

**INQUIRY INTO JOINT USE AND CO-LOCATION OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS
DRAFT LANDCOM REPORT**

**Prepared for
Landcom**

**By
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Disclaimer

This report is indicative in its content, comprising data and interpretation. Those persons who are involved in planning and development of lands in the study area should rely on their own research.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Public buildings play an important role in the social fabric our communities. They include public schools and higher educational facilities; community health centres; civic centres, town halls and community centres; cultural facilities such as public libraries, arts facilities and museums; emergency services such as police, fire and ambulance; and recreational and leisure facilities such as tennis centres, indoor sports centres and swimming pools. They typically provide space for a range of important government services (such as information/education/research, child care, seniors activities, health services etc); meeting places and focus for local residents; activity space for recreational and leisure activities; space for social enterprises and businesses; and links to historical and cultural features of a community.

Importantly, what makes these buildings *public* is that they have an enshrined principle of being available to all – of being inclusive. In a sense, they provide a meeting place or focal point for people of all backgrounds, interests and ages. Overall, without appropriate public community infrastructure, the community may find it hard to function as a true community.

However, to work well, public buildings must meet the changing needs of the community. They must continually address the myriad of changing social and lifestyle trends that are and will continue to have a marked impact on how communities function. They must also address the changing physical, social and economic environments in which we live.

Landcom has a major role in the development of new communities. As a state-owned corporation which focuses on developing residential, commercial and industrial projects in greenfield and urban renewal markets Landcom's activities focus on:

- Developing serviced residential land on the fringe of the Sydney metropolitan area much of which is sold to the public as individual house lots
- Selling house lots to individual builders subject to compliance with Landcom's requirements and design guidelines
- Redeveloping unused or derelict land in established urban areas for residential and/or commercial uses. These sites are generally masterplanned by Landcom and developed through partnering arrangements with the private sector or other government agencies.

Landcom has a strong commitment to sustainable development and is focused on having a positive impact on community life, the natural environment and the economy. It has recently adopted a triple bottom line reporting system with a series of environmental, social and economic targets Landcom seeks to achieve for every project. One of its key objectives is to provide appropriate community facilities in all communities that it builds.

This submission to NSW Standing Committee on Public Works, Inquiry into the Joint Use and Co-Location of Public Buildings is particularly relevant to Landcom's role in developing new communities. It brings to the inquiry information on Landcom's practical experience in facilitating and/or providing public buildings and recommends potential directions for improvement.

The submission addresses six key areas of interest:

- Section 2 - Defines what joint use and co-location means
- Section 3 - Identifies the benefits of joint use and co-location of public buildings
- Section 4 - Outlines the importance of the planning process in achieving joint use and co-location
- Section 5 - Provides examples of joint use and co-location projects
- Section 6 - Identifies issues which need to be addressed
- Section 7 - Recommends actions which could be taken to address these issues

2 WHAT IS JOINT USE AND CO-LOCATION?

This inquiry has chosen to focus on two innovative approaches to the planning and construction of public buildings. It has defined joint use as referring to where a single building has multiple uses while co-location is where multiple facilities share a single site.

However, both these approaches often include much more than what is implied by these definitions. Joint use and co-location are often more accurately described as joint ventures or partnerships where funds are pooled by different stakeholders to achieve a common outcome. It may have any or all of the following objectives:

- **Provide a higher level of service than would occur through stand-alone facilities**
- **Better address individual performance standards required by the government and the community**
- **Provide a more economic use of facilities, services and resources**
- **Provide tangible public benefits**

The options for joint ventures or partnerships may involve one agency providing the land, another the building and another the ongoing management. It may not be only about sharing physical buildings and/or sites but also about sharing resources including equipment, management, staff and expertise. It may also involve a partnership with the not-for-profit sector and/or the private sector.

