

VICTORIAN PARLIAMENTARY INTERNSHIP RESEARCH REPORT

**An investigation into the need for a 7-12 Secondary
School in Coburg**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on investigating the need for a 7-12 Secondary School for Coburg based on demographics and parental intentions. The report is needed as there is currently only one year 10-12 High School in Coburg. This report tries to build a case for establishing a 7-12 Secondary School for Coburg to ensure the local community is has access to a good quality, local secondary school.

The first chapter is an introduction, which discusses the educational reforms in Victoria and reflects on the impacts of these reforms on Coburg.

Chapter two provides background information about Coburg. It is intended to give an educational profile of Coburg and to give an historical context to current issues and debates. It looks at Coburg's demographics and current education options.

The third chapter deals with community responses to the current situation regarding secondary schools and discusses the results of a questionnaire on parental intentions (whether parents would be consider sending their child to a 7-12 Secondary School in Coburg, if it existed).

The fourth chapter focuses on the importance of having a local secondary school within Coburg and explains the beneficial flow on effects through the rest of society. It is argued that beneficial flow on effects through the rest of society can be divided into three areas, social, environment, and education.

Within the discussion, academic theory, data analysis, literature, and a questionnaire were utilised. Although student perspectives are relevant to this report, their individual opinions were ethically out of reach. However, a questionnaire was used to obtain parental attitudes. There was also personal communication with community groups and departmental leaders.

The report contends that there is a need for a 7-12 Secondary School for Coburg. Having a 7-12 Secondary School for Coburg has three main benefits, social, environmental and education.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In this chapter:

- 1.1 Introduction
 - 1.2 Reforms in the government education system
 - 1.3 Basic aims of reform
 - 1.4 Summarising the impact of the reform on Coburg
 - 1.5 Addressing legacies and aims in the current policy design
 - 1.6 Chapter summary
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1.1 Introduction

For the future of Victoria and its citizens, the quality of education is vital.¹ Not only is education important in providing economic prosperity for nations, social health and cohesion, but it also provides young people with economic and employment security in a changing world.² Educational stakes for individuals have increased and it matters more than ever before in history.³ Moreover, people do acquire ‘human capital’ during education, and this makes them and therefore their societies, more productive.⁴ Conversely, the inability for students to access education services often increases the likelihood of unemployment, and therefore increasing the likelihood of anti- social behaviours, such as crime. This chapter considers briefly some of the education reforms that have taken place in Victoria over the last few decades, and reflects upon the impacts of the reforms on Coburg.

1.2 Reforms in the government education system

The first Education Act of 1872 introduced free secular and compulsory school⁵. Since then society and government has changed dramatically. By the mid 1980s, the Government under Cain introduced the beginning of the education market with the de-zoning of government schools and shifts towards an educational policy that recommend schools having a greater level of self-management and devolution of government funding.⁶ In practice, de-zoning meant that students were no longer

¹ Department of Education and Training Victoria, *Review of Education and Training legislation: Discussion paper*, Department of Education and Training, Melbourne, 2005.

² Ibid.,; Department of Early Childhood Development, *Blueprint for education and early childhood development*, Department of Education and Early Childhood development, Melbourne, 2008.

³ Alison Wolf, *Does education matter?*, Penguin Books, Melbourne, 2002, pp. 246.

⁴ Wolf, *Does education matter?*, pp. 247.

⁵ Department of Education and Training Victoria, *Review of Education and Training legislation: Discussion paper*.

⁶ Simon Marginson, *Markets in education*, Allen and Unwin, NSW, 1997.

required to attend their closest schools and thus exposing education to the market for the first time. The government under Cain put forward a proposal called *Taking schools into the 1990s*, to further extend self-management of schools however, this proposal was rejected in 1986 mostly because of the opposition it received from unions, parents and organisation.⁷ Nevertheless, in 1992 Cain's idea of self management schools was revived by the government under Kennett's *Schools of the Future* policy, which was the centre piece of government's educational policy reform, that placed the public system into a free market mode by devolving financial and organisational decision making to the local schools.⁸ Under this policy the norms of the public service were replaced by those of the free market motivators such as customer demand, competition and efficiency'.⁹ It must be noted that Victoria was not alone in introducing these reforms; it was part of a global trend of economic rationalism.

