



Justification for a Primary School In Murrumbateman

An analysis and refutation of the conclusion, of the NSW Department of Education's paper entitled "Murrumbateman Needs Analysis – January 2014"

May 2014

Executive Summary

The Murrumbateman community has long desired a school of its own since a facility such as this brings with it a sense of social cohesion and long term benefits of social capital investment. Previous attempts to rebuild the school (the original was opened in 1869) have been rebuffed by the Department of Education, mainly on demographic concerns.

In late 2012 the Murrumbateman Progress Association (MPA) was made aware of growing interest within the community to re-evaluate the situation in light of substantial housing developments both actual and planned.

The MPA, with assistance of a grant from the Yass Valley Council, undertook a limited survey of the core village of Murrumbateman and its immediate surrounds.

The results of the survey proved that an overwhelming desire exists within the community for a primary school and further research confirmed sufficient numbers of children (364) within the surveyed area to justify a school (see body of this study for comparison with other schools).

The survey results were conveyed to the Department of Education who undertook a review over Christmas 2013. The conclusion of the Department was to reconfirm its earlier position and to continue to take a “wait and see” stance.

The Working Group requested a copy of the report and details of the judgement and the basis on which it was made.

At the date of this paper the Working Group is still awaiting a response from the Department.

In the interim the working group obtained a copy of the report from our local MP Katrina Hodgkinson.

The report exhibits a vain attempt to justify the Department’s position but simply highlights its inaction and inattention to the concerns of the Murrumbateman community. It has been sloppily assembled and contains a number of errors; the conclusion is inconsistent with the data contained within it!

It totally ignores the main issues surrounding the development of a school and concludes with a “do nothing” stance which totally ignores current and projected demographics in particular that a school in Murrumbateman will fill rapidly from our current population without having to wait for more housing developments.

Using the data contained in the report, and our own survey analysis we conclude that a school is in fact justified now. This paper states why the Department’s conclusion is wrong and adds further convincing argument to justify a school not only on the basis of social cohesion and building social capital but, on the fundamental demographics contained in the Department’s document together with a convincing argument of substantial cost savings and development opportunities that such a school would bring.

1. Background:

Initial Survey: In 2007 a survey was conducted by the Murrumbateman Progress Association which indicated a then population of 2100 with a projected growth of 30% to a population of approximately 3000 by 2011. This target has been met and recent development plans indicate a further increase in excess of 1,000 people in the next few years as new land comes on line. Based on these statistics a submission was made in 2007 for a new Primary School to be built by the Department of Education.

The Department rejected the submission on the following grounds:

1. Insufficient numbers of children attending Yass schools to warrant a school in its own right (no mention was made of over 300 children attending school in the ACT);
2. That the two Yass public primary schools would suffer and possibly become unviable should numbers drop because of those attending Murrumbateman;
3. Lack of sureness as to whether Murrumbateman would continue to grow as planned and the investment would fail to achieve breakeven status;
4. The number of dwellings in a "Greenfield" development needed to exceed 2,000 or possibly 2,500 before the Department would reconsider;
5. The cost of building a school - said to be in the order of \$12M

The Department then decided to take a "wait and see" position.

Subsequent Development: Late in 2012 a "straw poll" indicated that circumstances had dramatically changed and that the situation was worth revisiting. The growth had been in line with that predicted and the "village" of Murrumbateman had a population, stated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the 2011 survey, to be 2,846 and of these there were some 920 children under the age of 18.

A survey, underwritten by the Yass Valley Council and the Progress Association, was therefore conducted by a working group set up under the auspices of the Progress Association to ascertain community attitudes to the building of a school, or otherwise. The survey response resoundingly supported such a project and surprisingly also showed that most parents with children currently enrolled in the ACT would enrol to have their children educated locally.

The survey outcome was presented to the Department who subsequently produced a report based on their own statistics; a copy of this report was obtained through our local MP (Katrina Hodgkinson) and is included in Attachment 1.

