Community Consultation Report

Proposed Closure of Wyreema State School

2 August, 2013
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1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to detail the findings of the community consultation regarding the Queensland Government's proposed closure of Wyreema State School (WSS).

WSS was identified by the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) as part of an annual review to assess the viability of state schools against the criteria in the DETE School Viability Assessment procedure. It was subsequently referred to the Minister for Education, Training and Employment for consideration as a potential school for closure. Under the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, if the Minister proposes closing a state school the Minister must publish a notice about the proposal in the Queensland Government Gazette, and the closure must not happen earlier than six months after the publication. Consultation must occur with the community as part of the viability process.

JTA Australia was selected to provide independent consultancy services to facilitate the consultation regarding the proposed closure and assume responsibility for assisting the school community to develop appropriate consultation approaches within each community. JTA’s role included co-ordinating and facilitating community meetings and the collation of information presented during the meetings and through written submissions. Its role did not include the formulation of recommendations. The recommendations will be determined on the information provided to the Minister via the School Viability Assessment criteria and this consultation report which outlines the quantitative and qualitative issues submitted to JTA through the consultation process.

Following the finalisation of the annual School Viability Assessment process, DETE plans to seek feedback on both the assessment and consultation processes. This will be considered along with feedback provided through the submissions to JTA, P&C Queensland and the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association.
2.0 Methodology

The aim of the methodology was to ensure genuine engagement and consultation with transparent and effective processes. It had to include processes with the capacity to encourage individuals within school communities to express their views and then for JTA to be able to collect and collate them fully and accurately.

The methodology had as its objectives:

- advice to the school communities re the Minister’s statement about the proposed closure of WSS
- clear understanding of the timeframe and the purpose of the consultation
- identification of all stakeholders and ample provision of opportunities for school communities to become involved
- encouragement and receipt of an optimal number of views, issues, questions and submissions and
- assurance that the Minister and his departmental officers were given a report that identified all local issues and concerns as well as supplementary information on the four viability assessment criteria.

To achieve these objectives the following methodology was established:

- immediate and ongoing contact with the school principal, followed shortly afterwards by liaison with the P & C Association
  - This contact and co-operation included the provision of assistance to the school (when required) in relation to the preparation of a consultation plan which was then communicated to the wider school community

- utilisation of appropriate communication tools to ensure the school community was fully aware of the consultation and its timelines
  - This was facilitated through early completion of the consultation plan, including key stakeholders and a list of communication media to be used. Supported by JTA the consultation plan was developed and owned by the school community and then communicated to the wider school community to ensure optimal involvement by all stakeholders.

- three avenues for WSS stakeholders and community to express their views
  - Via meetings: a minimum two public/community meetings were recommended and meetings included students, parents, P & C Association, PCYC, teachers, union representatives etc. Barrie Spring, JTA Senior Consultant, participated in and/or facilitated all meetings listed in section 3.2 and notes were kept to ensure inclusion of all points raised during community meetings.
  - Via submissions (to be lodged by 26 July\(^1\)): a total of 70 submissions were received. DETE provided an email address for the consultation exercise but JTA also asked for the addition of another address (an independent JTA email one) which guaranteed the anonymity of the submission author if required.

\(^1\) Initially the closing date for submissions was identified as 9 August. However, during the consultation process the Minister indicated his desire to provide the earliest possible advice to communities regarding the outcome of the proposed school closure consultation process. Accordingly the consultation period was amended and shortened to Friday 26 July 2013 (by which time all submissions must have been received by JTA). The amended timeframe meant JTA could collate submissions earlier and bring forward the completion of the report to enable the Minister to fully consider the feedback and make an earlier determination.
o Via DETE and Ministerial correspondence: when views were expressed on the potential closure of WSS

• reference to the four criteria in DETE’s School Viability Assessment\(^2\) procedure
  o This four page document is on DETE’s website. JTA downloaded the document and ensured that all stakeholders had access to it as it formed the basis of why the school had been identified for potential closure. This procedure outlines the four criteria upon which each identified state school was assessed:
    ▪ enrolments
    ▪ accessibility
    ▪ curriculum
    ▪ resourcing equity

• data and issues collection
  o This required establishment of an appropriate spread sheet system for the collection of all issues, concerns and options via both stakeholder and community meetings as well as by submissions.

• ongoing interface with Regional Directors and staff from DETE’s Infrastructure Services Branch to ensure that information required by the school community was distributed to it
  o While school communities often asked questions for which there were no immediate answers, in some instances there were questions to which they demanded answers in a short timeframe. When possible, these questions were forwarded to DETE and the responses received were then returned to whichever group of stakeholders had asked the questions.

JTA believes the methodology has worked to the benefit of the school community and the level of engagement and input has been strong.

\(^2\) The School Viability Assessment procedure ensures DETE has a formal process in place to meet its obligations under the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 around school closures and amalgamations. The procedure was developed in consultation with key education stakeholders, including P&C Queensland, Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association and the Queensland Teachers’ Union.
3.0 Wyreema State School

3.1 Profile

Wyreema State School was established in 1895 and is located at 12 High St, Wyreema, approximately 15 km from Toowoomba. The school offers two multi-grade classes with a high adult to child ratio, and much of each student's learning is done in small groups. Music, Physical Education and Language Other Than English (LOTE) Specialists visit the school weekly. Students socialise and play using the ovals, playground equipment, tennis courts and gardens.

After-school activities are held on Mondays, Tuesday and Wednesdays until 4.40pm. Monday afternoon has an Extended Play afternoon, Tuesday the Gardening Club and Wednesday Art Attack.

WSS has the capacity to take 96 students. However on Day 8 of 2013 there were 40 students enrolled, giving the school a current utilisation rate of 42 per cent.

3.2 Consultation plan and activities

The consultation plan is attached as Appendix 1.

Barrie Spring attended and facilitated those meetings to which she was invited (four in total); Leanne Griffin from JTA also attended two meetings to ensure a record was kept of questions and comments.

The table below identifies the number of attendees at each meeting as well as the purpose.

Table 1: List of WSS Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Attendees (incl consultant)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial meeting with Sandy Tetzlaff (Principal), Alex Charlesworth (P&amp;C President), Deb Dunstone (Regional Director), John Mulcahy (Assistant Regional Director)</td>
<td>6 May 2013</td>
<td>11.30am</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial community meeting</td>
<td>8 May 2013</td>
<td>6.30pm</td>
<td>50+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second community meeting</td>
<td>15 May 2013</td>
<td>6.30pm</td>
<td>100+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with Toowoomba Regional Council and school representatives</td>
<td>31 May 2013</td>
<td>9.00am</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.0 Wyreema State School Issues

4.1 Preamble

The discussion of issues identified below is the result of notes taken by Barrie Spring or Leanne Griffin at each of the meetings and the collation of 70 submissions. The submissions came from a mix of parents, students, staff, unions, groups involved with the school or community members including former students and families of the school. In relation to the information provided at meetings or in submissions by the WSS community JTA has not attempted to verify the accuracy of the data provided; if subsequently disputed DETE is in a much better position to establish the validity of issues raised.