1.3 Basic aims of reform

Victoria's *School of the Future* policy was constructed at a time when Victoria faced heavy financial debt.¹⁰ The government under Kennett initial policy agenda, aimed at reducing both Victoria's debt and public sector expenditure.¹¹ It also aimed to increase the efficiency of the education system and decentralise decision making from the government to principals and the school community. The anticipated benefits were to move education towards a more competitive free market model in which schools compete for students on the basis of their ability to achieve high quality academic performance.¹²

1.4 Summarising the impact of the reform on Coburg

Kennett's policy changes saw cuts of over \$300 million to the state education budget and the removal of more than 7000 teachers. The government also closed more than

⁷ Brian J. Caldwell, "The Significance of School finance Reform in Victoria", in *School Resourcing: Models and Practices in Changing times*, edited by Perter Karmel, Australian College of Education, Deakin West, ACT, 2000, pp 43-50.

⁸ Caldwell, "The Significance of School finance Reform in Victoria".

⁹ Marginson, *Markets in education*.

¹⁰ Caldwell, "The Significance of School finance Reform in Victoria".

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-50.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 43-50.

250 schools.¹³ The impact of these changes, especially the closure of schools deeply affected communities such as Coburg. Either as a direct or indirect result of this policy, the city of Moreland for which Coburg is a part of lost Glenroy High, Oak Park High, Hadfield Secondary College, Coburg Secondary College, Newlands Secondary College, Moreland High School and most recently, Moreland City College. Not only did the closure of schools, evoke unprecedented level of parental and community activism but also meant the loss of community facilities and mounted pressure on parents and students to obtain transport to distant schools.¹⁴

1.5 Addressing legacies and aims in the current policy design

The current government still administers schools with a degree of self-management however recognises the importance of an increased scope of cooperation and diluting the market ideology from *Schools of the Future* policy.¹⁵ Whilst acknowledging the benefits of competition, the government recognises “unfettered competition between schools may not be conducive to meeting the needs of all students and all communities, nor the provision of a full range of programs for a more diverse range of students now staying on at schools”.¹⁶ The Government’s approach to management of schools is built around catering for a diverse mix of students in secondary school and an expectation of shared responsibility and cooperation between schools.¹⁷ According the 2008 Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development, the new mission is to “ensure a high quality and coherent birth-to-adult learning and development system to build the capability of every young Victorian”.¹⁸

1.6 Chapter summary

Over the last few decades a number of educational reforms have taken place in Victoria. The process of marketisation of education has had painful and damaging effects for some communities such as Coburg, whereby a number of schools were closed down within and around the Coburg area. A new 7-12 Secondary School in

¹³Ibid., pp. 43-50.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. pp43-50.

¹⁵ Department of Education and Training Victoria, *Blueprint for Government schools: Future directions for education in the Victorian government school system*, Department of Education and Training, Melbourne, 2003

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 21.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 21.

¹⁸ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *Blueprint for education and early childhood development*, pp. 9.

Coburg would support the 2008 Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development, in providing “high quality and coherent birth-to-adult learning and development system to build the capability of every young Victorian”.¹⁹

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 9.

CHAPTER 2 BACKGROUND TO COBURG

- 2.1 Introduction
 - 2.2 Demographics
 - 2.3 Education in Coburg today.
 - 2.4 Summary
-

2.1 Introduction

The suburb of Coburg is located 8km north of Melbourne and is part of the City of Moreland. Besides Coburg, the City of Moreland covers the suburbs of Brunswick, Brunswick East, Brunswick West, Pascoe Vale, Pascoe Vale South, Coburg, Coburg North, Hadfield, Fawkner, Glenroy, Oak Park and Gowanbrae.²⁰ Within Coburg there are seven primary schools and only one secondary school Coburg (for years 10-12), Coburg Senior High School. The educational profile Coburg is characterised by a history of dramatic change over a relatively short period of time. The dramatic change has been seen in the number of school closures within and near Coburg throughout the 1990's (noted in the previous chapter). This chapter considers the educational profile of Coburg and Coburg's demographics.



²⁰ Id consultancy, "Community profile" at <http://www.id.com.au/profile/Default.aspx?id=220>, accessed 11 March 2009.

2.2 Demographics

[2.2.1]

Coburg is the largest suburb within the City of Moreland's municipality, with a population of over 23000.²¹ The population of Coburg declined between 1982 and 2006, but increased between 2001 and 2006 by 1000 people, or 5%, the result of mainly new housing developments on the former Pentridge Prison site and other smaller residential developments.²² Coburg's fertility rates are higher than the average found in the City of Moreland²³. In terms of age structure, compared to the city of Moreland, Coburg has a greater proportion of people in the younger age groups (0-17) but a smaller proportion of people aged 60 and over. 20.9% of the population were aged 0-17 and 17.8% were aged 60 and over compared to 19.4% and 20.1% for the city of Moreland.²⁴ Further the table below shows the greatest proportion of people aged 10-19 years (approximately people of secondary school age) within the City of Moreland are found in the suburbs of Coburg, Fawkner, Glenroy and Pascoe Vale²⁵. Consequently, educational facilities and opportunities need to be available for the greater number of secondary school aged people, within these areas and particularly Coburg.