The Department's report not only acknowledged the number of primary school children within the "village" area but further noted that the true catchment area was far larger than that surveyed and included some 1,500 dwellings with a population of 4,150 (Note that Yass with *three* primary schools has a population of just over 5,500).

The report also shows that the schools in Yass have both met or are exceeding their planned capacity. The Department is now considering expanding facilities at Berinba (one of the Yass primary schools) including the use of additional demountable classrooms.

Situation in Canberra schools: The most accessible ACT schools are either close to or at capacity. This has resulted in a change of (unstated?) policy whereby:

1. Parents, who in the past would be allowed to enrol children at a school because they had an elder sibling already there, can no longer expect this to occur; see [ACT Policy \(www.det.act.gov.au/school_education/enrolling_in_an_act_public_school/priority_placement_areas/frequently_asked_questions_on_priority_enrolment_areas#residencenotppa\)](http://www.det.act.gov.au/school_education/enrolling_in_an_act_public_school/priority_placement_areas/frequently_asked_questions_on_priority_enrolment_areas#residencenotppa);
2. NSW parents who in the past were given preference in enrolments are no longer entitled to this privilege and must wait until all local children are enrolled before being considered for a place; [ACT Policy](#)
3. The Department's report also states "*There is some surplus capacity at most government ACT public schools near the border. However, the issue with enrolments from government ACT schools is the expectation of going on to secondary schools in the ACT, which only have minimal spare capacity. As development in the ACT continues many students from NSW will be either forced back to NSW schools or have to enrol in a non-government school.*"

Note: We are unsure if this information has been conveyed to all affected Murrumbateman parents

Due to this parents are becoming anxious at placement time often waiting until the school is about to close for the Christmas break before knowing if they have a place. There is also stress for some who have children spread over different schools.

There is also growing community concern regarding student travel issues. This ranges from:

1. The increasingly higher risk of bus accidents because of the numbers of buses involved, the inability of drivers to control the students as well as drive the bus, the lack of a decent highway, and increasing traffic due to developments in the Yass Valley; through
2. The recurring and wasteful cost of bus travel, which is in excess of \$1.8M, when such money could be better spent on local long term beneficial infrastructure and badly needed sport and recreational facilities; to
3. Anecdotal information from teachers in the ACT school system (Attachment 2) who have noted the detrimental effect of the long hours of travel on all their out of town students. This is primarily due to lack of

play time, less time for homework, and lack of overall concentration because of the early starts and late home coming.

Note: The working group is undertaking further research into this significant issue due to its potentially damaging long term effects.

2. The Justification:

Why a school in Murrumbateman?

Under the NSW Education Act 1990, the guiding principles on which the Act is based are stated as:

'In enacting this Act, Parliament has had regard to the following principles:

- (a) Every child has the right to receive an education,*
- (b) The education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child's parents,*
- (c) It is the duty of the State to ensure that every child receives an education of the highest quality,*
- (d) The principal responsibility of the State in the education of children is the provision of public education'*

Regarding section (c) it would appear that the Department believes the highest quality education is not available within this State as it is currently underwriting the education of 317 primary aged school children within the ACT school system.

Clearly under section (d) the Department is *not* providing education to the bulk of the Murrumbateman children. It would appear to the Primary School Working Group (PSWG) that denying Murrumbateman a school is denying these children the right to receive the highest quality education in their locality and within the State in which their parents pay their taxes.

The justifications for a school are many and varied. The Department's report has focussed purely on the demography of Murrumbateman and its surrounds and whilst this paper seeks to deal with this we believe the Department must also take into account other issues such as cultural or community matters, health and safety and of course an economic rationale.

