (respectively) Lake Grace District High School	31/05/10
37	Cathy Wright Chairperson Kojonup Working Inc.	27/05/10
38	Maree De Lacey Chief Executive Officer Peel Development Commission	28/05/10
39	Fiona Yeats Principal Bruce Rock District High School	31/05/10
40	Frank Peczka Chief Executive Officer Shire of Narembeen	31/05/10
41	David O'Keefe President Gnowangerup District High School Parents and Citizens' Association	16/05/10
42	ER Della Bosca Acting Chief Executive Officer Shire of Mukinbudin	27/05/10

No.	Submission	Date
43	Sarah Nicoli School Vice Captain Gingin District High School Student Council	31/05/10
44	Jacqueline TeRuki and Edwin Waight Private Citizens	31/05/10
45	Stuart Taylor Chief Executive Officer Shire of Wongan-Ballidu	27/05/10
46	Tabatha Dedman 09/10 District Governor Eastern Wheatbelt The Association of APEX Clubs of Australia	27/05/10
47	Julian Murphy Chief Executive Officer Shire of Corrigin	31/05/10
48	Rebekah Burges Executive Officer Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt Inc.	31/05/10
49	Louise House Chair Rural, Remote and Regional Women's Network	31/05/10
50	Carina Kopke Vice President Isolated Children's Parents' Association of WA (Inc.)	31/05/10
51	Lynnette O'Reilly Chief Executive Officer Shire of Moora	31/05/10
52	Cr Dana O'Hare Deputy Shire President Shire of Quairading	31/05/10
53	Peter Groves Chairperson, School Council Quairading District High School	31/05/10

No.	Submission	Date
54	Justine Whyte President Quairading District High School Parents and Citizens' Association	31/05/10
55	Mark Williams Principal Wyndham District High School	31/05/10
56	Alan McLaren President Western Australian District High School Administrators' Association	31/05/10
57	Katrina vanStraalen Principal Wyalkatchem District High School	31/05/10
58	Gary Sherry Chief Executive Officer Shire of Boddington	31/05/10
59	G Bowley Chair The Great Southern Employment Development Committee	31/05/10
60	Ian Kelly Principal/Director Professionals Jurien Bayview Realty	31/5/10
61	Steve Douglas Chief Executive Officer Mid West Development Commission	31/05/10
62	Cr Jill Mathwin Shire President Shire of Kojonup	02/06/10
63	Bruce Manning Chief Executive Officer Great Southern Development Commission	08/06/10

No.	Submission	Date
64	Genette Keating President Consumers' Association of Western Australia (Inc.)	09/06/10
65	Kath Ward Principal Merredin Senior High School	10/06/10
66	J F Brown Private Citizen	11/06/10
67	Liz Adlam Private Citizen	11/06/10
68	Kit Anderson President Kojonup District High School Parents and Citizens' Association	17/06/10
69	Aaron Cook Chief Executive Officer Shire of Gnowangerup	21/06/10

APPENDIX 3
LIST OF WITNESSES

APPENDIX 3

LIST OF WITNESSES

Witnesses	Date
Sharyn O'Neill Director General Department of Education	17/05/10
Margery Evans Deputy Director General, Schools Department of Education	17/05/10
John Leaf Acting Deputy Director, Finance and Administration Department of Education	17/05/10
Colin Pettit Executive Director, Regional and Remote Schools Department of Education	17/05/10
Kevin Brady Principal Gingin District High School	21/05/10
Sue Moir President Gingin District High School Parents and Citizens' Association	21/05/10
George Gifford Shire President Shire of Gingin	21/05/10
Reece Waldock Chief Executive Officer Public Transport Authority	31/05/10
Mark Burgess Acting Managing Director Public Transport Authority	31/05/10

Witnesses	Date
John Bailly Manager, School Bus Services Public Transport Authority	31/05/10
Christine Arnold Principal Narembeen District High School	08/06/10
Ian Mortimore President Narembeen District High School Parents and Citizens' Association	08/06/10
Cr Stephen Padfield Shire President Shire of Narembeen	08/06/10
Frank Peczka Chief Executive Officer Shire of Narembeen	08/06/10
Lynette Baker President Shire of Corrigin	08/06/10
John Boyland Principal Lake Grace District High School	08/06/10
Susan King Private Citizen, Lake Grace	08/06/10
Pauline Wray Principal Quairading District High School	08/06/10
Edward de Ruiter Principal Mukinbudin District High School	08/06/10
Peter Lyons Vice Chairperson Jurien Bay Chamber of Commerce	11/06/10