To keep this report as succinct as possible a spreadsheet indicating the number of times certain matters were raised via submissions has been attached (Appendix 2). A qualitative summary of those matters follows to provide an indication of the strength of the views held on issues by some parts of the community. The first four headings are those identified in DETE’s School Viability Assessment (SVA) criteria.

4.2 Enrolments

DETE’s SVA enrolments criteria includes enrolment history (especially the past five years) and forecasts for the next five years and the number of students attending the school who do not live in the school catchment area.

Comments on enrolments referred to the future growth of Wyreema township and surrounding region and its impact on enrolments, the capacity of alternative schools, poor catchment enrolment management, previous decline in enrolments due to poor performance, high turnover of previous principals and the impact of Out-of-School Hours Care (OSHC) being unavailable at WSS.

One of the most frequent and strongest arguments made against the proposed closure of WSS related to the predicted future population growth. Community members asserted the area is growing steadily, particularly in the demographic of young families with children reaching school age; it offers affordable housing, relaxed country lifestyle and is family friendly. The community considers the provision of a state primary school is essential for the future viability of the community.

Numerous other comments were made in relation to future population growth including claims that:

- the Wyreema area is set to grow and it was noted in Toowoomba Regional Council (TRC) data that there are over 250 house blocks currently available for development
- new developments could accommodate approximately 650-700 new residents
- TRC has made a substantial investment in infrastructure in the Wyreema area
- TRC sees a thriving future for Wyreema, with well over $1million allocated for a new district park for the township in its ‘Public Parks and Land for Community Facilities’ schedule of works
- much of Wyreema is zoned as ‘emerging communities’ in the Toowoomba Regional Planning Scheme.
- there is also current growth occurring along the entire western corridor and Wagner’s International Airport (18 km from Wyreema) will be completed within two years
- Wyreema is a fast growing residential area which supports several businesses such as the local shop, electricians, plumbers, earthmoving and farming
community members are dismayed at the prospect of the school closing when there are future proposed housing developments for the area; they said they cannot understand why the government is trying to stifle growth

according to Australian Bureau of Statistics data for 2011, Wyreema’s population included 10.2% in the 0 to four years age bracket, and 9.6% in the five to nine years age bracket, well above the state average of 6.9% and 6.6% respectively. It was said that it is reasonable to assume an increased local need for primary education in the coming years.

The school community stated WSS is a growing school; more parents are beginning to realise what the school has to offer and, as its reputation spreads, enrolments will continue to rise. Explanations provided by the community to support this included:

- enrolments are growing; there are currently 43 students, an increase of 16 students over the past couple of years; at least 48 students to be enrolled in 2014 with a projected growth upwards of 75 students by 2018
- at least 30 babies and toddlers (most of whom attend the WSS playgroup) are on future enrolment lists
- the playgroup (which is the only such service in Wyreema and surrounding districts) puts the school on show and has been successful in securing enrolments for it
- Wyreema State School currently has a capacity of 96 students and an enrolment of 43 students so the school is utilised at 45%
- projected figures for 2014 indicate 50% utilisation, 2015 - 57%, 2016 - 65%, 2017-71% and 2018 - 78%.

WSS believes these figures are conservative considering the expected growth of Wyreema and the increasingly positive reputation of the school.

There was concern regarding which alternative schools were available to students if WSS closes. People were of the opinion that enrolments have not been managed across either the WSS catchment area or the area of neighbouring schools. It was thought that DETE had allowed out-of-catchment student enrolments to escalate unchecked with the result that current enrolment patterns are misaligned with the catchment areas of WSS and surrounding schools (including Bunkers Hill, Vale View and Drayton State Schools). Other comments made claimed that:

- the state schools surrounding Wyreema (Vale View, Bunkers Hill, Cambooya and Drayton State Schools) are either at or trending towards capacity and do not represent a sustainable or realistic alternative for existing and future WSS students
- Bunker’s Hill is already at 97.2% capacity, with an Enrolment Management Plan (EMP) to be put in place at the beginning of 2014
- other schools in the region such as Vale View, Glenvale and Ramsay have all survived viability assessments in the past but now have sustainable enrolments
- DETE has failed to investigate why children living in the WSS catchment area bypass the school and attend other schools; strategies should have been introduced to promote enrolment of in-catchment students
- the inactivity of DETE in determining and addressing the factors contributed to poor enrolment figures; the P&C believes the school has been left ‘to wither on the vine’ for some time
- WSS should not be penalised for ‘in-catchment’ students attending other state schools
- a previous ‘Notice of Interest’ placed over land in Wyreema in the 1990s by the then Education Queensland was lifted. It was claimed the land had been designated for building a ‘Super School’ which would have resulted in smaller schools having to close.
Surveys conducted by the P&C indicated that families in the Wyreema catchment who do not use WSS had students in another school before moving to Wyreema, were unhappy with previous principals, or needed a bigger school that offered OSHC.

Comments were made concerning the apparent reasons for a decline in enrolments associated with previous principals and the turn-around in both enrolments and reputation attributable to the current one. They included:

- high turnover of principals (nine leadership changes since 1999)
- data indicating 28 students left the school between 1998 and 1999; this coincided with allegations of misconduct
- DETE failed to properly manage the high turnover of WSS principals and teachers between 2006 and 2010.
- between 2006-2010 the school developed a bad reputation due to the ineptitude of the principal
- the school had little direction due to a number of reasons out of the parents’ control and this severely tarnished the school’s reputation
- problem with departmental policy allowing principals to ‘act’ in positions at other schools while seeking a promotion. This leaves school in limbo and parents are reluctant to enrol their children without knowing and supporting the principal.
- new Principal and the P&C have been active in trying to turn around the school’s image after a long period of instability
- with the appointment of the current Principal, change has been immense; the school thrives on order and every student has respect and pride in the school and in themselves
- the school has flourished under the guardianship of the excellent current Principal who is loved by the students and their families.

All respondents to the P&C questionnaire referred to above believed that OSHC would improve enrolments. The P&C and Westbrook Childcare have entered into a commitment to trial OSHC with a view to making it available within the next two years either at WSS or the nearby Wyreema Community Hall. Further comments made included:

- additional government resourcing of before and after school care is needed at WSS
- the lack of before and/or after school care at WSS is an issue for working parents
- OSHC is an issue when considering where to enrol your child
- P&C believes the major obstacle is the ‘red tape’ and disjointed bureaucratic approach associated with establishing before and/or after school care.
- previous plan to use former principal’s residence for OSHC was supported by the community but the department allegedly dismissed the plan and sold off the residence.

4.3 Accessibility

DETE’S SVA accessibility criteria includes distances and travel times to and from school, access to nearby schools or alternative education programs, transport options and arrangements for the school and neighbouring schools (road networks, bus routes, train routes).

Vale View State School is the only state primary school within 5 km of Wyreema, with other preferred alternative schools such as Drayton SS and Bunkers Hill SS being 9.8 km and 14.9 km away respectively. Issues associated with increased travel distances to a new school included:

- it would not be straightforward for students to simply transfer to another school; amongst other things it may limit students’ ability to walk or ride their bikes to school
• it is likely that many students will have to travel to Toowoomba to attend school if WSS closes
• significant impact if families have to drive their kids out of Wyreema to attend school
• there is no commuter bus service between Wyreema and Toowoomba; one-car families would be severely burdened.

