

PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION REPORT

Elize Scheepers – Portfolio Holder, March 2018

2017 saw a change in the governance of our Residential Colleges. Country High Schools Hostel Authority, CHSHA, folded on 1 July 2017 to be replaced by Residential Colleges, which is now a department within the Department of Education with Deborah Hardie at the helm.

Substantial renovations done to Broome Residential College during 2016 had the College run with new vigour this past year. 2 new junior dorms, 4 new staff houses, 2 bedsits were added to existing dorms, a recreational hall, basketball court as well a 15m swimming pool were enjoyed.

At the time of writing my report the official numbers of the student census statistics gathered by the Department were not available to the public. All Residential Colleges, including City Beach, have beds available and are fully staffed. Residential Colleges of Broome, Esperance and Geraldton will have access to additional staff members who are there solely to support all Aboriginal students attending these Residential Colleges. 2018 Broome will have two and Esperance one of the support staff join them. 2019 Albany, Esperance and Broome will see additional staff join them to support their Aboriginal students.

On 12 December 2017 two government Residential Colleges, Northam and St. James' in Moora, were earmarked by the State government to be closed down. On 10 January 2018, Mr. McGowan admitted many decisions made to save the government budget were done in haste and they had "got the balance wrong" between budget savings and the impact on rural families. However, the decision was only reversed for Northam Residential College, Moora remained ear marked to be closed. This decision has brought extreme stress not only to the current students and their families but to many other families across the state who had planned on sending their children to Moora. Why on earth send your child to Moora?? Perhaps the fact that CMSHS had the highest median ATAR score of all senior high schools in the Wheatbelt (including Northam and Narrogin) may be a very good reason! At present Moora has the third highest occupancy rate of the 8 Residential Colleges in WA.

There seems to be a grey cloud regarding the figures thrown out in regards to the upgrade of Moora, which has clouded the judgement of those undecided about giving their support or not. Tracey Errington, current President of CMSHS P&C explained it very simply and I feel it is important to share in this report.

The figure of \$8.7million is what many understand is required for the upgrade, when in fact only \$500,000 is required to stay open. The \$8.7million is the balance of the initial (approximately \$55m) funding set aside by government about 10 years ago. The exact timing and figure are awaiting confirmation. Utilising this money, each Residential College was progressively updated - Moora being the last. \$8.7million is what was left of the funds after the second last upgrade. Work on the last Residential College upgrade in the program was to commence in March 2018... in Moora. Mr. McGowan's newly elected Labour Government commissioned a report on what would be required at Moora to upgrade the current facility. The report itself cost \$150,000 - the upgrade itself was never finally costed as the consultants' contract was terminated before the costing stage. On 1 July 2017, the Education Department took over all Residential Colleges and their assets from the Country Hostels Association, and, through recommendations from the Blaxall Report, cancelled the

remaining upgrade and redirected the remaining \$8.7million elsewhere.

The last building assessment carried out by BMW (Building Maintenance and Works) department for maintenance and repairs was done in 2012. They put the figure required at \$160,000. The maintenance was not carried out then as the planned upgrade was imminent, thereby killing two birds with one stone. As all schools and colleges, an annual funding is received by the Residential College of \$315,000. This figure, added to that quoted in 2012, rounded off comes to \$500,000.

Advance Housing in Albany have opened a new facility for tertiary students. Apartments housing 20 fully furnished rooms each with an ensuite bathroom are located opposite the University of WA. One of the single roomed apartments is built in a wheelchair friendly structure. A further 40 rooms are in the planning stage. This accommodation is not only for university students but available to any tertiary students in Albany over 18 years of age. Many student accommodation facilities in Perth are also not solely for the use of university students. An example is that of ECU Student Village in Joondalup which accommodates any actively studying tertiary student, whether at a university or TAFE. I urge parents to contact student accommodation facilities near your child's place of study before going to the expense of setting your child up in their own accommodation.

I would like to close my report with a request to each of our ICPA members across the State... please show your support and stand behind fellow rural families, who like you also work and live on the land. Please give add a voice, or a letter to the P&C giving them your moral support to have Moora Residential College remain open to receive their children.