

# **Towards 2020**

Submission from

## **CANTEEN SUB-COMMITTEE ALFRED DEAKIN HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED**

### **Introduction**

As presented in the Alfred Deakin High School (ADHS) Parents and Citizens Association Incorporated (P&C) submission:-

- there are no compelling educational or social reasons to amalgamate Alfred Deakin High School and The Woden School;
- interaction between the schools already occurs in a number of ways;
- the financial details of the proposed amalgamation would seriously compromise the ability of the new entity to successfully strengthen the program for gifted and talented students, as envisaged in *Towards 2020*; and
- there is an urgent need to upgrade the canteen.

Without compelling educational or social reasons, which should be paramount, the remaining criterion implied in the Government's proposal is reduction in excess costs.

This paper will demonstrate that there are not extra costs in running ADHS, and that on this basis, there is also no financial justification to amalgamate ADHS with The Woden School.

### **Financial Analysis**

Shortly after the release of the 2006 Budget, the Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope MLA, wrote a *Letter to the People of the ACT*. He said:-

“... There are now almost 18,000 empty desks in government schools across the Territory, and many schools have worryingly low enrolments.

It costs Canberra ratepayers up to \$10,000 a year more to educate each pupil in these schools than it does to educate a child at a school, which is at or near capacity. “

It was clear then, as now, that the motivation for school closures and amalgamations was largely driven by cost-cutting, and not educational benefits.

Although the criteria for closing or amalgamating individual schools has never been clearly and consistently articulated, the Chief Minister's argument seems to be:-

- building space not used for classrooms (so-called empty desks) costs too much, and
- small schools cost too much money per student to run.

Based on these implied criteria, it is therefore very strange that there is a proposal to amalgamate The Woden School and Alfred Deakin High School (ADHS), for the following reasons:-

According to the *Towards 2020: Renewing our Schools*:-

- ADHS has the third highest occupancy rate (98%) of high schools in 2006 out of 17 high schools;
- ADHS had the fourth lowest average student cost (\$9,922pa) out of the then 18 high schools in 2004-05. This was some \$973pa less than the average cost of \$10,895pa per student across all high schools.
- As a result ADHS costs the ACT Government some \$777,427pa less than an average high school the same size.

As ADHS has a very high occupancy rate, high numbers and a substantially less than average cost per student to run, the Government has failed to pass its own tests for, or put a sustainable case for, amalgamation with The Woden School.

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