One of the reasons parents chose to send their children to WSS was that it offered a safe environment that enabled children to walk or ride to school. The view was:
• children need to be as close to their families as possible, with limited travelling
• we have a responsibility to educate children in a stress-free environment without unnecessary travelling
• WSS is safe to walk to (not on a main highway like Vale View SS)
• the school is not located on or near a main road so offers ease of access and parking
• parents who currently drive their children do so because they live on farms some distance to the closest school
• parents who drive their child/children to the school are not affected by traffic issues and travel times for most are very short.

People felt strongly that families should have access to a local school and that the choice should not be taken away from them:
• parents have an unquestionable right to have their children educated in the size and style of school which suits their own children and agrees with their own philosophy of education
• it is up to parents to decide whether or not they wish to send their child to a large, less intimate school, or a small family-oriented facility.

4.4 Curriculum

DETE’s SVA curriculum criteria is about the extent of a school’s curriculum and its ability to access suitable educational resources.

WSS is fully immersed in and closely follows the recommendations of the Australian Curriculum, and also provides specialist lessons in Physical Education, Music and LOTE. Information Technology is an important Key Learning Area in the Whole School curriculum with each classroom using seven computers and an interactive whiteboard. Integral to the school is the voluntary Chaplain, who assists at the school twice a week and also the Values Education program where a new value is taught each week.

Currently, there are two Students with Disabilities (SWD) at WSS, three students who may be verified as SWD over the next year and five students with learning difficulties. These students access modified learning programs, are well accepted within the student body and are progressing well.

Many comments were made at meeting and in submissions about how well WSS caters for those students with disabilities or learning difficulties:
• school caters for children with a variety of disabilities and does so in an holistic manner that is accepted by all the community
• WSS treats students with disabilities like all the other students, not as a statistic with a disability
• WSS caters well to students with learning difficulties and ADHD
• WSS has children from all cultures and the school's compassionate environment supports children with a disability as 'one of their own.'
The whole school community said it takes pride in circumstances such as when a student was awarded third place in the Special Needs category of the Ludwig Leichhardt drawing and writing competition. His award was quite substantial and this occasion was a source of great excitement for him and definitely a very proud moment for his parents and siblings and, of course, his teachers.

WSS prides itself in caring for and nurturing every student and the philosophy of the school is about educating the whole child, not just academic achievement:
- it is a school that meets students’ needs, a place where they are happy, inspired to learn and grow, and encouraged to reach their potential
- Wyreema SS looks at the academic needs of all students and caters for their individual needs
- children who struggle get the extra help they need, just as children are also encouraged to exceed beyond their year level
- teachers are able to adjust school programs to the point where each child is accommodated and can work to the best of his or her ability.

4.5 Resourcing equity

DETE’s SVA curriculum criteria is about the extent of a school’s curriculum and its ability to access suitable educational resources.

WSS encompasses 2.37 hectares with well-established trees, gardens, and extensive wildlife habitats. There are four water tanks, a bore and $50,000 worth of solar panelling (that the school won through the ‘Solar Panels for Schools Scheme) as well as:
- one high set building
- two modular buildings
- one (Building Education Revolution) Small Schools Resource Centre
- three covered play areas
- one amenities building
- four shade structures
- one prep shed
- one tennis court and
- one storage shed.

The school has 15 computers for student use, one computer for Administration use, one laptop for Playgroup and Teacher Aide use, one I-Pad for Special Needs students use and two Interactive Whiteboards. Teaching staff have the use of their Computers for Teachers (CFT) laptops.

The P & C said school funds are well managed and always in surplus. Current servicing costs to the school are:
- Principal
- 1.62 teachers
- teacher Aides -118 hours a fortnight
- other staff - 28 hours per fortnight
- cleaner - 31.5 hours per fortnight.

This is at an average cost per student of $12,243.

Other comments made regarding facilities and resources include:
- beautiful surrounds offer an excellent natural learning environment
- land for future expansion of school facilities which will be needed with the forecast growth
• WSS has had many providers supply machinery, steel, pavers, sand, garden products and labour, to beautify the school grounds  
• school facilities are of good quality and have been well-maintained.

WSS has a very passionate and active P & C comprising approximately 40% of all families. The P&C has been an integral part of the consultation process around the school’s viability. Parents are actively engaged in the school and take a strong interest in its current activities and its future. It has been stated that many much larger schools had smaller and less committed P & Cs; it would seem a waste to lose the resources represented by the time and effort the P & C has put into the education of its children. Further comments reflected the view that the P&C and all parents are a valuable resource for both the school and the community:
• active P & C that provides for students and the larger Toowoomba Community (e.g. Toowoomba Hospital Foundation, Toowoomba Children’s Hospice) through its annual fundraising efforts  
• P&C has purchased five new computers, provided maintenance to the school grounds and purchased new equipment such as flags and marquees  
• P&C efforts have the effect of heavily subsidising students/families in the local community to enable access to excursions, educational supplies and learn to swim program  
• grounds are always well presented and maintained mainly due to the fact the P & C conducts regular working bees  
• P&C holds events to which all the community are invited  
• P and C runs a ‘Meet and Greet’ at the beginning of each school year and assists with the Awards Night at the end of the year.
• quality education for children requires active and direct parent involvement; WSS offers that opportunity for local families  
• parents are involved at school in the education of their children; this was demonstrated through the 92% parent attendance at the end of First Term’s parent/teacher interviews.

4.6 Local issues

This category is not included in DETE’s viability assessment criteria. However, the Minister encouraged the community to participate in the consultation process and raise other local issues it believed he needed to be aware of in making his decision.

4.6.1 School and student performance

The current Principal has turned the school around and is the driving force behind the school spirit, community involvement and success. She puts the needs of students, parents and staff first with the end result being that people now consider the teaching, organisation and ‘feel’ of WSS has never been better. It was stated that staff have committed to stay which is conducive to stability, connectedness and significant trust from the surrounding community. Many comments focussed on the professional caring staff and high teaching standard at WSS:
• positive support shown by the great staff of the school and their willingness to participate in all school functions and extra-curricular activities and to help parents with outside general school requirements  
• teachers focussed on providing a safe and happy environment; they treat each child with respect  
• teaching staff go to extraordinary lengths to get to know each child; every student is made to feel special  
• teaching staff are phenomenal with their teaching skills and their capacity to relate to each and every student and individual needs
teaching team have a great relationship and work perfectly together
they go above and beyond to ensure the success of their pupils in all aspects of their lives, not only academically but also giving them self-pride, individualism and respect for others
teacher aides play an important role in maintaining a safe environment.