Figure 1: Moreland population by suburb

	Moreland											
	0-4 years		5-9 years		10-14 years		15-19 years		20-24 years		Total 0-24 years	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Brunswick	967	11.5	659	9.3	662	9.9	781	11.1	2,552	24.1	5,621	14.1
Brunswick East	342	4.1	257	3.6	199	3.0	275	3.9	786	7.4	1,859	4.7
Brunswick West	653	7.8	497	7.0	445	6.7	612	8.7	1,224	11.5	3,431	8.6
Coburg	1,707	20.3	1,275	18.0	1,199	17.9	1,353	19.2	1,836	17.3	7,370	18.5
Coburg North	363	4.3	331	4.7	295	4.4	323	4.6	405	3.8	1,717	4.3
Fawkner	843	10.0	794	11.2	744	11.1	674	9.6	701	6.6	3,756	9.4
Glenroy	1,178	14.0	1,161	16.4	1,112	16.6	1,117	15.9	1,149	10.8	5,717	14.3
Gowanbrae	202	2.4	149	2.1	136	2.0	122	1.7	123	1.2	732	1.8
Hadfield	305	3.6	325	4.6	306	4.6	316	4.5	312	2.9	1,564	3.9
Oak Park	292	3.5	279	3.9	275	4.1	285	4.1	286	2.7	1,417	3.6
Pascoe Vale	892	10.6	771	10.9	738	11.0	699	9.9	808	7.6	3,908	9.8
Pascoe Vale South	654	7.8	594	8.4	570	8.5	480	6.8	519	4.9	2,817	7.1
Total	8,398	100	7,092	100	6,681	100	7,037	100	10,701	100	39,909	100

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of population and Housing, 2006

²¹ Department of planning and Community development, "Suburbs in Time- Suburbs in Melbourne" at <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>, accessed 11 June 2009.

²² Id consultancy, "Community profile", at <http://www.id.com.au/profile/Default.aspx?id=220>, 2008, accessed 11 March 2009

²³ Id consultancy, "Population and household forecasts for Coburg" at <http://www.id.com.au/Moreland/forecasetid/default.asp?id=220&gid=10&p>, 2008, accessed 1 April.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of population and Housing*, 2006.

[2.2.2]

Coburg has a higher percentage of people born overseas than the average in Victoria. In Coburg, 33.8% of people were born overseas, whilst state-wide 24.7% of people were born overseas.²⁶ The top 10 countries of birth for Coburg residents besides Australia include, Italy, Greece, Lebanon, United Kingdom, China, India, Turkey, New Zealand, Philippines, and Vietnam. Further, the proficiency of English in Coburg is significantly below the statewide average, with 20.5% of people who can only speak English while the average for Victoria is 79%. A greater number of people in Coburg (24.2%) can speak another language and speak English poorly or not at all compared to the City of Moreland (21.8%).²⁷

[2.2.3]

The proportion of low-income earners defined as those earning less than \$400 per week and the number of high-income earners defined as those earning \$1000 per week is similar to the City of Moreland. Overall, 44.8% are low-income earners and 16.2% are high-income earners, compared with 44.4% and 15.7% for the City of Moreland.²⁸ Further, though the unemployment rate in Coburg decreased between 2001-2006 from 8.7% to 5.7%, the unemployment rate is still higher than the statewide average of 5.4%.²⁹ Also 13.1% of people aged 15 and over achieved Year 8 or below as their highest school level and 51% achieved Year 12 whilst 3.1% did not go to school at all³⁰. Indicating Coburg's year 12 retention rates are below the metropolitan average, which is 84.4% for all metropolitan regions.³¹ Socio-economic status and education are intrinsically linked and schools with poorer communities consistently perform below the state average.

[2.2.4]

In terms of population projections, between 2006 and 2031, Coburg is expected to increase by 9,273, at an average annual growth rate of 1.29%.³² Within Moreland,

²⁶ Id consultancy, "Community profile."

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Department of planning and Community development, "Suburbs in Time- Suburbs in Melbourne."