Whether it's joint use, co-location, joint venture or partnership, all need to have the following ingredients to make it work:

- **Shared Philosophy**– agencies involved in a joint project must be willing partners committed to working in partnership, co-operation and sharing throughout the life of the project. This is possibly one of the most critical factors for a successful project.
- **Service Compatibility** – the image, operating structure and users of the services involved need to be compatible. For example, older people and youth often experience problems sharing facilities while a community health service may not be interested in sharing premises with the police. Emergency services may not want to be located in the heart of a residential area with noise an issue for residents and emergency services requiring quick access to major roads.
- **Common Design and Management Goals** – all agencies need to agree on design and management goals for the project ensuring that they provide benefits for all involved. Although time-consuming, memorandums of understanding or written agreements need to be made to cover every aspect of the project and to ensure awareness and commitment by all parties.
- **Financial Assessment** – not all joint projects provide financial benefits and often the benefits may be related to other objectives such as higher levels of service or early provision. It may be evident during the negotiation stage that a stand-alone facility is more cost-effective but greater importance may be evident from the potential for improved service outcomes. Capital and recurrent implications need to be determined for each agency as part of an overall assessment of a joint project.

In summary, joint use and co-location of public buildings are really just the “tip of the iceberg”. Joint projects which focus on the planning, design, construction and on-going management of public buildings includes a wide variety of models all of which aim to provide a more effective service to the community.

3 BENEFITS OF JOINT USE AND CO-LOCATION

In understanding the benefits from joint projects it is important to understand how public buildings in local neighbourhoods work. As shown in Figure 1, community infrastructure is provided by four key players – commonwealth and state governments, local government, the not-for-profit sector and the private sector. Provision is typically reliant on demand from the community and the various policies and practices of each sector. Importantly, all neighbourhoods are different – a reflection of the people who live and work in that particular community. By considering the range of community infrastructure provided by the different players, it is evident that joint projects can involve many different scenarios and outcomes. What is important is to ensure that the chosen combinations meet the objectives outlined in Section 2 above.

