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9 November 2011

The Honorable Dr Elizabeth Constable
Minister for Education
19th Floor, Governor Sterling Tower
197 St. Georges Terrace,
PERTH WA 6000

RE: Concern over Proposed Closure of the Denmark Centre for Sustainable Living

Dear Dr Constable

I am writing to you to express our concerns regarding the future of the Denmark Centre for Sustainable Living (CSL).

As you may be aware, on the 27th October 2011, the Denmark High School Principal presented a letter to the Denmark Education and Innovation Centre purportedly giving formal notice to vacate and close the CSL by 30 June 2012. This letter has also been forwarded to Green Skills which holds the Management Agreement for the CSL facility and educational programs.

In 2004 a 15 (5+5+5) year lease of the Centre for Sustainable Living was agreed to between the Minister for Education and the Denmark Education & Innovation Centre (DEIC) Inc. DEIC is an umbrella group of Denmark based organisations including schools, Great Southern Institute of Technology, and community organisations. It is dedicated to fostering cooperation to promote education. The Centre commenced operations in 2005 and is managed by Green Skills Inc, a not for profit charitable group that is also a Registered Training Organisation.

Since 2005 the CSL has been actively used by many school and community groups for educational purposes. The facilities of the CSL are already actively used by the Denmark High School and the school and its grounds have tremendously benefited from the presence of the CSL and its current managing group, Green Skills. Hence the local community has a strong connection and reliance on the CSL educational facilities and services. Each year the CSL attracts over 5000 education visitors, over 600 accommodation and 400 meeting room hires. See www.denmarkcsl.com.au for more information.

Green Skills would like to express its concern over the lack of consultation regarding the proposed closure letter from the Denmark High School or consideration of the Denmark community and the lack of acknowledgement of the resources invested in the CSL.

It is Green Skills' view that the CSL is an essential educational facility that caters to a broad spectrum of our community and provides valuable environmental, social and economic benefits to the region. It has taken a decade of work and over \$1,000,000 investment in site facilities with significant addition program funding to establish and develop the CSL. None of these establishment costs were contributed by the WA Education Department who initially planned to convert the original Agricultural School building into a car park.

The CSL represents Denmark's vision for an interactive, engaged and sustainable community. It is irreplaceable and should not close.

We also refute child safety concerns for the school's proximity to the CSL raised by the Principal of the Denmark High School. The CSL and Green Skills, following appropriate child safety policies (that include Police Clearances and Working with Children checks for staff), has functioned to host school and community groups without any incident related to child safety over the past six years. The High School already has other facilities situated on its grounds which are community based including the Great Southern Institute for Technology's Denmark campus and the school oval (which is a shared facility with the Shire of Denmark). Under the Denmark High School upgrade plans; there is provision to demolish the existing Trades building for a future shared community facility – so clearly it is possible for community based education activities to be sited on Dept of Education land, with appropriate safeguards.

Green Skills would prefer an amicable resolution to the matter of the proposed CSL closure and would be willing to assist the school in meeting its classroom needs.

We request that you act to ensure the retention of this important community educational facility.

Also, we would like to schedule a meeting with you regarding this important issue.

I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully,



Annabelle Newbury,
State Manager, Green Skills