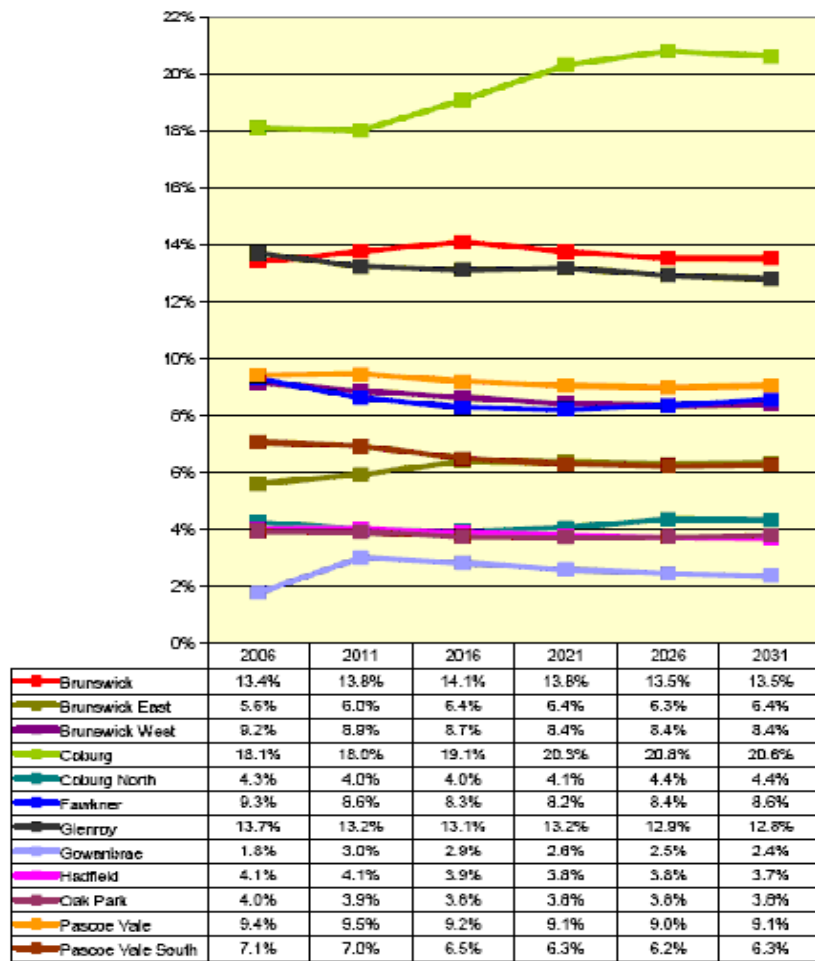
³⁰ Id consultancy, "Community profile."

³¹ Department of Education and Training Victoria, *Summary statistics for Victorian school*, Department of education and Training Victoria, 2007.

³² Id consultancy, "Population and household forecasts for Coburg."

Coburg is expected to have the largest net gain and is the only suburb that shows a predicted significant increase in the youth demographics.³³ As the graph below illustrates, the only significant projected change in the proportion of Moreland’s 0-24 year old population is the anticipated increase of Coburg’s 0-24 year old residents. The 0-24 year old population in other suburbs within Moreland is expected to remain relatively stable³⁴.

Figure 2: Proportion of Moreland’s 0-24 year old population, 2006-2031



Source: Id consultancy, “Population forecasts” at <http://www.id.com.au/Moreland/forecastid/default.asp>,

[2.2.5]

The major driving forces behind the increased population projections for Coburg are the current and planned developments occurring in the vicinity of Coburg. Below are

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Id consultancy, “Population forecasts” at <http://www.id.com.au/Moreland/forecastid/default.asp?id=220&gid=10&pg=8>, 2008, accessed 11 March.

figures that highlight the projected population changes that are based on the following assumptions regarding residential development within the City of Moreland. The data indicates, within the City of Moreland, Coburg has the highest forecasts for additional dwellings.

Figure 3: Principle forecast land assumptions 2006-2031

- Coburg – 4,994 additional dwellings
- Brunswick- 2,698 additional dwellings
- Brunswick East – 1,802 additional dwellings
- Glenroy – 1,478 additional dwellings
- Pascoe Vale – 1,185 additional dwellings
- Brunswick west – 968 additional dwellings
- Coburg North - 750 additional dwellings
- Fawkner – 736 additional dwellings
- Pascoe Vale South – 618 additional dwellings
- Gowanbrae - 567 additional dwellings
- Oak Park – 438 additional dwellings
- Hadfield – 428 additional dwellings

Source: Id consultancy, 'Population forecasts', at <http://www.id.com.au/Moreland/forecastid/default.asp>

Developments such as *Coburg 2020*, the former Pentridge prison site, Kodak site, and the former Coburg High School site, will see the area become more heavily populated. The exact population increase attributable to these developments is harder to ascertain because of the changing household types and the mix of development proposed.