Witnesses	Date
Trevlyn Geiles Principal Jurien Bay District High School	11/06/10
Belinda Buitenhuis President Jurien Bay District High School Parents and Citizens' Association	11/06/10
Laura Hooton School Council Chairperson Jurien Bay District High School	11/06/10
Shane Love Shire President Shire of Dandaragan	11/06/10
Kaye McGlew Youth Connections Case Worker Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt Inc.	11/06/10
Denese Smythe Manager, Youth Connections Program Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt Inc.	11/06/10
Rebekah Burges Executive Officer Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt Inc.	11/06/10
Dr Walter Cox Director Ardross Group of Companies	11/06/10
Rodney Baker Principal Carnamah District High School	11/06/10
Colleen Bennier President Carnamah District High School Parents and Citizens' Association	11/06/10

Estimates and Financial Operations Committee

Witnesses	Date
Kylie Tremlett Secretary Carnamah District High School Parents and Citizens' Association	11/06/10
Peter Scharf Principal Dalwallinu District High School	11/06/10

APPENDIX 4
SENIOR SCHOOL ALLOCATION FOR 2008, 2009
AND 2010

APPENDIX 4

SENIOR SCHOOL ALLOCATION FOR 2008, 2009 AND 2010

Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations

Supplementary Information No A1

PUBLIC

SCHOOL NAME	2008 Senior School Allocation FTE	2009 Senior School Allocation FTE	2010 Senior School Allocation FTE
BEVERLEY DHS			
BODDINGTON DHS	1.5	1.04	0.4
BOYUP BROOK DHS			
BROOKTON DHS	0.4	0.48	
BRUCE ROCK DHS			
BULLSBROOK DHS	3.26		
CARNAMAH DHS	1.32	1.04	0.4
CHRISTMAS ISLAND DHS	1.66		
COCOS ISLAND DHS			
CORRIGIN DHS	0.32	0.08	
CUNDERDIN DHS	0.4		
DALWALLINU DHS	0.88	0.64	
DARKAN DHS	0.08		
DERBY DHS	2.08	2.2	3.32
DONGARA DHS	1.7	1.58	0.48
DONNYBROOK DHS			
DOWERIN DHS			
EXMOUTH DHS	1.04	1.74	1.62
FITZROY VALLEY DHS	1.54	1.62	1.5
GINGIN DHS	1.5	1.88	1.2
GNOWANGERUP DHS	0.72	0.72	0.32
HALLS CREEK DHS	1.74	1.86	1.62
JERRAMUNGUP DHS	0.08		
JURIEN DHS	0.8	1.5	0.96
KALBARRI DHS	1.66	1.2	1.44
KAMBALDA WEST DHS	0.16		
KELLERBERRIN DHS	0.32		
KOJONUP DHS	1.12	1.38	0.72
KULIN DHS			
KUNUNURRA DHS	3.36		
LAKE GRACE DHS	0.16	0.24	0.16
LEONORA DHS	0.64	1.26	0.72
MEEKATHARRA DHS	1.2	1.38	1.5
MORAWA DHS	0.8	1.58	1.26
MOUNT MAGNET DHS	1.44	1.54	1.12
MUKINBUDIN DHS	0.74	0.48	
MULLEWA DHS	0.8	1.2	0.4
NANNUP DHS			
NAREMBEEN DHS	0.32	0.32	
NORSEMAN DHS	1.26	1.62	1.2
NORTHAMPTON DHS			
NORTHCLIFFE DHS	0.08		
PEMBERTON DHS			
QUAIRADING DHS	0.48	0.16	
RAVENSTHORPE DHS	0.08		
ROEBOURNE DHS			1.9
ROLEYSTONE DHS			
SOUTHERN CROSS DHS	0.64	0.56	0.4
TOODYAY DHS			
WAGIN DHS	0.08	0.08	
WAROONA DHS			
WONGAN HILLS DHS	0.96	1.54	0.72
WYALKATCHEM DHS	0.8	0.4	0.08
WYNDHAM DHS	0.96	0.08	
YANCHEP DHS			
YORK DHS			

