

Summary of recommendations and findings

- Finding** 14
- That there is evidence that small schools, particularly at the primary level and particularly for rural and regional communities, can contribute to positive outcomes for students and for local communities.
- Recommendation 1** 14
- That the NSW Department of Education make publicly available:
- the evidence base it uses to support its assertions about educational outcomes and small schools
 - the criteria it uses to determine when a small school is placed in view.
- Recommendation 2** 30
- That the NSW Department of Education act with honesty and good faith by informing parents at the earliest possible stage when it intends to close a school.
- Recommendation 3** 31
- That the NSW Department of Education amend the *Protocols for schools where recess, closure, amalgamation or other educational provision models are to be considered* to:
- require the Director and Principal to consider at Stage 1 any strategies to boost enrolments and, should they identify any such strategies, to not proceed to step 2 until those strategies had been developed and implemented and
 - insert at step 6 a new dot point requiring the School Consultative Group to consider strategies to boost enrolments and should such strategies be identified, to not proceed with the process of closure until such strategies had been developed and implemented.
- Recommendation 4** 31
- That, in the interests of transparency and integrity of process, the NSW Department of Education:
- carefully consider the purpose of its *Protocols for schools where recess, closure, amalgamation or other educational provision models are to be considered*, specifically, whether they are intended to facilitate consultation with parents and other stakeholders that genuinely influences the decision about a school's future, or alternatively, to facilitate stakeholders' transition towards acceptance after a decision has been made
 - if the intended purpose is to facilitate transition, change the language of the Protocols to reflect this
 - if the intention is that consultation be genuine, adapt the Protocols to enable this from an earlier stage.
- Recommendation 5** 32
- That the NSW Department of Education develop and publish on its website an action plan on the organisational culture surrounding school closures with particular reference to the need to be respectful and understanding towards parents.

Recommendation 6**32**

That the Deputy Secretary, NSW Department of Education, be required to provide appropriate support, information, and resources to facilitate the consultation process at step 6 of the *Protocols for schools where recess, closure, amalgamation or other educational provision models are to be considered*.

Recommendation 7**33**

That the NSW Department of Education make the following refinements to the *Protocols for schools where recess, closure, amalgamation or other educational provision models are to be considered*, to further improve consultation and transparency:

- add a requirement that local government be consulted at the earliest possible stage, and also at step 6
- enhance consultation with local community members at step 6
- introduce requirements for formal record keeping of school consultative groups and school closure review committees.

Recommendation 8**40**

That, in the interests of transparency and robust decision making about the future of individual schools, the NSW Department of Education formally review its processes for considering demographic trends at the local level and likely events and planning decisions that will influence enrolment numbers.

Recommendation 9**48**

That the Minister for Education reverse his decision to close Martins Creek Public School at the end of 2015 to enable the student with complex needs to complete his primary schooling there.

Recommendation 10**53**

That the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, or an alternative government agency independent of the NSW Department of Education, engage an external, independent body to audit the Department of Education's process of handling the complaints made by parents of Wollombi and Martins Creek Public Schools. If any complaints handling process is found to be flawed, the relevant complaint(s) should be independently reinvestigated.