One of the biggest issues raised throughout the consultation process was that of small schools and the many benefits they were seen to offer both students and their families. It was claimed that small schools such as WSS are important as they give country youngsters, and children with specific needs, an opportunity to be educated in an environment that provides excellent learning, promotes values education and provides a feeling of safety to students. Many parents have specifically chosen WSS because of its smaller student population; other comments made regarding WSS and small schools in general included:

- WSS is meeting children's every educational need because children aren't a number in an over-crowded classroom
- small school means small classes, more one-on-one or small group teaching time; means community; a great positive start to education rather than getting lost in the system; greater opportunity for children to reach their full potential and have their strengths and weaknesses identified early
- children obtain leadership opportunities not always available in bigger schools
- families send their children to WSS because a small school environment is what they need for the education of their children. Some children would not cope in a big school environment and would get lost in the system, especially those in need of special education and one on one teaching
- students who struggle are mentored by others in the class in a supportive environment
- many of the students at WSS have previously experienced bullying and maladjustment in larger schools; parents report excellent results with the change of environment and teaching approach
- all children are treated equally and provision is made for those who need special guidance; this generates a spirit of togetherness and looking after one another.

WSS has the reputation of being a quality educational establishment. All students have a role in the school and learn the responsibility and importance that is attributed to those roles. People spoke of the positive learning experience and environment that WSS brought to the entire community:

- children are courteous and respectful of adults and each other; school has taught them confidence to communicate in a positive and polite way
- students want to be at WSS, they want to learn and embrace all opportunities; parents are appreciative of this
- a school without bullying, violence and vandalism is a mere dream for most communities but here it is a reality
- the school is well supported with parents and teachers working in partnership to ensure the best outcomes for students
- Wyreema is an inclusive school where everyone is accepted, valued and inspired to reach their potential; it is a place where all students feel like they belong
- children who come to the school with problematic behaviour blossom into children who have a strong sense of self worth
- children at this school have a great sense of community; at school events older students support the younger ones; they demonstrate good manners and a sense of social responsibility.
4.6.2 Impact on students and families

Students in Years 3 to 7 submitted essays (some illustrated) on what the school meant for them and why it was important it not be closed. Points made have all been referred to elsewhere in this report so are not listed here; twenty essays in total were received.

Significant stress regarding the impact on students and their families if WSS was to close was evident both at the meetings and in submissions. The majority of parents believe they would be adversely affected should WSS close. Parents said that most of them have based their decision to live in or near Wyreema primarily because of work, housing affordability, access to the local school for their children and local community factors. People felt strongly that many children, especially those with disabilities, do not cope with changes like moving schools; their learning would be set back several months, if not more, in adjusting to their new school environment. Additionally it was stated:

- several students with emotional and social issues are already struggling with the prospect of having to move schools
- the offer of money to compensate for new school uniforms is an insult compared to the turmoil that will be created for students
- without a local school many families will re-locate
- it will be detrimental to change school for one year of primary school before entering high school (applies to Year 5 and Year 6 students)
- DETE has applied a city-centric view which fails to take account of the practicalities and special circumstances of families living in a rural community
- DETE has not offered the parents of WSS children any advice or practical alternatives to consider if the school is closed as a result of the viability assessment process
- there will be more than 40 friends forced to separate and go to different schools; WSS is not just a school it is a family.

4.6.3 Impact on community

The impact that a potential closure of WSS would have on the township and wider community ranked in the top three issues raised in meetings, submissions and petitions. It was said that closing WSS is not something that can be viewed in isolation as it is intrinsically linked to the welfare of the community. People commented that social and economic impacts would be significant to the entire community as illustrated by the following:

- WSS is important to the whole community; if the school closes the town will die.
- the whole community will be affected by the closure of the school; hall will no longer be the hub of school-related functions and fundraisers
- several user groups rely on WSS including a weekly playgroup of 42 registered children, Toowoomba City Council Mobile Library, and the Social Tennis Club
- depriving Wyreema community of its own state school would be an injustice and would create community unrest and hardship
- loss of the school which is a safe meeting hub for the community, combined with a growing population, could result in a disconnection in the community; this gap could see increased crime, further isolation of socially marginalised families and increased poverty as people lose touch with each other and spend more time away from the town
- taking the school from a growing community like Wyreema will result in a loss of social capital
- community spirit that surrounds the parents, students and active P&C is a treasure; school events are true community events
- the school is the central hub of the Wyreema community; DETE’s Parent and Community Engagement Framework: Working Together to Maximise Student

JTA Australia
Learning would be rendered meaningless for parents and the local community if the school closes.

It was believed that local business would also be impacted if the school closes as the school has long standing partnerships. The Wyreema general store in town gets a lot of patronage from the WSS community and closure of the school will adversely affect its future business viability as the school is a drawcard for young families and the store benefits from this.

There was considerable concern regarding the adverse effect a school closure would have on property prices e.g. local rental properties would be less attractive to prospective tenants with families. It was felt that new, often first time, home owners with young children or those planning families would not consider an area without a local school; consequently development would slow and existing house values may decrease. It was believed future residential development will suffer if the school closes as this usually results in a domino effect of loss of services in the area; there were estimates that the town could lose up to 30% of its population.

Comment was made regarding loss of employment at the school, and in particular the significant impact on support staff. Support staff are members of the local community and closure would impact negatively on their ability to earn a living. It is particularly difficult in a rural area such as Wyreema to find positions at other schools that are able to accommodate the hours required. Some staff have children at the school so their future employment may not tie in with where their children might have to attend school.

4.6.4 Other issues

Other issues raised at meetings included financial implications of a school closure on WSS families given the socio-economic demographic of Wyreema and surrounding areas. These included:
- increased costs (fuel, fares) to cover transport to alternative schools
- relocating and possible change or loss of employment
- without the P&C subsidy many families/students will be unable to access extra-curricular activities at larger schools.

The impact on the WSS Play Group program and its participants was raised, citing:
- once or twice a week depending on term the school offers a play group for the community which offers both learning and enjoyment for the participants. Numbers currently exceed 40, many of which are potential new enrolments.
- play group includes a number of children who are in the Prep age group as well as some other children from the community. The community believes this has been a brilliant initiative which not only acts as a recruiting strategy for the school, but serves as a great transition for children from play group to Prep, in the same location with the same staff
- closing the school will mean children will miss out on the playgroup which provides an important learning experience for children aged from seven months to the year before they start school. For some families the playgroup is the only avenue they have for their children to participate in such experiences
- play group allows families and children to get to know each other which makes the transition to school easier for all.

The community was concerned about issues related to the school’s history including:
- it has a proud history beginning in 1895
- generations of families have attended the school and made WSS a part of the family tradition. It was said that those families, and the school, are very much part of the fabric and history that holds the Wyreema community together
• the school is of substantial historical and cultural importance.

In terms of the economics associated with school closures it was said that:
• the government's Growing a Four Pillar Economy and six month action plans refer to revitalising front-line services for families, building new schools and funding for schools; they do not any reference to closing schools
• children's education should not be determined by how much money a school is worth but the standard of teaching and learning.

The school community felt strongly that closure of the school would go against the provisions of the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 which include universal access to high quality state education, providing for the establishment of state educational institutions, and facilitating their operation as safe and supportive learning environments, ensuring education programs are responsive to the individual needs of children and encouraging a parent's involvement in his or her child's education.
5.0 Petition

WSS ran two petitions, a hard copy one (2,437 signatures) and an e-Petition (1,135 signatures). At the closure of submissions on 26 July, the petitions had been signed by a total of 3,572 members of the community opposing the proposed closure of the school. The number of signatures indicates overwhelming support by the community to keep the school open.

