

Deb Foskey MLA

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Walking and cycling to school cheaper than PE teachers

Deb Foskey, Greens MLA, today said that the closure of local primary schools is contributing to the increasing unfitness of Canberra students.

"The closure of local primary schools was a backward step for ACT public education, impacting particularly on low income families," said Dr Foskey.

"It was also a retrograde step for children's fitness as it reduced the number of students able to walk and ride safely to school."

"It is the informal activities of walking and cycling, running and playing that our students need, not just for physical but also for emotional and psychological development."

"When I brought this up during the debate on school closures, Minister Barr refused to acknowledge that the loss of neighbourhood schools would reduce opportunities to walk to school."

In response to my question on notice, Minister Barr said, "Students enrolled in a school within their priority enrolment area are not deemed to be living too far away for them to safely walk or ride to school." Clearly if there are fewer schools more students will live further away from them.

"Cook Primary does have a walking school bus and parents choose it because it is in walking and cycling distance from homes. It has everything going for it yet the ACT Government plans to close it at the end of this year. Flynn, Mt Neighbour and Village Creek have already closed and many other schools will either close or be made junior primary schools this year and next."

"The Walking School Bus is a great initiative - but many students don't have the opportunity to join it because their school is just too far away."

"More PE teachers are a good idea but exercise shouldn't be just an add-on, something you do at school. It's a no-brainer really - local schools provide sports amenities like ovals and the opportunity to get there - by walking and cycling," said Dr Foskey.

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