Cultural

Schools and primary schools in particular, assist in social cohesion and in raising social capital within a community. They do this in various ways by:

1. Providing social forums such as the P&C and drawing the community together by providing a common arena for meeting people and developing relationships;
2. Having Sport and Recreation Facilities available to the greater community;

3. Being a focal point for the community to run extra curricular events such as children's concerts, as well as sport and recreational events or to utilise school resources to benefit the community in general;
4. Addressing the common values or goals that a school will bring namely:
 - Educating children to attain or surpass common educational benchmarks yet retain and engender community values such as:
 - o Sustainable living (solar power, water conservation etc)
 - o Rural living (animal husbandry, land care, horse management, food growing etc.);
 - o Providing different educational opportunities to the normal city curriculum;
 - Children developing local friendship networks and circle of influence without the need to travel to Canberra or Yass for basic sports or club activities;
 - Develop a feeder school for land based careers;
 - Self-resilience and a sense of freedom

Health and Safety

The primary areas of concern for parents particularly of primary school age include:

1. Fatigue caused by long distance bus travel and early rising and late homecoming;
2. Learning issues now apparent from lack of homework time (see attachment 2);
3. Lack of exercise and 'adventure' options available to students through walking or cycling to school;
4. Increasing statistical possibilities of accident incidences (long trips and an increasingly crowded highway);
5. Lack of supervision of children on the buses

Economic

The economic justification, or lack of it, has not been covered in any detail by the Department. The Department has previously stated that a school would cost in the order of \$12M, that current policy is to build a school in its entirety and the Department would only countenance this for a "Greenfields" site with a minimum of 2,000 dwellings.

The Department has not taken into account the significant savings to be made on reducing the cost of cross border bus fares or the development opportunities of providing jobs such as teaching and building and maintenance services.

A significant factor in justifying a school is that of cost-efficiency and how this relates to enrolment size. Whilst some small public schools have their costs underwritten on the basis of isolated communities, ethnic support or for social inclusion, most schools are justified on numbers attending and all (public and private) are funded in the long term by Federal or State subsidies based on student numbers. The student numbers indicated in the report can be

compared to a school the size or equivalent of Berinba in Yass (the largest and most successful one).

Note: The Department's report concludes that a Murrumbateman school would fall within the "core 14" classification (medium to large) and hence it can be surmised that this would justify a school on a cost benefit basis.

Whilst the Department might balk at an outlay of \$12M a much more cost effective approach can be considered. In terms of initial outlay a staged project such as that followed by the Anglican Church in building Burgmann College in the ACT could be taken. Burgmann now has two campuses and a fully operational school.

However the Department rejects this approach – we do not understand why?

Our own high level cost analysis indicates that a viable school could be built incrementally starting with an initial investment of approximately \$4.3m over the initial 3-6 year period. This is based on the experience of other schools. It should also be understood that this would not be a final figure as future development would include a multi –purpose hall/gymnasium, more sporting facilities and the like.

The \$4.3m is based on:

1. 3 classroom pods (4 classrooms in each) @ \$750K= \$2.25m
2. Resource centre @ \$1m
3. Specialist facilities (science, design and technology etc) \$0.25m
4. Administration @ \$0.5m
5. Ground works @ \$ 300K
6. Enrolment of initially two classes of Kinder and year one growing by one year group of two classes per year

One argument for keeping the status quo is that the ACT bears the cost of the students (said to be on average some \$8,000 to \$10,000 per student). Whilst this may be true it should be born in mind that the ACT receives somewhere in the order of 20% to 80% of the funding from Federal grants, can top up its numbers and thus retain marginally viable schools and also put the money to use within the ACT communities.

It should be noted that this has worked well for the ACT until recently when most schools are now reaching capacity and the ACT seems to be closing its doors to further enrolments from out of town students.

Environmental

It is worthwhile briefly mentioning the buses impact on both the road usage and emission of exhaust pollution as well as the safety and economic costs covered previously.

