

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs for the petition tabled by myself, Hon Jim Chown MLC, on 20 March 2018.

Ref: Petition No. 051 - Point Peron Camp School

This petition calls attention to the invaluable opportunity provided to the children of Western Australia by the Point Peron Camp School and all our Camp Schools of the Education Department.

The Point Peron Camp School was built in 1956 and received a significant upgrade worth approximately \$750 million in 2016. The school meets all the Department of Education policies and guidelines and has a record of being a safe school camp over the last 61 years.

The Camp Schools are staffed by qualified teachers and sports and recreation specialists who assiduously work with the children to achieve the best outcomes for all attending.

Point Peron Camp School presents an extensive list of programs, all of which achieve an educational outcome that cannot be gained in a classroom setting. All programs are designed to take students out of their comfort zone and to give them experiences of inestimable worth that they will never forget.

The great outcomes and successes they achieve are talked about for weeks after and more importantly, put into practice back at their school and home. These life lessons cannot all be achieved in a conventional classroom environment.

Some of the key focuses and outcomes of these programs are:

- Team building, working together to achieve an outcome
- Resilience, self-esteem and character building
- Goal setting, perseverance and tolerance
- Over coming fears

During 2017 Point Peron Camp School was booked for 93% of available term days, plus a number of weekends and term holidays. The visitors comprised of 94% school groups and 6% community groups.

Of the 4603 students that attended in 2017, government schools made up 86%, with private schools the remaining 14%. Numbers have grown significantly for 2018, with 5700 students booked in already for this year's program.

Point Peron makes a practice of putting our public schools first and have had occasion to decline requests from private school groups looking to book out whole blocks. The reasoning is as to make this facility available to our public schools.

The government camp schools are the only affordable option for our public schools to experience this worthwhile resource.

Although private camps are available, they do not offer the scope of programs that we see at camps like Point Peron. Private camps also have a much inflated price tag attached to their service, which for the majority of public schools would make them unaffordable.

Below is the current pricing for Point Peron Camp School

Accommodation and catering: \$45.30 per student, per day

Program fees: \$10 per student, per program

Fees are set by the Department of Education (Previous year + CPI)

If the Camp Schools were to be taken over by Commercial Enterprise there would be a large increase to these fees.

An example of this is the private facility Forest Edge Recreation Camp in Waroona, their fees are double that of the Point Peron Camp School.

There is a real possibility that our public schools could not afford the experience of a camp school if the costs were to double, as they too have had their budgets restricted of late.

It would be a sad day for public education in this state if we took this fantastic opportunity away from our children, simply by making it financially unattainable. This then becomes an experience that only the select will get access to and that is unacceptable.

Another commendable point is the support Point Peron Camp School affords 'Uni Camp for Kids' which is a charity for underprivileged kids, run by UWA.

UWA reserves the camp for 3 weeks, 7 days per week in the month of January. The charity spends \$92 000 per annum at the camp school for their program. The charity has looked at alternatives for next year and has found it will likely cost them in excess of \$200 000.

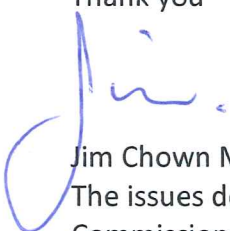
A senior member of the Point Peron Camp School recently had an offer of sponsorship to support the charity program. Surprisingly he was told by the Department of Education not to pursue the opportunity as he was considered to be working against the Minister.

Why are we throwing baby out with the bath water instead of taking sponsorship? It seems ludicrous that the Government would not investigate sponsorship possibilities. Our children's education is a worthy cause that our commercial world has always been keen to support.

I am also concerned that the Government's strategy in commercializing our camp schools is to actually make a profit from our children's vital education. One would presume that if a commercial enterprise was to take over the camp schools, there would be a contract requiring payment for lease or usage of the facilities.

Instead of providing high quality education to our children, as is every child's right in this state, the Government would instead be making education into a money making business. This is another 'so called' budget repair measure at the detriment of our children and our education system which has already seen untenable cuts.

Thank you



Jim Chown MLC

The issues described in this petition have not been taken to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman).