

INQUIRY INTO CLOSURE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Partially Confidential

Dear committee members,

the parents and school community went into the process for closing the school in good faith. We went on the “consultative committee” (sic). We wrote submissions for it. We investigated the NAPLAN testing regime, we studied the analysis of NAPLAN results and spoke to experts in the department about it, we pored over NAPLAN results for nearby schools, and when we found that they were well below national average standards, we took this information to committee and it was **ignored**. We were told to consider the position of the special-needs child at the school, and so we did, his parents did, his NGO did, his psychologists and case-workers and occupational therapist and speech therapist did, and all of this was **ignored**.

We were told that the school staff did not have time to undertake training programs offered by the department. We rang *sixteen* schools to find out if they offered Focus on Literacy, apparently all-important to [REDACTED], and none of them did. The day after being told that there was no time for such training, the principal at Martins Creek Public School *started that training*. That the school could offer any such of these courses as it chose or that the parents requested be made available to their children was **ignored** and omitted from the final report that was written for the committee by the department’s employees.

We did our own investigation into the alternative educational options for our children, and found that the nearby schools **did not meet our standards**, both educationally and in the arena that the department so fondly calls “socialisation”*. No-one in the department understood what was meant by this term or attempted to investigate this area of concern and like so many other aspects of the committee’s investigations, it was **ignored**. We told the principal from a primary school in Telarah that there was no bullying at Martins Creek Public School and he called it a “utopia”, but benefits such as this, and facts such as the parents **all** being happy with the social development of their children and, based on their knowledge *as the parents of these children*, that it was the most desirable place for them to be were (no prizes for guessing) **ignored**. This was another one of the pillars of the department’s stated reasons for closure which also made no impression on the final report that was written for the committee by the department’s employees.

In short, the parents and school community demolished every one of the reasons that the department gave for wanting to close the school, barring only the low numbers. Unsurprisingly, the ban on new enrollments being taken by the principal really was not something that we could argue away, but when asked if the department had any strategies or ideas on how to increase numbers at the school, such as enforcing the school zoning as is done elsewhere, [REDACTED] warned the parents that this would infringe on the concept of “parent choice” which the department seemingly considered sacrosanct... except in the case of people who choose to send their children to a school that department wanted gone.

Such acts of bad faith and tokenism have been upsetting and frustrating and enraging, to say the least. The community consultation should have been carried out on the parents’ level, not that considered sufficient by the department’s employees, which was the reality.

Yours faithfully,

Dr David Allingham

[REDACTED]

*“Socialisation”: a term so nebulous, vague and culturally-loaded as to both meaning-free and able to mean anything that the speaker wants it to mean, including different things at different times. Children can be socialised to whatever the prevailing norm is. More of this is not necessarily better; people can be socialised to extremely undesirable norms.