

The Secretary,
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations
and Education References Committee
Suite SG.52, Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Thursday, 24 June 2004

Dear Sir or Madam,

Re: Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding for Schools

Our son has been attending Blue Gum Community School since the beginning of 2001 and his case is one of this school's many success stories. It has only been through the sheer determination and dedication of the staff, the high staff to children ratio and the school's educational philosophies that our son has been able to "turn himself around" from displaying aggressive and socially immature behaviours to now forming positive relationships with other children and functioning as part of a group. We believe that it is only by attending Blue Gum's program that our son is able to improve socially and developmentally at the incredible rate at which he is doing.

It is for the above reasons we believe that our son's placement in a mainstream program would not be satisfactory and why we are committed to driving from one side of Canberra to the other (a daily round trip of 100km) each school day to attend Blue Gum school. We are an average family who have our own small business and would find a substantial increase in school fees forced on the school by inadequate Federal Government funding, too much of a burden financially.

Blue Gum School gets \$1,817 per child from the Federal Government whereas Catholic schools in Canberra get \$3,101 federal funding per child. This is unfair! Why is the Federal Government discriminating against Blue Gum families?

We appreciate the opportunity of highlighting our concerns about Blue Gum's funding position and some of Blue Gum School's many unique qualities. We hope that this exceptional school will be given the chance to continue to exist and grow to benefit other families as well as our own. We are not asking to be treated differently, all we are asking is that we be treated the same as other independent schools in Canberra.

Yours sincerely

(signed)

Cathy & Simon Marsh