The *Coburg 2020* plan is part of the Victorian State Government's strategic planning policy *Melbourne 2030: Planning for sustainable growth*. It aims to 'create the framework for a sustainable, medium to high density, mixed use community-focussed village'.³⁵ Within the plan, by 2020 the development is expected to provide not only 1,400 new full time job opportunities but also provide housing for 6,000 residents.³⁶ Additionally much of the former Pentridge prison site is being redeveloped into residential housing and is aiding population growth in Coburg.

³⁵ Moreland city council, "Part 1 Central Coburg vision" at <http://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/building-and-planning/coburg-2020/central-coburg-2020-structure-plan.html>, accessed 17 April 2009, pp 16.

³⁶ Ibid.

The Kodak site is another redevelopment that is located in Coburg. Currently, zoned as an Industrial 1 site, the site may be utilised for either residential or industrial development subject to council approval.³⁷ At this stage, the council wants to ensure redevelopment of the site will have environmental, social and economic benefits. Furthermore plans for the former Coburg High School have been proposed to include “520 one and two bedroom apartments, about 3300 sqm of commercial space, solar power generation and a black water treatment plant”.³⁸

The above developments have the capacity to bring new residents and families to the area, and consequently the need for educational services for children and secondary students become greater. In terms of household structure, forecasts predict the most significant increase in the proportion of couple families with children are expected in Coburg, reflecting the level of future development attracting family households.³⁹ Within the context of these developments, the establishment of a 7-12 Secondary School in Coburg would prove to be a necessary preparation for the influx of new residents and resultant students that Coburg is currently and will continue to receive.

2.3 Education in Coburg today

[2.3.1]

The most recent closure of Moreland City College (2005), and soon to close St Josephs College indicated a level of destabilisation and vulnerability that still exists in the provision of education to the area. A school council leader commented that the closure of schools has ‘left a big black hole’ and that ‘parents are desperate, frustrated, and angry that there is nothing out there for their kids’.⁴⁰

[2.3.2]

At present, Coburg has one secondary school, Coburg Senior High School. The school was developed in 2007 at the former Moreland City College site, to meet the needs of students in years 10 to 12. Despite consisting of a broad curriculum,

³⁷ Moreland city council, “Kodak site redevelopment” at <http://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/building-and-planning/strategic-planning/kodak-site-redevelopment.html>, Accessed 17 April 2009.

³⁸ Andre Awadalla, “Coburg High Bid.” *The Moreland leader*, News, 11 May 2009.

³⁹ Id consultancy, “Population forecasts.”

⁴⁰ Anonymous school council leader.

including, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), Vocational Education and Training in schools (VET) and Victorian certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and aiming to develop partnerships with local community, including TAFE, local schools, and other provider, the school is limited to only providing education for years 10-12.⁴¹ As a result there is still a gap in the provision of secondary school education in Coburg, as there is no access to an open 7-12 Secondary School for the growing community.

[2.3.3]

Furthermore, this gap in the provision of secondary schooling in Coburg is exacerbated, as many residents have to travel and or in some cases move outside their local area to access open secondary schools. For example, information gathered on secondary placements for year 7 in 2009 showed that eighteen students from Coburg Primary School went to six different secondary schools outside Coburg.⁴² Difficulties in accessing local secondary schools in Coburg mounts pressure and costs on parents and students to obtain transport to more distant schools.

[2.3.4]

Additionally, in 2003 the implementation of eastern and western residential boundaries and enrolment caps placed on Strathmore Secondary College has further limited the education options for Coburg resident. In particular, this has locked out residents from West Coburg from attending their nearest local school. These boundaries, which were put in place to curtail enrolment pressure and reduce student numbers to a sustainable level, further widen the gap for the provision of education services for Coburg residents.

3.4 Chapter summary

Since 2001, the population of Coburg has grown and population projections indicate this growth to continue. Within the City of Moreland, Coburg is the only suburb that shows a predicted significant increase in the youth demographics. In terms of education in Coburg, radical education reforms in the late 1980s and early 1990s, has

⁴¹ Coburg Senior High School, "Coburg senior high school" at <http://www.cshs.vic.edu.au>, accessed April 10.

⁴² Compiled from unpublished data concerning year 7 transitions.

resulted in a destabilisation of educational networks in the area. The limited education options in Coburg today indicate a gap in the provision of 7-12 secondary education afforded to Coburg. Chapter 4 looks briefly at the community attitudes to the current education options afforded to residents, as well as discussing parental intentions (whether parents would consider sending their child to a 7-12 Secondary School in Coburg, if it existed).

