



Colin Barnett

## Turn City Beach back into school: Barnett

BETHANY HIATT

Former City Beach high school should be converted to a middle school linked to Churchlands Senior High School to ease pressures in the western suburbs, former Liberal education minister Colin Barnett said yesterday.

*The West Australian* revealed yesterday that parents of children from Churchlands' feeder primary schools would be warned of overcrowding there. Many of its 1764 students are in 16 transportable classrooms.

Churchlands and Shenton College are the only two State schools between Fremantle and Carine.

City Beach was closed in 2005 by the Labor Government, Scarborough, Hollywood and Swanbourne were closed by the Liberals, the last two replaced with housing. Shadow education minister Peter Collier and Churchlands MP Liz Constable have urged the State Government to re-open a school at City Beach because children from new housing developments would put more pressure on Churchlands and Shenton College.

Mr Barnett stood by his decision eight years ago to replace two run-down schools with Shenton College. It had boosted western suburbs public education facilities and academic programs and forced private schools to upgrade.

But Churchlands had been allowed to grow too big and had too many transportable classrooms. "The only way you could probably do anything with it would be to run a middle school program on the City Beach site as part of Churchlands," he said.

Mr Barnett said the western suburbs closures in 1999 and 2000 were part of a big modernisation program of schools in Mandurah and south-east suburbs. The Labor Government had not done enough since then.

Education Minister Mark McGowan said the Labor Government had opened 44 new of replacement city schools in six years, the Liberal government opened 22 in eight years.

"Far from neglecting northern suburbs we have built three new high schools at Kinross, Ellenbrook and Mindarie and a replacement high school at Mt Lawley," he said.

Churchlands had recently got \$190,000 to improve its carpark.

## Riebeling recovering

Legislative Assembly Speaker Fred Riebeling is recovering after he was taken to Rockingham District Hospital with a viral infection in the lining surrounding his heart.

The North-West Coastal MP was at a dentist's surgery in Rockingham on Friday when he felt symptoms similar to a heart attack. He was diagnosed with pericarditis.

# School's in at home as more parents opt out

BETHANY HIATT

Home schooling is gaining popularity among Perth parents, with new figures revealing an increase of nearly 20 per cent in the number of children being taught at home in the past five years.

Education Department figures show there are 916 children from the metropolitan area registered as home schooled students this year compared with 771 in 2003. The biggest jump was between 2006 and 2007, with an increase of 92 students.

The number of country children has dropped slightly in that time, from 642 pupils registered in 2003 to 548 this year.

However, it is possible that the number of home schooled children is even greater, because not all parents register with the department even though they are obliged to do so.

Australian Home Education Association president Esther Lacoba said there were many reasons why parents chose not to send their children to school, including disillusionment with State and private school systems, bullying problems and a wish to have more influence on their children's lives.

"The major advantage is an enjoyment of family," she said. "It's a lifestyle choice, I'm not rushed every morning to get out the door and in that school gate and we can customise what our children learn."

Home-schooled students who are registered with the Education Department are visited by a moderator once a year to check if their lessons cover all eight learning areas in the curriculum framework. They also have the option to sit Statewide literacy and numeracy tests so parents can see how their children's results compare with others at the same level.

Children who learn at home until Year 12 can apply to sit TEE exams as a private student or submit the details of their upper secondary studies to



Class of their own: James and Thomas Simpson of Kensington are schooled at home by mother Karen. Picture: Trevor Collens

universities for individual consideration.

Kensington mother Karen Simpson, who is a trained primary school teacher, said she and husband Gary made the choice to home school their children Thomas, 13, and James, 10, so they could have more input into every facet of their development.

Thomas went to pre-primary for a year but both boys have studied at home since. The Simpsons are considering whether to send the boys to a mainstream high school in the next few years.

"We just felt that four and five was very young to wave goodbye to your

children for the bulk of the day," Mrs Simpson said. "It's not that we were unhappy with schools, we just felt that we had an option and we liked the idea

### 'The major advantage is an enjoyment of family.'

ESTHER LACOBA

that we could be more flexible and more involved."

Mrs Simpson said many parents who taught their own children did not have formal teaching qualifications

but they were highly educated. Others had no qualifications but still did a brilliant job.

Most people assumed that home-schooled children missed out on socialisation.

"But it's really not a problem," she said. "They're socialising with children beyond their own age and a lot of adults. There is positive and negative socialisation and I think they get a lot less of the negative and more of the positive."

Edith Cowan University education head Greg Robson said the added value available at schools was difficult to match in a home environment.

## Native title deal reached on outback town

DARWIN

Native title has been upheld over one of Australia's most famous outback towns, Tennant Creek, marking the first time a claim has been made over a whole town.

It is also the first time an agreement involving a town has been reached without litigation.

On a sandy red floor under a makeshift tent at Tennant Creek, the Federal Court recognised yesterday the Patta Warumungu people's eight-year

battle. Justice John Mansfield praised the local people, the Northern Territory Government and other interested parties for avoiding a "lengthy and costly" trial.

"The event is important because it marks a significant milestone in the court's strategy for dealing with native title claims," he said.

The claim covers 65 per cent of the township or 42.1sqkm, including the Tennant Creek watercourse, and involves 200 people from seven families.

Under the agreement, they will have non-exclusive native title rights to live on, travel over and access the land, including hunting, gathering, taking natural resources and conducting ceremonies.

A Federal Court ruling sparked outrage last year when it upheld the Nyoongar native title claim over more than 6000sqkm of Perth and its surrounds.

The Federal and the WA governments are appealing against the decision separately.

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