Reclassified to Primary School Class 4B in 2010



THIRTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

**MINORITY REPORT OF
HON LIZ BEHJAT MLC**

REPORT 27

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

**THE REMOVAL OF SENIOR SCHOOL
ALLOCATION FUNDING FOR YEAR 11 AND 12
COURSES AT 21 DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS**

Report 27 - Minority

July 2010

**Minority Report of the Hon Liz Behjat MLC regarding
*The Removal of Senior School Allocation Funding for Year 11 and 12 Courses at
District High Schools as conducted by the Standing Committee on Estimates and
Financial Operations and tabled on 1 July 2010 as Report 27***

- 1) I participated in the inquiry conducted by the Estimates and Financial Operations but was not in attendance at the meeting (because of other Committee hearings) where it was decided that this inquiry would be undertaken and therefore had no input into the terms of reference.
- 2) Initially I believed that the necessity for the inquiry may have been unfounded but as I learnt more about the subject matter during the course of the inquiry I have come to the conclusion that the inquiry was necessary but perhaps not for the same reasons as the other Committee Members.
- 3) The decision to bring forward the reporting date from August 2010 to 1 July 2010 has cut short the opportunity to completely canvass all of the issues surrounding this matter but on the basis that the Committee is hopeful that funding for the 2011 year can be reinstated (**Recommendation 1**) it was decided that there was sufficient evidence taken to be able to reach the conclusions and recommendations in this Report. I would have preferred to have had more time to investigate the types of courses being delivered by the district high schools but I have dealt with this issue in my recommendations.
- 4) I am of the opinion that whilst it may be appropriate to reinstate funding for the 2011 academic year, it is necessary for a complete review of the funding and delivery of courses to be undertaken before further commitments for academic years beyond 2011 can be made.
- 5) With regard to the Committee Report I do support Conclusions 4.1 to 4.5 inclusive and Conclusions 4.7 and 4.8. I do not support Conclusions 4.6, 4.9 and 4.10.

- 6) I do not support Recommendations 1 and 2 of the Committee Report and have made my own recommendations 1-3 at the conclusion of this minority report.

- 7) With regard to Clause 2.1 of the Majority Committee Report I do not agree that the cessation of senior school allocation funding for Year 11 and 12 courses from 21 district high schools was made by Government in 2009. I am of the opinion that the cessation of funding came about as a result of an interim funding program introduced by the previous Government coming to an end as was always intended. Evidence was given that this funding was introduced as a transition so that schools could comply with the requirements of the *Acts Amendment (Higher School Leaving Age and Related Provisions) Act 2005*.

- 8) In my opinion it is therefore not the proper conclusion that this was “**a decision**” of the current Government. I am also of the opinion that this decision was not taken as part of the 3% efficiency dividend but the cut in funding became an unintended consequence of the cessation of the program and was therefore utilized when determining where the efficiency dividend cuts would come from.

- 9) With particular regard to this funding program (and I do not make this comment with regard to the Department of Education in any other context) it seems that the records of the decisions taken by the previous Government and information concerning the timeframe for implementation and cessation of the funding program have not been properly maintained. On several occasions the Committee sought copies of correspondence and advice provided to the Minister but at the time of reporting the information had not been provided.

- 10)** What appears to be a general reluctance from the Department to provide advice that has been sought could possibly be due to the fact that the information has not been fully maintained within their system.
- 11)** There does not appear to be anyone within the Department who either has, or is willing to share, the corporate knowledge surrounding the program and it is because of this I am firmly of the opinion that this is the reason why the actions being taken now have not been sufficiently canvassed nor communicated with the schools and the communities affected by this current situation.
- 12)** The evidence provided by Mr Rod Baker, Principal, Carnamah District High School and Mr Peter Scharf, Principal, Dalwallinu High School was to me the most useful in providing information regarding the initial implementation of the program and the current Government's intention with regard to the program.
- 13)** Mr Baker's knowledge was particularly helpful as he had previously held the positions of District Director for the Mid West Education District for five years and during that time participated in the two "Roadshows" held in the district where the then Minister for Education, Alan Carpenter, introduced the plan for the School Leaving Age Change (SLAC).
- 14)** In his submission to the Committee Mr Baker stated*"My comments are generally in support of district high schools having the opportunity, with some additional systemic, support, to run VET programs for year 11 and 12. While I am aware that there are some that are happy to be able to do away with the responsibility, and there are a few others that can't run the program due to local factors, there are many district high schools that have now demonstrated the value of having such a program. I am not supportive of TEE programs in district high schools (with some exceptions linked to large student enrolments) and agree with the published comment that cohorts of less than ten students*