CHAPTER 3 COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AND PARENTAL INTENTIONS

- 3.1 Introduction
 - 3.2. Community Indicator survey
 - 3.3 Community concerns
 - 3.4 Community group
 - 3.5 Parental intentions (Questionnaire results)
 - 3.6 Chapter Summary
-

3.1 Introduction

Community attitudes are but one of the several important issues when assessing whether there is a need for a 7-12 Secondary School for Coburg. This chapter considers some of the contemporary responses that have taken place with respect to secondary school options and reflects upon the community perspectives on secondary schooling available within and around Coburg. This chapter draws upon information gathered via personal communication with residents from the local community and information compiled from a questionnaire that was designed to capture parental intentions and comments.

3.2 Community Indicator survey

The Community indicator survey is a survey conducted annually within the Moreland municipality, for which Coburg is a part. It is designed to give feedback from the Moreland Community on a range of issues. In terms of education, the Moreland community indicator survey has consistently shown ‘moderate’ to ‘high’ results for the question ‘your area has good quality primary schools’. However, the results for the question ‘your area has good quality government secondary schools have ranged from below ‘very low’ to ‘low’ since the surveys inception.⁴³ One could interpret this to mean, on a broader scale the Moreland community are not satisfied with the current secondary schools available.

⁴³ Danielle Jenner, Hannah Warby, “Community Indicators Survey 2008 – Final Report” at http://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/mccwr/_assets/main/lib91108/rep2308.doc, 2008, accessed 1 April 2009

3.3 Community concerns

[3.3.1]

It is important to identify current concerns within the community in regard to secondary education that has either as direct or indirect result produced community dissatisfaction with current secondary schools available. Through personal communication, case studies, and comments gathered from the questionnaire, which will be discussed at a later stage, there were some common concerns that were expressed largely from the community. These included the limited educational options afforded to the community, concerns over the Strathmore Secondary boundary, travel concerns, quality of education, and difficulties in transitions to secondary school as primary school friends are being separated.

[3.3.2]

Residents of Coburg and surrounding areas have expressed a great deal of concern over secondary education options currently afforded to the local community. Residents have indicated that the imminent closure of St Joseph's college, along with the former closures of Coburg High School, Newlands High School, Oak Park High School, Moreland High School, Hadfield High School, and Coburg North Secondary College, have dealt serious blows to the educational options available to young people growing up in the Moreland community. A resident of Pascoe Vale (daughter at Pascoe Vale North primary) has commented, "the lack of high schools in the area is not good enough. The reputation of the local schools is disgusting and the government should be doing more about it".⁴⁴

[3.3.3]

Additionally, residents have expressed that this situation has been exacerbated by Strathmore Secondary College boundaries that have prevented residents of West Coburg applying or enrolling at the school for many years. In accordance with the Departments guidelines, the Strathmore Secondary neighbourhood area is defined "as the area for which Strathmore is the nearest secondary school, measured in a straight

⁴⁴ Collette De Silva, "Questionnaire for secondary school enrolment; a survey for year 4 and 5 students." Melbourne, 2009.

line, to a student's permanent resident address."⁴⁵ There are two variations to this definition. Firstly, the western boundary runs along Bulla Road and the Eastern Essendon Airport to Moonee Poods Creek. Secondly, the eastern boundary runs along Derby Street and Melville road.⁴⁶ Hence these boundaries are further limiting secondary school options for Coburg residents, particularly Coburg West residents as they are positioned outside the boundary.

[3.3.4]

Furthermore, mounted pressure and costs on parents and children to travel to more distant schools outside Coburg due to the lack of secondary schools available in the area is another common concern expressed by the community. These costs mounted on parents and students can include financial costs, loss of time and loss of opportunity. Currently any 7-12 Secondary School, which residents in Coburg attend, now requires a degree of travel. This makes some schools difficult to access. Some parents have to move away from Coburg in order to access secondary schools more readily. Micheal Pogia, a resident of Coburg comments, exemplifies this by stating "our community is being dismantled as families move away to find school options when their children get towards secondary school age. Friends and families are being separated, as they have to go to separate high schools."⁴⁷ Another resident who was formerly from Coburg and now lives in Strathmore stated "we have a daughter currently in year 7 at Strathmore Secondary College. Please be advised that in 2008, we moved from Coburg to Strathmore because of the lack of public secondary schools in Coburg. This move was extremely expensive financially to our family as we had to sell our family home of 10 years to purchase a new family home within Strathmore school zone".⁴⁸

[3.3.5]

Concerns were also raised about the quality of existing secondary educational options and the need to significantly improve infrastructure and student outcome standards

⁴⁵ Strathmore Secondary College, "Enrolment Neighbourhood boundary" at http://www.strathmore.vic.edu.au/enrolment/enrolment_boundary.asp, accessed 1 May 2009.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Personal communication.

