



INQUIRY INTO THE JOINT USE AND CO-LOCATION OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS

INQUIRY OVERVIEW

State and local governments are responsible for the provision of many public buildings, from schools, police stations, and hospitals at a state level; and childcare centres, libraries and sporting facilities at a council level.

The Committee's role includes the examination of existing and proposed capital works projects in the public sector and consideration of mechanisms for achieving savings in capital works programs. As such, maximising the use of public buildings is a key objective for the Committee.

Combined facilities may be a viable option to save on construction and operating expenses. Cost savings result because spaces such as conference rooms, lobby areas, restrooms and parking areas can be shared. Economies of scale can pay off - often larger facilities have lower average running costs.

Combined facilities involve two main approaches:

- the joint use approach where a single building has multiple uses; or
- the co-location or campus approach where multiple facilities are based at a common location.

Both approaches can be successful but proper planning is crucial. Understanding the needs and functions of each building and how they might intertwine is important. Co-location of buildings often requires larger parcels of land and often takes a long implementation period due to financing and co-ordination of multiple projects. A further issue is the development of regulatory arrangements and cooperative management systems across different government agencies to enable joint use or co-location of facilities.

As the NSW population grows, particularly in metropolitan and coastal areas, there will be new demands for state and local public buildings. Rather than responding to change with new infrastructure only, the potential for retrofitting or adaptive reuse of buildings should be explored.

Where new buildings are required, innovation may allow for a variety of functions or conversion from one function to another over time. This in turn can produce public buildings that are better aligned to the life cycle of the community. For example, as communities age, the demand for facilities will change - from education facilities, to recreation facilities, and then community health/aged care facilities.

A further option is the co-location of public and private buildings. NSW already has many instances of co-location of public/ private buildings, such as new civic complexes. A key issue is balancing public and private spaces for community benefit.

The Committee is seeking comments on the aforementioned issues reflected in the inquiry's terms of reference.