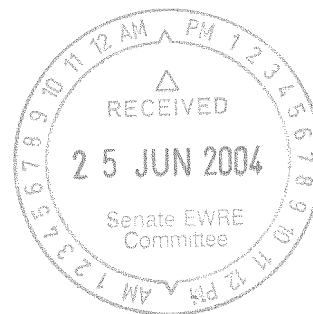


Monday, 28 June 2004



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

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Inequity of Commonwealth funding for Blue Gum Community School
(an independent primary school based in the Australian Capital Territory)**

My child is a second grade student at Blue Gum Community School at Hackett in the A.C.T. I am writing to voice my distress at the inequity of Australian Government funding currently being provided to Blue Gum Community School.

I chose Blue Gum Community School for my child's education because it offers a uniquely Australian and refreshingly alternative education philosophy, as well as better teacher-student ratios. I also chose Blue Gum Community School in particular, because it is a non-religious based school.

Blue Gum Community School is classified as a very small independent school. I struggle to comprehend why the Blue Gum Community School has to fight so hard for funding that other schools are routinely given, simply because of how the school is classified by the Australian Government. I am sure I will not be the only one to voice my opinion in this regard.

Blue Gum Community School is currently provided funding under the SES funding model. This model makes assumptions about parents' wealth that in no way reflects the reality of the socio-economic mix of Canberra's suburbs.

I understand that under the current funding model, the Australian Government gives Blue Gum Community School \$1,817 for my child but other independent schools in the area get \$3,404. **Why?** Because of this inequity, Blue Gum Community School is missing out on around \$100,000 in government funding this year alone.

How can our school possibly make up this shortfall whilst being denied the choice of funding model?

I also understand that the ACT Government rejected the SES funding model because it considers it inappropriate in the A.C.T. How can the Australian Government justify singling out one school, Blue Gum Community School, being classified under this model if the rest of the A.C.T. schools are not? This simply is not fair. Every other school in Canberra is able to choose which funding model suits it best (the old ERI model or the new SES model). Why isn't our school given that choice?

As a single parent, I work fulltime to enable me to provide the best education I can afford for my child. I cannot afford to pay the higher school fees (an extra \$2,000!) to make up this funding shortfall. And why should I? – Just because I choose to send my child to Blue Gum Community School.

The families at Blue Gum Community School are no different from the families at neighbouring independent schools or religious (catholic) based schools. Why am I, and other Blue Gum School Parents, especially being penalised for choosing to send our children to Blue Gum School?

I ask that you give serious consideration to the issues raised above during the Inquiry's deliberations.

Yours sincerely

Paulina Ollman