Many of the petitions made comments and these have been read, summarised and listed below. Many of the same issues were raised via submissions but the school community recognised that some people felt more comfortable expressing their views in this manner, hence the inclusion of the comments below:

- please don’t close, our children, families and the community will be devastated
- I was going to send my five children next year
- small schools are needed for rural areas and small towns
- lifeblood of the community, will impact on local business
- less money for politicians, more for education
- government problems and cost cutting shouldn’t impact schools
- WSS enrolments are increasing
- kids have a right to local education
- Wyreema is a growing community and the decision is short sighted
- Toowoomba is an expanding regional centre
- Wellcamp Airport and Industrial Estate are only 20 mins away
- school has been there a long time and is part of the community’s heritage
- country communities need local schools which are often their key infrastructure
- many generations of local families have attended WSS
- moved to Wyreema and planning to enrol children
- too far to travel to other schools, can’t walk to school anymore
- small schools, small classes and better for kids
- school closures destroy communities
- schools are the future of country kids in country towns
- government has an obligation to provide local schools
- parents should not have choice of where they enrol children taken away
- don’t interrupt children’s education and their stability, their education will suffer
- closure of WSS is a land grab
- support existing schools
- give less funding to private schools
- education is a priority not sport
- kids with special needs and learning disabilities need WSS
- fantastic P&C supporting the whole community
- education is worth more than real estate
- small schools provide quality education and individual teaching
- schools should be decentralised – we need small sustainable communities
- families will leave the area – we need them in rural Australia
- Brisbane should leave the country alone,
- great school and fantastic Principal and staff
- false economy to close and then have to reopen schools
- no super schools, kids get lost in the system
- families will suffer the financial burden of changing schools
- WSS consistently mentors pre-service teachers
- past pupils of small country schools are successful, productive citizens
- other states have learnt hard lessons after they closed schools
- discipline is better and anti-social behaviour is less likely in small schools
- other schools are almost at full capacity
- so much for the government’s commitment to education for all
- people will lose employment
- the heart of a rural community is its school
- went to this school 55 years ago, still backbone of community
- we should respect local community needs.
- this school is about educating the whole child, not just academic achievement.
6.0 Conclusion

Community consultation regarding the proposed closure of Wyreema State School resulted in a total of 70 submissions and four meetings facilitated by Barrie Spring, the JTA Senior Consultant who was responsible for coordinating the consultation process and activities.

The Wyreema community engaged very quickly both with Barrie and the consultation process generally. Every effort was made by the consultant to ensure all views were represented and that everyone had an opportunity to make a submission. The dominant theme that emerged was of the extreme regard that parents, students, staff and community members had for the educational and social outcomes that Wyreema State School community was providing.

There was acknowledgement that the enrolments were not as good as they should be although this was considered the result of historical circumstances due to high staff turnover rather than an ongoing problem. The lack of out-of-hours school care was considered a major deterrent for the increasing number of working mothers in the area. These were both considered important factors in diverting families to other schools in the area in the short term.

However, there was a strong view throughout the consultation and submissions that demographic changes across the region as well as future development plans for the area by Toowoomba City Council ensured that the school would be in a growth pattern for some time. Council was involved in consultation meetings and supplied the Wyreema community with considerable information re future developments and likely increases both in the workforce and new residential construction. This was reinforced by the claim that Toowoomba city was expanding in the direction of Wyreema as its external boundaries moved towards Oakey.

Another important issue for Wyreema parents was concern that it was becoming more difficult, and more expensive, for rural people to find an alternative school within a reasonable location. There was anxiety that the cost of additional travel to a Toowoomba school plus the extra time involved for both parents and children would increase budgets and travel time.

Wyreema is a close knit township and region which is reluctant to accept that the local community may be considered unviable in the short term; their sights are set on the medium and long term in wanting the school to continue. They were well supported in this by local and state government representatives who were constants during the consultation process.

The community consultation process engaged and involved a broad range of community members, including staff, students, parents, local business, and local and state government elected representatives. It was evident through the submissions and consultation meetings that the community is proud of its school and united in its desire to remain open.
APPENDIX 1 – Consultation Plan, Wyreema State School
Introduction
The Department of Education, Training and Employment has identified Wyreema State School for community consultation regarding proposed closure as part of the Department’s School Viability Assessment process. JTA, an independent consultant, will lead and manage the consultation process, and subsequently provide a written report to the Minister on the issues raised during the consultation process.

This consultation plan has been developed with the Principal and President of the P&C Association of Wyreema State School to ensure all interested stakeholders are able to participate and have their say on the proposed closure.

The consultation plan outlines the opportunities for the school community to provide input into the discussion about the future educational needs and opportunities for students of the school. It is important that the school community get involved to identify the range of factors that are relevant to the school community and that need to be considered by the Minister in the final determination about the future of the school.

Stakeholders
As part of the consultation process, it is important that all stakeholders who are part of the school community have their say.

The following list of stakeholders has been identified by the Principal and President of the P&C Association to be included in the consultation process:

- parents
- staff
- students
- P&C with support from P&Cs Qld
- Toowoomba Regional Council - councillors and relevant departments
- State Members of Parliament
- QTU and Together Union Representatives
- local business groups
- local community groups
- past students and parents and potential students and parents.

Consultation activities
To give stakeholders the opportunity to have their say, a range of consultation activities have been identified by the Principal and President of the P&C Association. The following provides a list of the consultation activities to take place, and the nominated schedule for these activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultation Activity</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Purpose of activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter to school community</td>
<td>Friday 3 May 2013</td>
<td>To inform the parents and school community of the proposed closure of Wyreema SS and provide initial advice on the consultation process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initial meeting with Regional Director, Principal Advisor, Wyreema SS Principal, P&amp;C President and independent consultant</td>
<td>Monday 6 May 2013</td>
<td>11.30am-1.00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information meeting with all students</td>
<td>Monday 6 May 2013</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EQ HR consultants meeting with School Staff</td>
<td>Monday 6 May 2013</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Community Meeting – all community members welcome (Regional Director and independent consultant to provide information)</td>
<td>Wednesday 8 May 2013, 6.30pm-8.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Meeting with QTU Representative Zeb Sugden</td>
<td>Thursday 9 May 2013</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Meeting with QTU Representative Kevin Bates</td>
<td>Thursday 9 May 2013</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Meeting— all community members welcome (Organised by the P&amp;C)</td>
<td>Wednesday 15 May 2013, 6.30pm-8.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff Meeting</td>
<td>Thursday 16 May 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting with P&amp;C</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Consultant to hold one on one meetings with key stakeholders as identified</td>
<td>May – July 2013</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Principal meeting with Principal Advisor (Regional).</td>
<td>Thursday 23 May 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walk Safely to School</td>
<td>Friday 24 May 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting with Upper Pod students (Grades 3-7)</td>
<td>Monday 27 May 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRC meeting with representatives from three regional schools that have been proposed for closure.</td>
<td>Friday 31 May 2013, 9.00am-12.00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequent informal meetings between the P &amp; C members</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Activity</td>
<td>Date(s)</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal phone calls, emails, meetings etc</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Information sharing and updating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Community Engagement Tour</td>
<td>Wednesday 29 May 2013</td>
<td>The proposed school closure will be a high priority topic on the agenda for this evening meeting at Wyreema Hall. Information and ideas sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Meeting</td>
<td>Thursday 30 May 2013</td>
<td>To review and discuss information re proposed closure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working Party meetings</td>
<td>Sunday afternoons</td>
<td>Update and inform each other of progress by task managers, plan for future events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Fun Day - Come and See Our School</td>
<td>Sunday 2 June 2013</td>
<td>Showcase our school and invite prospective students and families to see Wyreema SS in person, fill in “Intention to Enrol” paperwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Meeting</td>
<td>Thursday 6 June 2013</td>
<td>To review and discuss information re proposed closure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Community Meeting</td>
<td>TBA – July/ August 2013</td>
<td>To inform and update the community on the progress of Wyreema SS consultation process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written submissions via email</td>
<td>Ongoing until 9 August 2013, 5pm</td>
<td>Written submissions will be accepted in addition to the information collected at other consultation activities. The submissions will be included in the report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Communication Options**
Communication with stakeholders about upcoming activities and the progress of the project is integral to a successful consultation process.