Demography

The report has depicted Murrumbateman as a “Greenfields” site (Paragraph 3.0 page 4) and states that such sites must reach 2,000+ dwellings in order to meet the base criteria for building a school. As a rule of thumb this may well serve a base purpose especially where no town or services exist. However, the original Murrumbateman primary school was founded in 1869 but closed in the 50’s due to the perceived need to support school numbers in Yass (this criteria no longer applies).

The development situation has changed dramatically since that time with Murrumbateman being one of the fastest, if not the fastest, growth areas in its category and having a bias to young families.

We must be cognizant of and emphasize, that Murrumbateman is *not* a Greenfields site! We should not be classed as a start up community with all the risks that entails. Our demographic is already well established and is skewed to younger families with young children. Thus the “dwellings” rule of thumb should not apply. We should look to actual numbers and also have more faith in planned progress since our development track record has proved sound.

What should be the ultimate demographic criteria however is whether or not the township can justify the school in terms of the number of children in the catchment area and also the long term prospects of maintaining such numbers. The Department’s own report supports both criteria. Population growth in the whole area under consideration has been significant and is projected to continue at approximately 2% year on year or 70% in the next 25 years (See the Attachment 1).

The Yass Valley is also entering a sustained period of development which may further add to this argument and Council has developed a Master Plan to this effect.

The demographics as outlined in the report, and in particular the number of children within the Murrumbateman catchment area, indicate that not only is a school warranted but that it should be of a relatively medium to large size.

Examples of NSW schools sizes surrounding the ACT are (as at 2008):

- St Gregory’s Primary School, Queanbeyan, K-6, 642 students
- Bungendore Public School, K-6, 488
- Captains Flat Public School, K-6, 27
- Gundaroo Public School, K-6, 79
- Sutton Public School, K-6, 129
- Michelago Public School, K-6, 30
- Queanbeyan East Public School, K-6, 149
- Queanbeyan Public School, K-6, 719
- Queanbeyan South Public School, K-6, 467
- Queanbeyan West Public School, K-6, 379
- Jerrabomberra Public School, K-6, 801

Further as per the enclosed report (as at 2013):

- Yass Primary , K-6, 225
- Berinba, Yass, K-6, 275

The Department's report acknowledges a current figure of 364 primary aged children within Murrumbateman "village" and that the catchment area is far larger. It can be seen that even on a conservative ranking a Murrumbateman primary school would rank as the 7th highest out of the above thirteen. If we use the "Greater Murrumbateman" catchment area as defined within the report we find that the figure of 364 could well be 50% higher at 550 and thus rate as the 4th highest out of the above.

Given this it is disconcerting to note the Department's comments namely:

"At present there is no justification to have a public school for Murrumbateman included in the current 10 year Total Asset Management (TAM) program. However, long-term projections indicate that if students are drawn back from ACT public schools, there could be some justification for a 14 Core plus public school after 2026. Ongoing monitoring, particularly of the residential subdivision in Murrumbateman is required."

It is especially disconcerting since the report also:

1. Identifies and acknowledges a growth rate eight times the average for similar parts of NSW;
2. Recognises the actual and planned growth in and around Murrumbateman;
3. Accepts a projected enrolment of 280 students by 2021 (Table 8 page 7) which of itself implies that a school needs to be built by 2021 not "after 2026"!

The conundrum that the Department presents is two fold that is:

1. That we must 'wait and see' but hasn't specified what we need to wait for, how long we wait or who is looking for it; and
2. In order to get the right numbers of students (not specified) we need to draw the students back in order to make up the numbers but is not prepared to build a school that will draw the students back!

However not only is there a current justification for a school in terms of actual students within the primary school age group there is a solid argument for one to be in the planning stage for 2021 within the Department's own reckoning.

Note: 2021 is only 6 ½ years away, the Department concedes that it could take up to 5 years to build a school once approval has been granted and yet the Department has not included it in its 10 year TAM plan nor seems willing to do so.

