

## PARENTS AND CITIZENS BODY OPPOSES LABOR'S PLANS TO RELOCATE PERTH MODERN SCHOOL

The Labor Party's election commitment to relocate Perth Modern School students to a new academically selective school in the city was overwhelmingly opposed by a special meeting of the School's Parents and Citizens body.

"P&C aim to support the interests of the school for the benefit of the students, so it is our purpose to help parents understand the issues and allow them to voice their opinions regardless which political party is responsible." the President Andrew Stevens said.

At a hastily convened extraordinary meeting on February 7 the overwhelming majority of those attending were concerned that the ALP's election commitment with respect to Perth Modern School had been developed and announced without consultation with any of the stakeholders – the parent body, the Education Department or the school executive.

"The announcement took parents completely by surprise," the President said, "the timing, during an election campaign, has meant that discussion and debate are stifled. The P&C is severely restricted in our ability to get information to parents or consult with them because the school, it's staff, facilities, systems, (and even contact lists), cannot be involved in matters of a political nature at this time."

Mr Stevens stressed that, Perth Modern is an academically selective public school that draws students from all over WA, producing exceptional ATAR scores and numerous medallists every year. The students excel not only academically but in sports, music, the arts and more. This tradition and heritage is at risk without the longevity of the location at Roberts Road. Parents at the meeting expressed overwhelming concern for the potential loss of the school's heritage and illustrious tradition, but nostalgia is not only what's at stake.

Generous alumni, predominately from the periods of academically selected entry, are keen to ensure that these opportunities are equally available to all students. They have set up trust funds that award scholarships to students in financial need and have provided significant contributions to major building projects. Such assistance might not be available if they lose affinity because the current campus is repurposed or the academic selective program relocates to a new facility.

“There were very genuine grave concerns expressed in relation to student welfare and disruption to the academic future of current students.” Students currently in Years 7, 8 and 9 will be displaced during their critical years. They were not aware of this proposal when they made their application for entry to Perth Modern and may not have pursued it had they known and they no longer have options for transfer to similar programs in other schools. “Surely parents of students affected by such a major change should be consulted about such a proposal and not blindsided by a surprise announcement?”

“Very short notice was afforded to the parent body as we were not allowed to use the school communication system to notify parents of the meeting. Many who could not attend sent written condemnation for the proposal and I am still receiving around 20 communications daily from concerned parents. There is overwhelming concern and opposition to the proposal and worry about the uncertainty it is creating.”

The attendees also felt that the proposal to design, build and prepare a multi-purpose building for student intake by 2020 seemed too optimistic. The concept of a secondary school in the upper floors of a leased, high-rise building was not thought to provide a suitable learning environment for 1500 students and sharing it in a building with over a million visitors annually poses big concerns for security and safety.

The Meeting concluded with a categorical and overwhelming consensus of an apolitical opinion expressing opposition to such an idea, the timing of the proposal and the lack of consultation with key stakeholders.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

President, Perth Modern P&C (2017)