The following communication methods will be used to share information with the school community:

- Weekly/fortnightly school newsletter item
- Advertise consultation activities on school website
- Advertise consultation activities on local community group websites
- Advertise consultation activities on departmental Facebook
- Local newspapers
- Radio and television free advertising and news stories.
- Frequent emails
- Information notes to School community as need arises
- Letter box drops in the local community
- Flyers at local businesses
- Other
Should members of the school community wish to lodge a written submission, two dedicated email addresses have been established:

Wyreemass@dete.qld.gov.au

submissions@jtaa.com.au (for those would prefer their submission remain confidential and not go through the Department of Education, Training and Employment)

The issues raised in submissions made to either of these email addresses will be included in the report sent to the Minister; contributors can ask that their names be withheld.

Contact details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandy Tetzlaff – Principal</td>
<td>07 4696 2130</td>
<td><a href="mailto:stetz1@eq.edu.au">stetz1@eq.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Charlesworth – President, P&amp;C Association</td>
<td>0427 958 547</td>
<td><a href="mailto:alex@agrigging.com.au">alex@agrigging.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrie Spring – Consultant</td>
<td>0418 746 116 07 3268 6665</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Barriespring@jtaa.com.au">Barriespring@jtaa.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alana Ashby – Working Group Co-ordinator</td>
<td>0421 828 734</td>
<td><a href="mailto:allyleon@iinet.net.au">allyleon@iinet.net.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Lewis – Working Group Correspondence Officer</td>
<td>07 4696 2971</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kb.lewis@bigpond.com">kb.lewis@bigpond.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2 – Issues raised in meetings and submissions received
Our children are more important than any amount of money. Closing the school will mean children will miss out on the playgroup which provides an important learning experience for children from 7 months to the year before they start school. For some families the playgroup is the only avenue.

Small school means small classes, more one-on-one or small group teaching time; means community; a great positive start to education rather than getting lost in the system; greater opportunity for children to reach their full potential and have their strengths and weaknesses identified early.

Students with disabilities are treated just like any other students, not as a statistic with a disability.

The offer of money to compensate for the closure may not last long. Wyreema is a growing area with more housing developments planned.

Students who move schools do not cope well with changes like moving schools and would set them back several months, if not more, in adjusting to their new school environment.

WSS has a strong reputation for being a quality educational establishment. Every student has their role in the school and they learn the responsibility and importance that is attributed to those roles.

The school is pivotal to the community. Real estate values will drop with no school in the town. The school’s compassionate environment welcomes special needs kids who are treated the same as the others. WSS is the hub of a growing community; the close the school removes the most important service in the community.

Centralisation of schools will result in overcrowded classrooms or a small number of schools with enormous numbers of students all stuck in the system. Government should investigate the economic gains of small,
The bonds formed between Wyreema students (as a small school) are profound. The population is expected to greatly increase over the next few years so there is a real need for the school to remain.

Curriculum

Wyreema School (WSS) is 117 years old and the closure of the school will mean an end of identity to this local historic educational icon forever.

School and Student

Great P&C; heaps of computers, supports national events.

School staff are passionate.

WSS has been through major upheaval with previous staff, but in the last 2.5 years has become something that teachers, students and the community are proud of.

P&C is very active and passionate; raise huge amounts of money and contribute greatly to transport costs for school excursions and swimming lessons.

School is the focal point of the community, and this is valued by the community members.

Closing the school would be detrimental to the community.

WSS is important to the community, and if the school closes, the town will die.

Changing schools is traumatic for children.

Increased costs to cover transport.

You can walk to school knowing you are safe.

Wyreema has served the community of Wyreema for 117 years.

Fun experiments, fun camps, fun art, has school pets.

A lot of community support from school (e.g. wake arranged and paid for by P&C for mother of school children).

New home owners won’t consider the area and house values may decrease.

Closing the school would affect the children in many ways which the government would not understand.

WSS provides specific individualised learning programs for certain students.

Curriculum Offerings

WSS has provided quality education to many students over its 117 years and the closure of the school will mean an end of identity to this local historic educational icon forever.

School provides specific individualised learning programs for certain students.

Excellent teachers and teacher aides.

The school provides high-quality education, where every child is treated equally and everyone has a fair go.

School caters for children with an intellectual and learning disability and does so in a holistic manner that is accepted by all the community.

WSS offers security; children can walk or ride to school.

Students are growing, there are 45 students now, up from 18 only two years ago, and we expect more than 50 students to be enrolled in 2014.

Previous decline in enrolments due to bad principal/new principal is good.

Enrolments are affected by no OSHC being available at WSS.

Distance to travel to new school/unable to walk/no public transport.

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WSS offers security; children can walk or ride to school.
The LNP government hasn't been upfront about their plans in their 6 month plan.

WSS has fun resources; a new Library, computers, sports shed, tennis court, sand pit, playground and a big oval.

WSS offers security; children can walk or ride to school.

WSS school parents offer tireless support in helping to maintain an experience of family in their school as well as aiding financially to provide extra educational equipment.

Wyreema is a fast growing residential area which supports several local businesses such as the local shop, electricians, plumbers, meteorologist and fencing. The school will be needed in this area with the growth of the area to grow by another 450 houses in the coming years.

Wyreema is a fast growing rural community that currently has 41 children enrolled and more than 50 to be enrolled in 2014.

School caters for children with an intellectual and learning disability and does so in a holistic manner that is accepted by all the community.

To deprive the Wyreema community of their own state school would be an injustice and would create community unrest and hardship.

Students feel happy and valued and the teachers listen to all of the questions and answers.

Wyreema State School is the heart of Wyreema community.