⁴⁸ Collette De Silva. "Questionnaire for secondary school enrolment; a survey for year 4 and 5 students."

locally. Numerous residents, such as a resident from Preston commented, “we desperately need better quality secondary schools in the area.”⁴⁹

[3.3.6]

The splitting up of friends and family, as they travel to separate high schools due to the lack of secondary schools in the community, is another concern raised by the community. A resident of Pascoe Vale commented “my child has made fabulous friendship groups at primary school all of which are off to a different high schools as there are none in the area to cater for our needs”⁵⁰. Another resident of Coburg who has a daughter in Grade 3 at Coburg North commented, “it would be excellent if children who grow up in the same community and attend the same primary school had an opportunity to attend a local high school together”.⁵¹

3.4 Community group

In response to the community’s dissatisfaction with secondary schools options afforded to residents within and around Coburg, a lobby group consisting of parents, namely the *High School for Coburg Group* has been established, to voice community concerns and the need for a 7-12 Secondary School for Coburg.

3.5 Parental intentions (Questionnaire results)

[3.5.1]

The Victorian government is committed to the principal of choice. A questionnaire was developed to capture whether a proposed 7-12 Secondary School in Coburg would influence parents secondary school preferences for their child. This questionnaire was designed to give parents greater secondary school choices and gain an understanding about parental intentions. Meaning, whether parents were willing to send their child to a 7-12 Secondary school in Coburg, if it existed. The questionnaire was distributed to parents who have children in either grades 4 and/or 5 at number of surrounding local government schools who agreed to participate, namely, Newlands Primary School, Preston West Primary School, Coburg West Primary School, Coburg North Primary School, Pascoe Vale South Primary School, Coburg Primary School,

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Pascoe Vale North Primary School, Oak Park Primary School, Pascoe Vale Primary School, and Westbreen Primary School. These schools were chosen because they are the surrounding schools and their involvement is relevant. Due to time constraints, the questionnaire was limited to year 4 and 5 students from government schools. The survey was of voluntary basis.

[3.5.2]

The questionnaire was designed in such a way to capture whether parents would change their secondary school preferences if there were a 7-12 Secondary School in Coburg. Hence, the questionnaire asked parents to first list their current top four secondary school preferences and then list them again with the knowledge of the possibility of a 7-12 Secondary School in Coburg. Additionally, the questionnaire left room for parents to make extra comments if they wished. The questionnaire was administered through the school councils.

[3.5.3]

Out of the 815 questionnaires that were handed out 174 were returned. The table below presents the results from the 174 questionnaires in regard to secondary school preferences and parental intentions for each school.

Figure 4: The percentage of changes in secondary school preferences for years 4 and 5 students to include a 7-12 Coburg Secondary School

Name of Primary School	No. of questionnaires returned	Percentage that changed preferences
Newlands Primary School	5	100%
Preston West Primary School	24	71%
Coburg West primary	25	68%
Coburg North Primary	16	63%
Pascoe Vale South Primary	18	33%
Coburg Primary	9	89%
Pascoe Vale North Primary	49	35%
Oak Park Primary	3	0%
Pascoe Vale Primary	22	50%
Westbreen Primary	3	33%
Average		53%

Source: Collette De Silva, "Questionnaire for secondary school enrolment; a survey for year 4 and 5 students", Melbourne, 2009.

The table above illustrates the proportion of change in secondary school preferences as a percentage for each school. Despite some schools, such as Pascoe Vale South Primary, Pascoe Vale North Primary, Oak Park Primary and Westbreen Primary having comparatively fewer changes in secondary school preferences if a 7-12 Secondary School in Coburg existed, this table shows that a significant percentage of parents from each school changed their secondary school preferences. From the questionnaires that were returned, the highest changes in secondary school preferences are found at Newlands Primary School (100%), Coburg Primary School (89%), and Preston West Primary School (71%). The table above also presents the mean of change in secondary school preferences. The statistics show that if there were a 7-12 Secondary School in Coburg more than half (53%) of the parents questioned would change their secondary school preferences and consequently consider sending their child to a 7-12 Secondary School in Coburg, if it existed⁵².

[3.5.4]

There were a number of barriers that may have influenced the results of this questionnaire such as only sampling parents of years 4 and 5 students from government schools, and receiving various proportion of questionnaires from each school. Another barrier included the difficulties parents expressed in making decision about future proposals because there is a lack of information about what is being offered. These barriers may be prevented or minimised in future research by widening the sample size to also include lower years levels and students from non-government schools, allowing enough time to receive relatively equal proportion of questionnaires from each school, and providing more information about what is being offered.