3. Other Matters

Government and Community Support

Since the concept of a Primary School was first raised in the local area, considerable support has been shown. This is backed by the recent survey and given unanimous support by Yass Valley Council together with our local MP and Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson, our Federal Member Angus Taylor and the Planning Minister and Member for Goulburn Ms Pru Goward. All of whom recognise the requirement for a school, its justification and also the advantages such a school will bring to the community.

Furthermore the Council has had land generously offered free for the school which will significantly enhance the process of, and underwrite a major cost impediment to, building a school.

Social Impact

It can be argued that a new and vibrant school will likely draw a new community which could adversely affect numbers in both Yass and Canberra, however:

- For Yass both primary schools are already at or exceeding their capacity, there is further planned development in the Yass area and the Department's report states that it is already considering expanding current facilities including more demountable classrooms;
- For Canberra schools a similar capacity situation is evident with Murrumbateman parents either being squeezed in at the last moment or turning to private schools to ensure a place.

The Department earlier used the argument that a school in Murrumbateman would adversely affect those in Yass – this is no longer the case.

Furthermore Murrumbateman currently suffers from the lack of a school as children schooled in the ACT and Yass inevitably find friends and relationships in those places. They then join various sport and recreation clubs to be with their contemporaries. This then results in parents spending endless travel and waiting time on evenings and weekends attending to their children's needs and often neglecting their own (or visa versa).

Under these circumstances families often find it easier just to give up their original dream of rustic idyll and move back to the city life. This is adding to the constant churn of residences said by some to be 3 years on average. The lack of a school is also proving a deterrent for some young families looking to move to Murrumbateman.

It can be argued that the social impact of building a school would therefore be highly positive with little or no adverse effect. Not only would Murrumbateman benefit but also Yass. Children schooled in Murrumbateman would stand a greater chance of attending a High School in Yass than is now the case.

Sports and recreational activities would likely be cooperative with Yass schools and engender inter school activities (football, netball etc). This in turn would see a greater number of the Murrumbateman community spending time in Yass and likewise those from Yass visiting Murrumbateman.

Prior Determinants

We refer back to the original rationale made by the Department to shelve the project in 2007 and that being, to some extent, iterated in the latest report. As previously stated the Department rejected the original submission on the following grounds:

- Insufficient numbers of children attending Yass schools to warrant a school in its own right;
- That the two Yass public primary schools would suffer and become unviable;
- Unsureness as to whether Murrumbateman would continue to grow as planned;
- The number of dwellings in a “Greenfield” development needed to exceed 2,000;
- The cost of building a school(\$12M)

The working group has demonstrated (using the Department’s report and our own survey) that:

1. Large numbers of children currently attending school in Canberra plus some attending in Yass would suffice to establish a medium sized school;
2. The Yass schools would not suffer from the establishment of a school in Murrumbateman as both are at or exceeding capacity; indeed a school for Murrumbateman would decrease the long term pressure on these schools to use more demountables and expand already stretched resources;
3. Murrumbateman has demonstrated a strong growth in line with expectations and has plans for further expansion based on the perceived low risk factor of such undertakings;
4. Murrumbateman is by no possible definition a “Greenfields” site and has a proven record of meeting development targets; thus a “number of dwellings” should not be used as a viable demographic rule of thumb rather actual numbers of students should be used to determine if a school is viable;
5. The initial outlay for establishing a school can be substantially reduced since the land (normally a substantial cost and planning factor) has been donated, demountable classrooms can be hired rather than built in situ, the school can be built in stages thus delaying up front costs and other overheads, such as administration, could be shared with other schools e.g. Berinba.

Timing

The Department has unintentionally acknowledged that even by its own reckoning a school should be built by 2021(Table 8 page 7). Given this and

the lead-in time for marketing, planning and obtaining approvals from the relevant bodies, particularly the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), it is fitting that planning for the building of a school should begin in late 2014. Any delay past this point would put severe additional strain on the community.