are not viable. The resources needed to support a TEE program are extensive and cannot be reproduced across many schools, VET, on the other hand, can be managed with a minimum of school based resources, making use of the range of community expertise available”... “Unfortunately the system didn’t clarify the expectations placed on small schools and parents seemed to assume that the SLAC meant that they could continue to send their children to the local school in years 11 and 12 where they would be catered for.....”

“Clearly, at this time, we should have made it clear that no District High School or small school would run a TEE or VET program unless it could meet particular criteria (eg: the extent of local government support, the number of businesses available for placement, school readiness and teacher expertise...). We didn’t take this line.....”.

- 15)** It was this evidence that has led me to the conclusion that decisions surrounding this entire program have been poorly communicated from the outset and that if the Department had engaged with the schools earlier on, the current issues could have been avoided.
- 16)** Mr Scharf in his evidence to the Committee concerning students undertaking SIDE and the issue of “double dipping” confirmed that he has raised this issue with the Minister at a function they both attended. The Minister had confirmed that she was concerned that some Principals were now not able to adequately supervise students undertaking SIDE and that it had always been the intention that years 11 and 12 could continue to be enrolled and that schools would be given support for the students undertaking those courses.
- 17)** However, it is apparent from information provided that the Department had not made this clear to Principals and at no time did they seem to offer help to schools that were experiencing problems. In fact, in some case, it would seem that the Department actively discouraged schools from enrolling any students in year 11 and 12 in the coming years.

- 18)** As well as the Committee Conclusions that I agree with as earlier stated in 5), I have reached my own conclusion that it is necessary for a complete review of how years 11 and 12 are delivered to students in the rural and remote regions of Western Australia
- 19)** Given that the current Government has a policy of encouraging government schools to be run independently I think it appropriate that there is a review is undertaken because “a one size fits all” approach to the delivery of education is not acceptable in this century.
- 20)** What has to be at the core of every decision taken by the Government with regard to education is what is best for the students and the communities in which they live and how can the Government best deliver this to them. Some schools will benefit from the retention of TEE programs and some will not. There are some schools that currently run very successful VET programs and these should be encouraged, supported and extended wherever possible.
- 21)** It is not sufficient to insist that senior school allocation funding be reinstated and then find out two years from now (or sometime in the future) that there are still some students not reaching their potential and indeed not completing their education in the best possible way.
- 22)** If children are falling through the cracks, as would seem to be the case in some locations, then it is incumbent on Government to ensure that these childrens’ needs are taken care of.
- 23)** It is perhaps not entirely appropriate that the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations conducted this inquiry as there are issues that clearly fall outside the parameters of what are the Committee’s Terms of Reference.

24) Regardless of the foregoing, the inquiry has brought to light issues that I do believe need addressing and it is because of this that I make the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

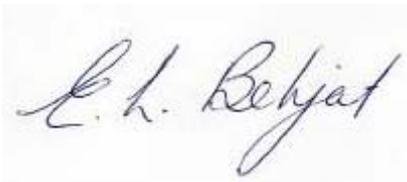
THAT the Minister for Education re-instate the senior school allocation funding to the 21 district high schools from which it was removed for the 2011 academic year AND AT THE SAME TIME commence a complete review into the delivery of year 11 and 12 programs at all District High Schools.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

THAT the review be undertaken by a special taskforce made up of a broad cross section of representatives from the schools, communities and businesses where district high schools are located, together with other specialists and departmental representatives as determined by the Minister for Education.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

THAT the terms of reference of the special taskforce include the necessity for the taskforce at all times to maintain its focus and base its recommendations on what is the best possible education and social outcome for the students and community located in each district.



Hon Liz Behjat MLC

Date: 1 July 2010