

# SECTOR UPDATE

9 March 2018



## **Minister supportive of outdoor education and privatising camp school operations**

Outdoors WA representatives met with the Minister for Education the Hon Sue Ellery this week to discuss impending changes to the operation of the WA regional Camp Schools network and the potential impact on the community.

The representatives were pleased to be advised that the Minister is supportive of the overall ongoing role of outdoor education in schools.

“We know that children and young people gain from residential camp experiences and it is positive that the Minister has affirmed that there is no question about the benefits to children who participate in outdoor education” Outdoors WA Chairperson Andy Wahid said.

The government intention was clarified and has moved from the original stated position to close six camp schools towards seeking alternative management of these camp schools facilities. This is an encouraging progression in the government recognising the community value that these camp schools provide.

The intention is to tender out the operation of six regional camp schools to private operators. The Camp School at Broome will remain within the management of the Department of Education due to its position in servicing the North West.

Outdoors WA strongly expressed the views that the camps schools network is currently working well and that the best models of residential outdoor learning involve a mix of teachers and professional outdoors staff and that this should be a consideration of terms within any future management model.

News for existing camp school staff in a new model was mixed. It is understood that those on permanent and fixed contracts will be redeployed within government. However it is unclear what impacts there will be for casual outdoor instructors that have no surety into the future.

The Minister affirmed that under any future arrangements that private operators would need to abide by the current values of camp schools and also ensure priority access and affordability to government school groups.

Dr Duncan Picknoll, Vice Chair of Outdoors WA said “We welcome the declaration of the Minister that any future private operators will need to ensure that camp school experiences are accessible and affordable, we look forward to seeing the detail on how this guarantee will be delivered to the families of 10,000 WA students who currently use the camp schools”

Given the proposed closure of camp schools has changed to a managed privatisation the Department of Education is currently developing the terms under which this may occur and the outcome of this is expected to be an open expression of interest process. Outdoors WA has offered to provide expertise in this process. It is unclear what will happen if certain facilities do not attract private interest. However it is clear that there is no budgeted funds into the future to subsidise ongoing camp school operations.

Outdoors WA will continue to advocate that residential camp experiences should be a priority of education because of their legitimate educational role and positive outcomes they deliver including: enhanced relationships between students and teachers, connecting students to nature and improved engagement and confidence in learning. Outdoor learning should be seen as an investment into the health and wellbeing of the state.

Outdoors WA would like to thank the WA community including those in the outdoors sector who continue to express their support for the WA Camps Schools and their vital role in children’s education.

“The support of the WA outdoors community has been essential in securing a positive shift towards recognising the value of outdoor learning and role that camp schools and their professional staff teams provide. We appreciate the uncertainty that is happening at the moment as the government continues to work through its processes in implementing policy. Outdoors WA will continue the important work in advocating to ensure that outdoor learning is affordable and accessible to all WA students” Andy Wahid said.

Outdoors WA will continue to support the WA Camp Schools and their teams, to advocate for an increased commitment to outdoor learning and to update the sector as the process unfolds.

To be updated on the ongoing work of Outdoors WA please check the website at [www.outdoorswa.org.au](http://www.outdoorswa.org.au)

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