Risk

The credibility of the Department within the community is at stake. The enthusiasm of those presenting the original submission in 2007 was soon dashed by the lack of progress or support from the Department. It has left a great deal of negativity and bad feeling within some parts of the community. It is essential that this deflation of energy and enthusiasm not occur again.

Perhaps the greatest risk is to the long term and planned development of Murrumbateman. There is the loss of attraction for parents of young families from the lack of a government school, the disheartenment that the poorly argued case for shelving this project has caused and the result that more parents will be turning back to the ACT school system.

4. Summary

The community has:

- Demonstrated its support for a school over a long period of time;
- Significant and sufficient primary school aged children to fill a school as well as further planned growth;
- Major concerns regarding significant numbers of students travelling out of NSW for schooling and the effect this has on their education, health and long term aspirations;
- Need for a primary school that would feed in to a local high school (e.g. Yass);
- Visible local support for such a school (Council community grant, donation of land);
- Available land owned by or promised to the community;
- An ongoing requirement for additional facilities, sport and recreational, that a school would bring.

Prior hurdles to the building of a school have been removed by time and progress.

5. Conclusion

There is no doubt a school in Murrumbateman is feasible and that previous impediments to its development no longer apply. The Working Group cannot see any reason for delaying the process further.

Recommendation

That the MPA adopts this paper and approves further follow up action with the Department with a view to having the Department adopt the proposal for a school and to include the development on its building schedule.

Attachment 1

NSW Department of Education

Murrumbateman Needs Analysis Report –January 2014

Note: Click on the following object to view the report:

Murrumbateman
Needs Analysis Repor

Attachment 2

Extract of a letter of concern

Quotations and Points from an email I received from a full time teacher with three young children who has read the Department of Education's report and thinks we should investigate some important issues not covered in the report.

1. Literacy Rates: "Last week at my school, a Canberra government High School, I was asked to select some students I would encourage to receive literacy support – from NAPLAN evidence, assessment marks etc. We run a literacy program and have teachers spend time working with students requiring 'extra' help. I chose some students and it wasn't until lunch that day that something caught my attention and has been worrying me ever since. The literacy coach came and gave me the list of students – I reviewed them and then the penny dropped! They were all 'out of area' students – coming from Murrumbateman, Goulburn, Bungendore and Braidwood. Half were from Murrumbateman. I didn't think much at first, but after then talking to the students it became very clear that they had never been asked by 'anyone' how they felt about travelling so far each and every day to and from school."

This is a major issue I believe and one we as a community have overlooked so far. Perhaps we need to survey the children and check NAPLAN? Are there statistics or reports that we can tap into regarding children who travel large distances each day?

The email went on to say:

2. Quality of Education: "These students were somewhat feeling disadvantaged because they lived so far away. It astounds me that in the report it stated, 'The report was forwarded to the Department of Education.....and considered as part of the Department's educational needs analysis for the Murrumbateman and Yass'. At no point anywhere in the report that I just read, has a study been undertaken of the educational needs of the students per say. Yes, we need a school in this area but I think we are missing the fundamental point and that is that the students are missing out on valuable learning time because of travel. Either way, whether they travel to Yass or ACT, there is time involved. One of my friends who lives in Murrumbateman teaches at [name withheld] Primary School. A lot of their student intake are primary students from the immediate Murrumbateman area. I asked her about the literacy rate and her words were, "*just take a look at the My Schools website – things don't look crash hot for the school.*" I may be thinking the wrong thing, but there seems to be a correlation (in the high school I am at, and the primary school my friends teaches at) that learning, whether it be literacy or numeracy of out of area students (Murrumbateman) be lower or below the average of students who live in the immediate schooling area. This is Government schools as well. To be honest, for students to travel 2 hours minimum per day, one can't deny that their schooling is being hindered – whether that be late