Writing in support of saving the school

Wyreema is a fast growing town with new development going on at present.

The proposed closure is causing anxiety, uncertainty and pressure on Wyreema families, plus no alternative has been offered to these families.

Children are making good progress in the school.

Family moved to Wyreema from St George because it was a country town and offered everything they were after, including a small school.

Why close a school where children can walk or ride a bike to school, or where their parents have to drive them because they live on farms some distance to what is the closest school and there is no bus service from the front gate?

Wyreema is a fast growing residential area which supports several local businesses such as the local shop, electricians, plumbers, meteorologist and fencing. The school will be needed in this area with the growth of the area to grow by another 450 houses in the coming years.

Wyreema is a fast growing residential area which supports several local businesses such as the local shop, electricians, plumbers, meteorologist and fencing. The school will be needed in this area with the growth of the area to grow by another 450 houses in the coming years.
DETE has applied a city-centric view which fails to take account of the practicalities and special circumstances of families living in a rural community.

Questions re the level of support provided to the school by DETE during the past few years, particularly its inactivity in determining and addressing the factors contributing to poor enrolment figures.

The Principal and staff have stabilised and improved enrolments over the last 3 years.

DETE has failed to investigate why children living in the WSS catchment area bypass the school and attend other schools.

Small class sizes are beneficial - allows one-on-one teaching, good teacher/child ratio.

Additional support for the school is needed in the way of before and after school care.

Very impressive school community and P&C

Closure goes against the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 - the objects of the Act include provision for schools to meet the individual needs of children .., and "encouraging a parent's involvement in his or her child's education".

Children are learning to be respectful, responsible, honest, caring, loving and friendly young people.

It would appear enrolments have not been managed across the WSS catchment area, and the areas of the neighbouring schools.

The previous Principal made a lot of bad choices for the school and a lot of students left.

The Wyreema area is set to grow and it is noted in Council data that there is over 450 house blocks currently available for development. In the years to come, a school will be needed for the area and it is completely absurd to close an existing school that will clearly be required in the future.

Queensland Government's "growing a four pillar economy'' and "six month action plans" - these documents include references to creating new jobs, building new schools and funding for schools. The documents do not make any reference to closing schools, including WSS.

DETE has not offered the parents of WSS children any advice or practical alternatives to consider if the school is closed as a result of the viability assessment process.

Children have progressed well at WSS.

"My girls have come a long way since being at this school in education and self-confidence. They no longer feel bullied or threatened. All of the staff are very welcoming and beautiful people. We need more schools like Wyreema for all children."

The staff at Wyreema State School go above and beyond their duties as teachers, they are all always there for the students and their families and also people in our community that have nothing to do with our school, when ever they need a hand to someone they will.

TRC has made a substantial investment in infrastructure in Wyreema.

WSS is an integral part of the community.

What enrolment management has been undertaken by the Regional Director to promote enrolment of in-catchment students?

Long history - three generations have been to WSS in one family.

The Wyreema State School is a country school located in a rural community.

Wyreema is a fast growing community - it offers affordable housing, relaxed country lifestyle and is family friendly.

It has a sustainable investment in infrastructure in Wyreema.

The school has quality teaching, meets educational needs, is supportive, safe, convenient and caring.

The school has fantastic grounds, great facilities and resources that are available to all students as a small school.

Very active P & C that provides over and above for our school students and the larger Wyreema Community.

The school caters for students with an intellectual or learning disability.

WSS provides specific individualised learning programs for certain students.

The school has an outstanding library.

The school has quality teaching, meets educational needs, is supportive, safe, convenient and caring.

The school would be a loss to the community.

It has a long history - three generations have been to WSS in one family.

The school is an integral part of the community.

The school has many special features.

The school's facilities are excellent.

The school has many special features.

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There are more young families moving into the area because housing in Wyreema is affordable, there is a good local school and the lifestyle for families is good.

The school is a hub of the community. Several times a year community events are held at the local hall to raise funds for the school or for charity. The school community report that they are regular customers of the local store due to the convenience of the location. They live close to the school so they are able to walk to school, if they were moved to another school this won’t be possible, and that goes for all of the kids in the area. Parents have an unquestionable right to have their children educated in the size and style of school which suits their own children and agrees with their own philosophy of education.

Students are proud of their achievements, be it academic, sporting, cultural or social. This school is about educating the whole child, not just academic achievement. Wyreema SS looks at the academic needs of every student and caters for these individual needs. The Wyreema Community & Township is growing rapidly with a further 500+ houses to be subdivided in the next 5 years - if Wyreema closes, the projected growth for a booming town of affordable housing is unpredictable.

The children at this school have a great sense of community. At school events you see the older students supporting the younger students, good manners and a sense of social responsibility.

The state schools surrounding Wyreema - Vale View, Bunkers Hill, Cambooya and Drayton - are either at or near capacity and do not represent a sustainable or realistic alternative for the existing WSS students as well as future Wyreema children.

The very positive support is also shown from the great staff of the school & their willingness to attend all school functions, extra-curricular activities & help parents with their children outside of the general school requirements.

For the provision of tuckshop. Closing the school would almost certainly have a devastating impact on local business.

Parents have an unquestionable right to have their children educated in the size and style of school which suits their own children and agrees with their own philosophy of education.

Significant impact if families have to drive their kids out of Wyreema to attend school. Wyreema contains a large new estate and a new subdivision has been proposed. It is likely that students will have to travel to Toowoomba to attend school if WSS closes. There is no commuter bus service between Wyreema and Toowoomba. One car families would be severely burdened. Students are proud of their achievements, be it academic, sporting, cultural or social. Without the subsidy of P&C many families/students will be unlikely to access extra curricular activities at larger schools.

The children must learn how to communicate and ‘get on with’ each other. Teachers and students have a nurturing culture - a culture where the school has a positive culture or behaviour or work. They have fun and students talk this through and care for each other.

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Wyreema is a very fast growing community with 250 house blocks currently before council.

Once we started at WSS we felt like we had joined an extended family.

The Wyreema teaching staff, which includes our wonderful teacher aides, work collaboratively at all times to gain the best outcomes for all students. Clinton Craig was awarded third place in the Special Needs category of the Ludwig Leichhardt drawing and writing competition. Clinton’s award was quite substantial and the occasion was a source of great excitement for him, his family, and the Wyreema community.

The P&C has a history of working tirelessly.

Wyreema is a rapidly growing area with many subdivisions underway.

Wyreema is a very fast growing community with 250 house blocks currently before council.

Wyreema has flourished under the guardianship of the current principal.

The Wyreema teaching staff, which includes our wonderful teacher aides, work collaboratively at all times to gain the best outcomes for all students.

We lived in Vale View but chose WSS because Vale View SS was in danger of closing. Was at WSS for 9 years before they withdrew their son because of an ineffective teaching principal. By the time an inquiry was held and the person removed a number of families had withdrawn their children.

Wyreema is an inclusive school where everyone is accepted, valued and inspired to reach their potential. It is a place where all students feel like they belong.

Wyreema is a rapidly growing area with many subdivisions underway.

Wyreema’s popular playgroup which my sister loves to attend.

