

SELECT COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL CLOSURES

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

QUESTION 1

List examples of schools that have gone into recess but then reopened during the last five years.

ANSWER 1

In April 2015 the Minister approved Tulloona Public School to be placed in recess from the beginning of Term 2, 2015. In August 2015, the Minister approved Tulloona Public School to be taken out of recess from the beginning of Term 4, 2015 to operate one day per week in Term 4 and be fully operational from the beginning of 2016.

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QUESTION 2

- a. Has any school, or have any of its predecessors gone into this process and come out the other end intact?
- b. Can you table those different schools for the last five years?

ANSWER 2

- a. Yes.
- b. Blackville Public School commenced local consultation in July 2013. A local decision was made to maintain the current educational provision.

Wollar Public School commenced local consultation in September 2013. A local decision was made to maintain the current educational provision.

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QUESTION 3

3. Can you identify what is the intent for the sites of those 20 schools that closed in 2015; whether they have been sold, whether they are going to trust, whether they are being managed, or whether the department is retaining them?

ANSWER 3

Bellimbopinni Public School	To be disposed.
Crowdy Head Public School	Crown Lands to consider the future of the site in accordance with the Crown Lands Act.
Ellangowan Public School	To be disposed.
Gateshead West Public School	Department is managing and retaining the school site.
Rouchel Public School	To be disposed.
Wollombi Public School	Currently leased until the end of the year.
Corinella Public School	Leasehold property. Lease terminated and property returned to owner.
Martins Creek Public School	The school site is currently operational.
Errowanbang Public School	Leasehold property. Lease terminated and property returned to owner.
Milbrulong Public School	To be disposed.
Sutton Forest Public School	To be disposed.
Badgerys Creek Public School	Leasehold property. Lease terminated and property returned to owner.
Eraring Public School	To be disposed.
Reids Flat Public School	To be disposed.
Wyong Grove Public School	To be disposed.
Windeyer Public School	To be disposed.

Spencer Public School	To be disposed.
George Anderson Walpole School	Not owned by the Department of Education. Within Corrective Services NSW portfolio.
Bylong Upper Public School	To be disposed.
Bibbenluke Public School	The site is being managed and its future is to be assessed.

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QUESTION 4

4. Are any initiatives or processes in place from the department to help schools to develop their enrolment? Where you have identified a school that might have less strong enrolment or is losing students, are the principals in training or is something done to help those schools?

ANSWER 4

4. The Department's Communication and Engagement Directorate develops materials, resources and training courses for school leaders to increase their capacity to communicate with their local community and actively promote their school. Social media is utilised by many schools to promote educational opportunities and events offered to students. The Department's School Website Service also provides support to schools in the development of attractive, informative and easy to manage websites.

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QUESTION 5

5. Did the Minister adopt the Department's recommendations made during 2014 to 2015?

ANSWER 5

5. Yes.

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QUESTION 6

6. Can you give us assurance that nobody in your department contacted the Department of Community Services at any stage and asked them to put pressure on Challenge Services not to make a submission to this inquiry?

ANSWER 6

6. The Executive Director, Director Public Schools NSW, Principal, Learning and Engagement Officer, Coordinator and Advisor working with the school have no knowledge of this matter.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

1. During the *in camera* hearing on 20 August 2015, witnesses claimed that Wollombi Public School's final Relieving Principal actively discouraged parents from enrolling their children at Wollombi, to start in early 2014.

(a) What is your response to this allegation?

(b) When did enrolments close at Wollombi Public School?

ANSWER 1

1. (a) The Relieving Principal did not discourage any parents from enrolling their children at Wollombi Public School.
- (b) Enrolments closed at Wollombi Public School on 17 December 2014, which was the last day of attendance for students.

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QUESTION 2

2. A further allegation was made that a parent whose family lived in the catchment for Wollombi Public School was told by the Relieving Principal and Director, Public Schools, that if she moved her child with additional needs to Laguna Public School they would be eligible for additional support, but if they remained at Wollombi, they would not. The child and one sibling were at the time enrolled at Wollombi, with three further siblings being potential new enrolments. What is your response to this allegation?

ANSWER 2

2. The Relieving Principal and Director Public Schools NSW did not tell a parent that their child would receive additional support by moving the child to Laguna Public School.

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QUESTION 3

3. The committee notes that under Section 28 (10) (a), the procedure in that section for the closure of a school does not apply in the case of a one teacher school. However, the Protocol for schools where recess, closure, amalgamation or other educational provision models are to be considered states that the protocol applies to all schools, regardless of their size.
- (a) Please explain what, if any differences in applying the protocol are allowed for one teacher schools, and what process is followed in such cases.
- (b) How does this differ from the processes followed prior to the Protocol?
- (c) The committee heard in evidence that Wollombi was treated as a one teacher school (prior to the December 2014 protocol) for the purposes of the school closure policy/process, when it was in fact a 1.3 teacher school. What is your response to this allegation?

ANSWER 3

3. (a) The Minister can use Section 28 (10) (a) of the Education Act to close a one teacher school without the majority of parents consenting.
- (b) Prior to the development of the protocols different and inconsistent processes to close schools were used.
- (c) A "one teacher school" is not defined in the Education Act. It means what those words normally mean. That is, a school to which only one full-time teaching position has been allocated. P6 schools are schools to which only one full-time teaching position is allocated. They are therefore one teacher schools. The additional 0.3 fraction was made available at Wollombi Public School to support the one full-time teacher and is made up of relief from face-to-face teaching, library and learning and support.

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