assignments or not doing homework. I have just picked up on a couple of things and after talking to the kids, they are tired when they get home! Aren't we all! It just seems a shame after reading the report that no study has been done on the performance of students who travel long distances because they don't have a school in close proximity. Obviously we want the best education for our students/children and providing one closer to our community should take precedence over the need for anything else! The department doesn't work with the students that this distance/travel affects. The Department doesn't see the stresses, the anxiety and the expectations that schools place on students regardless of where they live! Teachers don't give extensions to students that live out of town! These students are disadvantaged because of distance. The need for a closer school is imperative if educational measures and performances are to improve! Just look at the [name withheld] results and this should be evidence enough! I could be totally wrong as it shouldn't really matter where our students live, but we can't deny quantitative data that exists. I guess Mike, my concern is like I said before, who has asked the students about the travel? Who has asked them about their anxieties, fears or worries about not having enough time to work on their school work because of travelling such long distances? I think that these students need a voice. They are the ones that are being affected – along with our community. The report talks about capacity, anticipated numbers and foreseeable future! Where have they even given thought to these 300+ students that are now being taught the National Australian Curriculum and who need every minute of every day to adjust to the new workload, adjust to the new assessment requirements – add to this, extracurricular activities and normal household duties! Our country kids are wonders – they seem to do so much in so little time and I envy them! They don't seem to whinge, they don't seem to wine, but get the job done. It is only when I see their performances through assessment results that I wonder, are they really doing ok? Are they exhausted? Are they enjoying life or school? I lived in the country growing up and caught a bus and I went through this myself. It is hard being so young and having this burden placed on you.”

The teacher stressed that it is not the level of ability of the children that is in question just that they appear disadvantaged by losing valuable time; either rest time in the morning or play or homework time at night and of course tiredness during the day with the extra travel which affects their concentration during lessons.

3. Community Hub: “I guess from the Department point of view, they just see numbers and are waiting for the numbers of students to increase before any decision is made. This doesn't happen in Canberra. Communities are built around a school. If we take a look at any community or town, they are built around a central structure, of services by which this includes a post office, school and other services. Murrumbateman was years ago, as evidenced in the report built around the school – it was only due to a decline in numbers that it closed. For a community to function effectively we need our essential services maintained – this should be the right of any community. My principal

has already informed me that I most likely won't be able to have my children attend the school that I teach at, as a lot of North Side ACT public schools are nearing capacity. I know of two high schools already, having to cap their numbers. This will most likely mean I will teach in Canberra and send my kids to Yass which is impossible for me to do! The Department don't realise the practicalities associated with working in one state and sending your kids to another, some 55 km away from you! Having a school in a closer proximity would encourage our sense of community, sense of support for each other and allow our kids to enjoy the balance in life. For travel to take up so much time, these kids are not leading a balanced life – two more hours each day for learning life skills, spending time learning to read and write, or merely visiting a neighbour would improve outcomes both from a personal sense but also an educational one. I just admire the boys that I teach, that both come from Murrumbateman. They are so organised and I could learn a lot from them and they are only 13!!! This is what the Department don't see! Numbers are numbers and this doesn't mean much to me! It will be when the schools are at capacity that things need to change.

The ability to locate children either close to home or close to work is being ignored by the Department. We are now being told that siblings are being split over different schools and that out of town children will be the last to be allocated positions when first enrolling. This issue is of major concern to parents working in Canberra as there is no guarantee that a child will be placed in a school of choice.

Attachment 3

Notes on matters arising from Analysis of the Department of Education's needs analysis report dated January 2014.