3.6 Chapter summary

Community attitudes have reflected a need for a 7-12 Secondary School for Coburg. Not only has the Moreland Community indicator survey shown on a broader level the community are not satisfied with the current government secondary schools available but also concerns raised by the community have further confirmed this dissatisfaction. The results from the questionnaire show more than half of the parents questioned

⁵² Ibid.

would consider sending their child to a 7-12 Secondary School in Coburg, if it existed.

CHAPTER 4 DEVELOPING A LOCAL SECONDARY SCHOOL

In this chapter

- 4.1 Introduction
 - 4.2 Social benefits
 - 4.3 Environmental benefits
 - 4.4 Educational benefits
 - 4.5 Chapter summary
-

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the importance of having a 7-12 local secondary school within Coburg and explains the beneficial flow on effects through the rest of society and local community. Access to a local high school can have social, environmental and educational benefits.

4.2 Social benefits

There are many social benefits to developing a 7-12 local secondary school in Coburg such as it has the capacity to enhance social capital. Social capital is a term used to describe ‘features of social organisations such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit’.⁵³ Establishing a local secondary school and a strong commitment in providing education can facilitate higher levels of civil participation, improved social cohesion, and improved integration. It contributes to a more equitable and just society. In practice, a local school can provide an opportunity for community and school collaboration, which would support the 2008 *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* ideas that emphasis the importance of “fostering partnership – with parents and families and with local communities’.⁵⁴

By working together, benefits can accrue to both schools and communities. Schools provide communities with the educational services, lessons in social and cultural skills, and employment for community residents and services. Most importantly, schools have the potential to produce well-educated citizens equipped to contribute to

⁵³ Dale Hanson, Jan Hanson, Paul Vardon, Kathryn McFarlane, Rick Speare and David Diirrhein, ‘Documenting the development of Social Capital in a community Safety Promotional Network: It’s not who you know but what you know’, *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, vol 19, 2, 2008.

⁵⁴ Department of Early Childhood development, *Blueprint for education and early childhood development*, pp. 3.

the community. In turn, communities have the potential to furnish schools with financial support and can provide an environment to reinforce and compliment values of the school.

4.3 Environmental benefits

Further, development of a local school can provide environmental benefits. In recent time, the environment has been subject to much concern. Society is now more conscious about the environment and sustainability than ever before. For example the *Melbourne 2030: Planning for sustainable growth*, which is a blueprint for the future of metropolitan areas, recognises the importance of achieving sustainability and the reduction of green house gas emission within its development plans.⁵⁵ Having a local high school would work in alignment with the environmental principles of the *Melbourne 2030: Planning for sustainable growth*, as it would give local students the opportunity to travel less distance to attend a local secondary school and consequently decrease green house gases.

4.4 Educational benefits

In agreement with the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* ‘we know that children’s learning and development starts from day one and that their early experiences have a direct impact on their future well being. There is now overwhelming evidence that giving children the best possible start to life improves their educational, social, and economic prospects.’⁵⁶ A 7-12 local secondary school in Coburg would further support the above statement. By establishing a local secondary school this would provide local students with accessible educational opportunities and reinforce the importance of education.

Education provides not only personal benefits for the student but also benefits the community. Higher education is associated with higher income, prestige, and better working conditions. Further, there are public benefits to education. Lack of education represents a huge cost to society. Society benefits as a whole from the public effects

⁵⁵ Department of Sustainability and environment. “Melbourne 2030: Planning for sustainable growth” at <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/melbourne2030online/>, accessed 1 April 2009.

⁵⁶ Department of Early Childhood development. *Blueprint for education and early childhood development*, pp. 5.

of education. Society gets better-educated citizens- one more likely to be a conscious voter, raise healthier children, provide skills to the community and volunteer.

4.5 Chapter summary

It is clear, developing a local 7-12 Secondary School within Coburg has beneficial flow on effects through the rest of society, including social, environmental and educational benefits.

EVALUATION

The value of education is extremely important and has never been more important to individuals financially and socially than now. In Coburg, there is a gap in the provision of government secondary schools afforded to the local community which has been either as direct or indirect result of Kennett's policy that saw around 300 of nearly 2000 Victorian schools close. Since 2001, the population of Coburg has grown and population projections indicate further increases, due mainly to residential development projects. Community attitudes have reflected a need for a 7-12 Secondary School for Coburg and results from the questionnaire indicate more than half of the parents questioned would consider sending their child to a 7-12 Secondary School in Coburg, if it existed. Further, developing a local 7-12 Secondary School has associated benefits such as social, environmental and educational. .

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