

Update on the Save Perth Modern School Campaign

Dear fellow Modernians:

The Labor Party announced an election policy called 'Education Central' to convert Perth Mod from a 100% selective entry high school into a local general intake high school. Instead it proposed to establish a new academic selective school to be named 'Perth Academic College' (PAC) on the upper floors of a high-rise office building, yet to be built in the CBD, above the Perth bus port/train station and to transfer to PAC all students who are at PMS in 2020 (the anticipated completion date of the building). Promptly after the election the new WA Government confirmed via media statements its intention to go ahead. Regrettably, the genuine concerns that Modernians, students, parents, the School Board, School Administration, and the general public have expressed to the previous Shadow Minister/now Minister for Education and Training Ms Sue Ellery MLC have all been dismissed amidst an attitude that seems to say *'We can do a forklift transfer just because we can and it will all work out fine in five years time'*.

- Just two days after the State election the Society's **Council** met and unanimously resolved to work with the rest of the Perth Mod community to continue to actively campaign against the unwelcome changes.
- The Sphinx Foundation Board met to discuss the implications for the Sphinx Scholarship Fund.
- Naturally there was extensive discussion about the matter at the Society's **AGM** on the evening of Monday 3rd April, with the Chairman of the School Board, President of the P&C Association, myself and Members present giving their viewpoints.

To bring Members into the picture, the many other **actions taken** since the State election outcome that I'm aware of include:

- Meeting between the PMS Principal and Vice Principal and myself.
- Meetings with key influential people to develop strategies and direct actions.
- Regular liaison/meetings with Prof. Michael Henderson the Chairman of the PMS Board, and especially concerning lobbying efforts with Government MLAs and MLCs.
- Regular liaison/meetings with the Save Perth Modern Action Group (i.e. concerned parents).
- Liaison with individual Members of the Society concerning actions they might take.
- Developing more sensible and less disruptive options to address 'overcrowding' in northern/western suburbs high schools that might be more palatable to stakeholders and the Govt.
- Campaign coordination workshop on 25th March and attended by 17 representatives of the Perth Mod community, including seven Modernians.
- A nine-page letter which was co-signed by these Modernians: Malcolm McCusker AC CVO QC (PMS Patron), Dr Ken Michael AC, Janet Holmes a Court AC, Peter Farr (President, Perth Modernian Society), Barrie Baker (Chairman, Sphinx Foundation) was sent to all WA Govt. Ministers. The letter commenced with this statement: *"We write to you to express our opposition to the State Government's proposed "Education Central" and the effective closure of Perth Modern School (PMS). The proposal has been developed without proper consultation or assessment of its detrimental impact, educationally, sociologically and economically. We hope that by providing you with the following information you will support our request that the proposal be reconsidered."*
- Formal submissions to the City of Subiaco Council requesting amendments to the draft North Subiaco Structure Plan to strengthen the sections that relate to PMS; plus follow-up on this.
- Letter sent to the State School Teachers' Union of WA expressing the Society's concerns about the impacts 'Perth Academic College' would have on the teachers and their workplace.
- Recent contact with notable people who include former **Governor General Michael Jeffery** (*"Although I no longer live in WA, I agree totally with your view and would be happy to add my name to your petition"*), and famous young film **actress Katherine Langford** (ex PMS student) (*"to advocate for the spirit of Perth Modern to be respected and kept as is!"*).

By the way, the Education debate in the Legislative Council on 14 September 2016 is extremely illuminating: there is a **flabbergasting contradiction** of the high-rise CBD 'Perth Academic College' plan, as on Page 12 Sue Ellery MLC is quoted as saying about school land needs: *"When new*

*schools are built now, about a **3.5 hectare footprint** (35,000 sq m) is needed. That varies depending on whether the school is attached to a shared space with a local council or whatever."* The URL is: [http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Hansard/hansard.nsf/0/bbb9c6e264e34ca948258087002613f9/\\$FILE/C39%20S1%2020160914%20p5893b-5910a.pdf](http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Hansard/hansard.nsf/0/bbb9c6e264e34ca948258087002613f9/$FILE/C39%20S1%2020160914%20p5893b-5910a.pdf)

Summing up, many people are outraged at the negative implications from the WA Government's 'Education Central' policy.

- I can only hope that it won't end up diminishing the fantastic work that Modernians do for Perth Mod - via the Society, the Sphinx Foundation, the Sphinx Scholarship Fund, the History Centre, and many volunteers. It is cheering that the campaign to save PMS has done heaps to unify this Society AND the whole Perth Mod community.
- The whole thing has been time consuming, frustrating and exhausting, and I wish to sincerely thank the many Modernians who have put in a sustained effort to try and get a better outcome for present and future students.
- It is quite amazing to think that the Minister has not held a meeting with key stakeholders on this proposal.
- This being so, the public can in May expect to see more vocal opposition led by the Save Perth Modern Action Group.
- Please follow through on the letter writing to Ministers tactic that I outlined in the **eVent** Notice dated 27 March 2017.

As always friends, your feedback will be welcomed.

(Email: President@PerthModernianSociety.org.au, Tel or SMS: 041 990 5864).

Sincerely,



Peter Farr FAIM, FAICD

President

21/4/2017

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