In brief the points to make about the report are:

1. Student enrolment figures as of 13th March (page 1) are incorrect & Berinba has already exceeded its 2014 projection of 296 students, it has 302.
2. Page 1 Quote there is “no justification... in the current 10 year TAM [Total Assets Management?] Program” for a school, however the report goes on to state that numbers would justify a “Core 14 plus public school” [that’s a medium sized school] if our ACT children were to be included (see Table 8)?
3. Page 2 states “Department no longer owns land in Murrumbateman”; however it makes no mention of Council’s Master Plan and the land being allocated in it or of the existing block of designated Crown land;
4. Page 3 notes Berinba will require 2 additional portable classrooms by 2018 – no mention that they are already using portables or that the new ones could be located here in Murrumbateman!
5. Page 3. Item 2.4 states 57% of ACT bound students are going to Private schools but doesn’t state why! What are the reasons?
 - a. Long Term denominational aspirations (Radford, Daramalan etc)
 - b. The view that education in NSW is somehow inferior to that available in the ACT?
 - c. No viable alternative (e.g. keeping siblings together, location to work or child minding)
6. Page 4 the report states “there is some spare capacity at most government ACT public school (sic) near the border” – this is not born out by any feed back I have received and certainly not from the attached letter (Att. 2). This requires further research.
7. In relation to secondary schooling, the report states that “As development in the ACT continues many students will be forced either back to NSW or to enrol in non-government schools {due to limited capacity}” – *do the parents of the primary school kids know this?*
8. Page 4 heading 3.0 “DEC requirements for public school establishment” again refers to the metric of allotments or dwellings as a base for establishing a school and yet again avoids the obvious that it should be the number of actual children and the likely demographics (young families) of the township that are used to determine this. This is iterated on page 6 where focus on lots and general population stats ignores the current number of children.
9. There are further apparently erroneous figures quoted in 3.0 when discussing Murrumbateman’s planned growth (extra 1,200 over 30 years) versus both Yass and Murrumbateman (around 1,200 to 1,300 over 30 years) this implies that Yass will either not grow or by only 100 lots!

10. Heading 3.1 mentions the “Murrumbateman hinterland” catchment area as including Nanima, Spring Range, Jeir and Yass River. This may be restrictive as it excludes Hall, Wallaroo and even Yass itself (people working in Murrumbateman from these areas have said they would likely use our school)
11. Table 6 page 6. These figures do not add up! The numbers are identical for both Yass schools for 2013 & projected for 2016 whether Murrumbateman is included or not and Berinba currently has almost reached its 2016 projection this year (302 v. 310)!
12. Page 7 states that Murrumbateman with “minimal drawback of students from the ACT” would likely have 280 students by 2021! Note:
 - a. It is possible that with a reasonable draw back of students we would reach that figure NOW!
 - b. It takes 3-5 years to build a school by the Department’s own projections;
 - c. The Department’s report has not recommended the school be included in the 10 year TAM (Item 4.0 page 6 suggests that “regular monitoring of the LGA and lot take up” is all that is required)!
 - d. We don’t know when the TAM starts and ends or if it is a running schedule but either way Murrumbateman should be on it now just to meet the 2021 deadline;

The Statistics used in this document are questionable given that they:

1. Have errors in them;
2. Do not cover the whole possible catchment area for Murrumbateman;
3. Are subject to long term growth rates which have in the past proved inaccurate;
4. Do not reflect or highlight the current arguments for a school.

Report Rationale. This is limited to what appears to be an argument to do nothing. It doesn’t include:

1. Quality of education;
2. Probable detrimental learning effects on students (tiredness, lack of concentration, lack of time for homework etc);
3. Lack of social cohesion (friends, sport/recreational activities across many schools in the ACT etc);
4. Lack of a community hub including sport and recreational facilities;
5. Work opportunities – teaching, building, maintenance etc;
6. Value for tax payer money (bus fares, students fees, cost to ACT etc);
7. Community wishes (including support from Council, Members of Parliament, our Progress Association and of course parents and families affected by this)

The report effectively recognises that if all Murrumbateman parents decided to send their children to a NSW school that not only could Yass not cope but that they would be *forced* to build a school here.

The dilemma for the community is “How are we ever going to get the parents to commit to drawing back or sending their children to a school here if we don’t even have a commitment to building one in the first place”?