Students have been bullied in other schools have found a safe place at Wyreema and have developed friendships and interest in learning.

The Wyreema teaching staff, which includes our wonderful teacher aides, work collaboratively at all times to gain the best outcomes for all students. Clinton Craig was awarded third place in the Special Needs category of the Ludwig Leichhardt drawing and writing competition. Clinton’s award was quite substantial and the occasion was a source of great excitement for him, his family, and the Wyreema community.

Love the area and see many disadvantages in closing the school.

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Wyreema is a rapidly growing area with many subdivisions underway.
The facilities for the students are excellent. P&C activities draw the community together and raise money for both the school and local charities. Significant impact on staff at school - particularly difficult in an area such as this to find positions at other schools to accommodate the support staff.

The playgroup which is the only such service in Wyreema and surrounding districts puts the school on show and has been successful in securing enrolments for the school. Principal and P&C have worked hard to improve the image.

The Wyreema store in town gets a lot of patronage from the families here at Wyreema, it would find it hard to stay open.

Parents do not want to send their little 5-12 year olds by bus to a big school early in the morning and to return late afternoon.

The value of our houses would certainly go down. Social acceptance of children with learning difficulties.

There will be a need to build another school in the near-to-distant future to accommodate the growing population of Wyreema. There are more developments pending for the area and further enrolments for next year.

Although Wyreema State School is within the broader Toowoomba district, it would not be straightforward for students to simply transfer to another school, which may limit students' ability to walk or ride their bikes to school.

The loss of a school in another community lead to it being more vulnerable to crime and poverty.

Most families that attend WSS would be significantly impacted by decision to close.

WSS does not need to be closed, it is the Hub of this little community.

WSS is the heart and soul of growing community and its closure would affect the entire surrounding population.

Our teachers are all brilliant teachers.

Although the Minister had committed to a six-month consultation period, the original deadline for submissions to close the school was extended.

Enrolments have been steadily increasing due to ongoing development.

This school is a safe haven for many students. It provides what larger schools could not.

The principal at WSS and from what I have heard she is loved by the current students attending and also their families.

Excellent Principal at WSS and from what I have heard she is loved by the current students attending and also their families.

Although Wyreema State School is within the broader Toowoomba district, it would not be straightforward for students to simply transfer to another school, which may limit students' ability to walk or ride their bikes to school.
The school has a very positive vibe, student numbers are increasing, the latest Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Audit is demonstrating an upward trajectory of school improvement (indicated through generic and NAPLAN testing and audits).

Wyreema is a rapidly growing town on the outskirts of Toowoomba. I find it hard to believe that this school could be considered for closure. The value such schools have in their small communities is evidenced by the extraordinary commitment shown by the Wyreema community in its efforts to protect the school from closure.

Student Numbers dipped notably during the years of 2005 to 2010 due to 5 changes in Principalships resulting in community dissatisfaction.

More worrying is there will be over 40 friends forced to separate and go to different schools. Wyreema State School offers a safe environment/children can walk or ride to school.

The school facilities are of good quality and have been maintained well. There is room for 53 new students to reach the capacity of the school. Teaching and learning spaces including a comparably new Library and Community Resource Centre feature at the school.

The Regional Manager for Scripture Union, was most impressed when he met with the P & C, saying that many much larger schools had a smoker and was committed to Bunker’s Hill. It would seem to be best to protect the resources represented by the Wyreema P & C. They have invested a great deal of time and effort to ensure the education of their children, and I am most impressed with the dedication with which they do their work.

Wyreema State School has a proud history beginning in 1895. There is overwhelming support for the school from the surrounding community and rising enrolments with generations of new faces. The school is the hub of the community and it would be a great mistake to shut it down.

Most of the things that could not occur for the last day that the school premises themselves. All around were gardens filled with kids, crafts and other items carefully placed by the students.

Wyreema is a rapidly growing area. School numbers are growing (not declining).

The Queensland Government cannot make a decision for the longer term need for education provision offered by Wyreema SS unless its own schools planning commission has reported in detail the second phase of infrastructure demands.

Wyreema State School offers a safe environment/children can walk or ride to school.

The play group includes a number of children who are in the preparatory grade of Wyreema school, as well as some other children from the community. This has been a beneficial activity which not only acts as a socialising function for the students but also as a preparatory function for the children to enter grade 1.

The local school is the hub of the community, and it would be a great mistake to shut it down.

Wyreema State School has 42 students in attendance currently, with another student beginning on July 29. 2019.

Wyreema State School has a proud history beginning in 1895. There is overwhelming support for the school from the surrounding community and rising enrolments with generations of new faces. The school is the hub of the community and it would be a great mistake to shut it down.

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Students and families would have to settle into a new school.

Why students in catchment area are bypassing WSS for other schools

Previous decline in enrolments due to bad principal/new principal is good for school

Enrolments are affected by no OSHC being available at WSS

Distance to travel to new school/unable to walk/no public transport

Safe environment/children can walk or ride

Families should have the option of a local school/choice of school to send their children to

WSS caters for students with an intellectual or learning disability

WSS provides specific individualised learning programs for certain students

Curriculum Offerings

RESOURCING EQUITY: Impact on resourcing/management and teaching

Facilities

Active P&C

Good teachers/high teaching standard

Impact on children having to relocate

Impact on families having to relocate

Strengths of small schools

Positive learning environment/quality education

Impact on small community/school is heart of the community

Impact on local businesses

Impact on real estate values if local school is closed

Impact on employment

Other

Viability Assessment and Consultation Process

Financial implications for families

Impact on Play Group program/participants

WSS has a long history

Schools shouldn't be closed as a cost-cutting measure/economic argument for small schools

Other issues

Enrolments

Accessibility

Curriculum

School and Student

Impact on community

Students and families would have to settle into a new school.

Wyreema State School currently has a capacity of 96 students and from Monday, July 29, 2013 will have 43 students in attendance, therefore the school will be utilised to 45%. Projected figures for 2014 indicate 50% utilisation, 2015-0.5

Wyreema State School is fully immersed in and closely follows the recommendations of the Australian Curriculum, also providing specialist lessons in Physical Education, Music and ICT. Information Technology is an important key area

Significant data from this collection indicates 28 students leaving the school between 1998 and 1999-coincides with allegations of inappropriate conduct of the Principal of the time

Numbers have increased by 16 over the past couple of years and data indicates that we can expect a significant increase in numbers over the next 5 years projecting to 75 in 2018


Wyreema State School encompasses 2.37 hectares, comprising 1 high set building, 2 modular buildings, 1 BER Small Schools Area, 1 classroom/pupil area, 1 toilet block building, 1 Shade structure, 1 Prep Block, 1 Tennis court and 1 Basketball court

Wyreema State School Parents and Citizens Association is a very strong and active group that have greatly enhanced the physicality and positivity of the school. They fundraise consistently, with $30,000+ raised towards the new modular classrooms.

Wyreema Community use the School Facilities for a Playgroup Association affiliated playgroup once or twice weekly depending on term. No Prep students attend this playgroup as part of their curriculum expectations, although participation is an option for Prep students.

TOTAL