

The Donation & The Delay

Negotiations with the Education Department and the local Member of Parliament for the County of Evelyn, Mr W.H. Everard to establish a school in North Ringwood began in the early months of 1920. Mr W.S. Williams, a local auctioneer and estate agent, wrote to the local member on the 14th February 1920 enclosing the names of children and other details of the site for the proposed school. He indicated that the people of the area were "very anxious for a school and as a matter of moral justice, wish you to kindly impress the necessity on the Education Department".¹ The response by the Department to Mr Everard's representations was to send the District Inspector, Mr Dew, to the area 'for early inquiry and report'.²

In his letter to the local member, Mr Williams indicated that 37 children went to school from north of Oban Road along Warrantyte Road making their way to a 'long past overcrowded school'³ over two miles from Ringwood North. The letter also noted that there had been a great influx of population in the district and that the situation would become more acute in the near future. He suggested that "we could get a suitable site at a nominal sum, or we would subscribe among ourselves and make a present of the land if the Department would build the school."

It was Education Department practice to require school inspectors to complete a report regarding the establishment of a state school. Inspector Dew's report was completed on the 24th March 1921. The residents of the locality were primarily fruit growers and others who had homes in the area but who worked elsewhere. Some week-end homes were also to be found. The inspector indicated that the trend in this locality was to remain permanent. Thirty-four school-age children resided within two miles of the proposed school. It was likely that the average attendance would be twenty-nine. Inspector Dew recommended that the Department acquire the site, 'if the people were willing to help'. The site consisted of four acres in the Parish of Warrantyte and the County of Evelyn and was about two and a half miles from Ringwood State School and three miles from Warrantyte State School. (see Map 1) The inspector further reported that no further sites had been suggested and that all interested parties had agreed to the site highlighted on the inspector's map. In his report Dew suggested that "the Department should ask Mr Williams whether he and the residents are prepared to fulfil the promise as I daresay the land will be worth more than fifty pounds per acre in a few years".⁴

Following an assessment of the inspector's report, the Education Department resolved to erect a state school on the agreed site providing that Mr William's offer was enacted. However there remained some dispute about the exact location of the school site. Although Inspector Dew reported that the site he inspected was on Oban Road, a second sketch, provided by Mr Williams, showed the preferred site on Williams Road.

¹ School Building Files, (VPRS: 795, Box 2970) Williams to Everard

² School Building Files, (VPRS: 795, Box 2970) Department Memo from the Director to W.Everard:19 January 1921.

³ School Building Files,(VPRS:795,Box 2970), Williams to Everard, 14 February 1920.

⁴ School Building Files,(VPRS:795, Box 2970), Inspector's Report-24 March 1921.