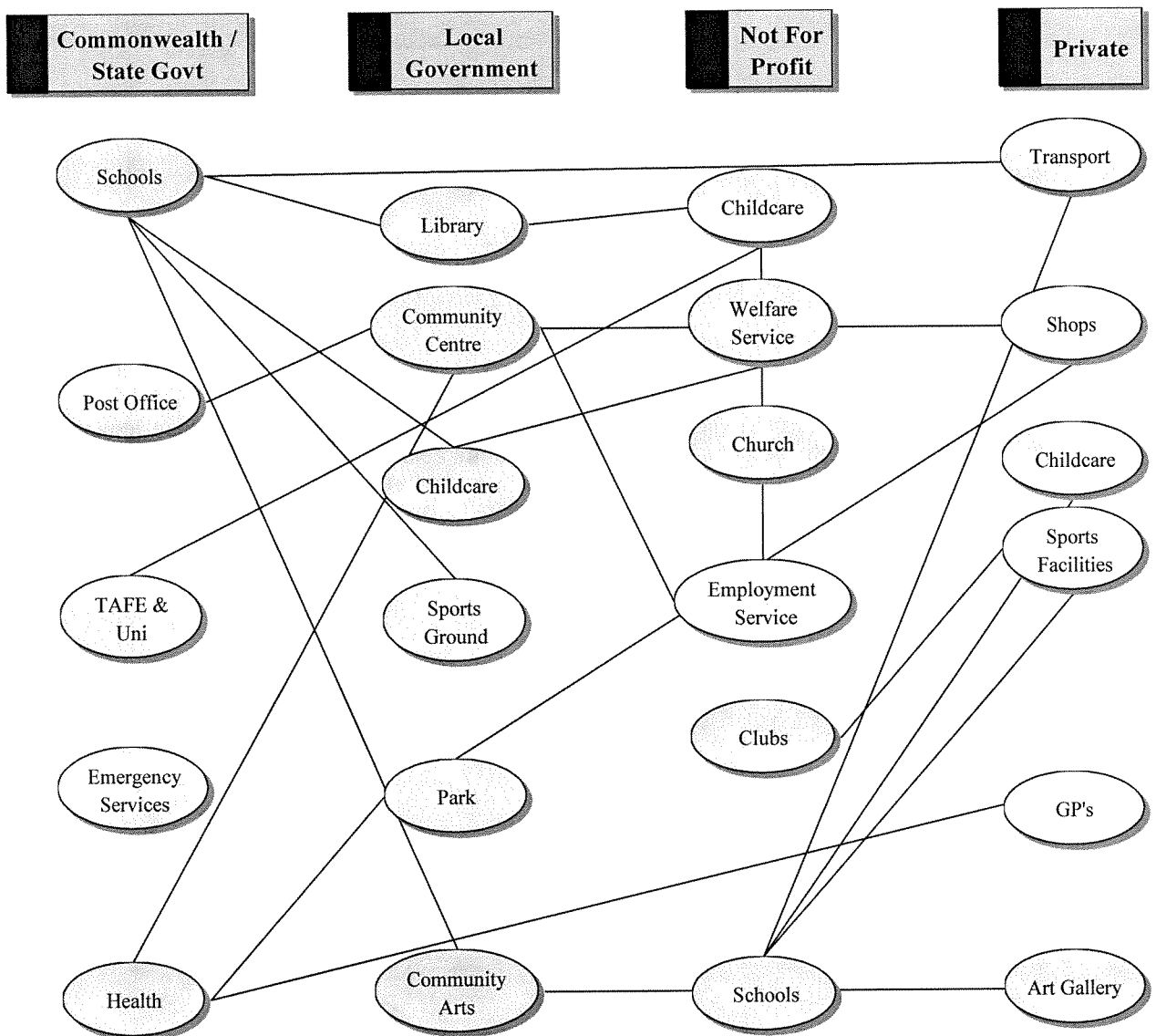


Figure 1: Potential Joint Use / Co-Location Partners

Landcom's practical experience in the development of new communities and neighbourhoods has enabled the identification of important benefits from joint projects. These include:

- **Facilitating the development of social networks** – public buildings play an important role in supporting the development of socially sustainable communities. Buildings which provide a focal point for the community, can be conveniently accessed and are part of community life, provide a place for social interaction and the development of social networks. They are often a vehicle through which social capital is nurtured with people establishing local networks, developing community trust and co-operating for mutual benefit. Joint projects involving public buildings further intensify this potential for the development of social capital.
- **Developing a sense of place and built identity** - importantly joint projects involving public buildings strongly identify *a sense of place* – *a public place* in the community. As shown in Figure 1, neighbourhoods can develop physical focal points where different types of community infrastructure work together.
- **Encouraging greater service co-ordination** - joint projects can bring together agencies which provide services for one particular group. In recent years, the Home and Community Care program has been building facilities which house a range of services for older people and people with a disability. Not only has this improved access for users, it has also resulted in greater co-ordination between service providers.
- **Improving accessibility** – services which attract a cross section of the community can be brought together to provide a one-stop shop. Local government has been active in taking this approach in many communities, providing local service centres in addition to the central administration offices. Equally, family and children's centres are also evident providing one location where parents can go to access services such as child care, playgroups, parenting classes, early childhood health services and childhood immunisations. For users, the accessibility benefits are significant particularly for busy working parents. For providers, this more holistic approach to service provision and the needs of the client is welcomed.
- **Enabling timely provision of public buildings and services** – the pooling of funds for joint projects or negotiated agreements with other players may enable provision to occur much earlier than planned. This is particularly important in new communities where often competing priorities for public funding may mean that new public buildings are not built for some time. This can have a devastating impact on new residents with people travelling long distances to schools, health and support services or even worse, people not accessing important services at all. It also hinders the development of social networks as no neighbourhood facilities are available where new residents can meet and get to know each other. Early provision of public buildings is an essential requirement of new communities.
- **Maximising the use of public buildings** - rather than public buildings being used by one group at one time per day or week, joint projects typically result in greater usage rates by a broader range of people. For example, joint use schools are used in the day time by students and at night time for adult education.
- **Providing construction and operation savings** – although not evident in all joint projects, some projects can be delivered at a more cost-effective rate than stand-alone facilities. There is a potential for operational savings while land costs are possibly the greatest savings for many agencies.

For Landcom, successful joint projects provide benefits which support the development and viability of sustainable communities.

4 IMPORTANCE OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

Public buildings are not an end in themselves. They are only the physical entity through which services are delivered. They really are about addressing the needs of the people who use them. In fact, the uses, services and activities which occur within or emanate from public buildings are more important to the social fabric of the community than the building itself. Like all public building projects, joint projects need to involve end users in developing a vision, plan and design for projects.

For joint projects to be successful, a participatory planning process is essential where key stakeholders come together to collaboratively assess, develop and manage a project. As outlined earlier, stakeholders need to be team players and have a shared philosophy on the outcomes for a project.

Experience has shown that the planning process for a joint project can often be longer and more complex than that for a stand-alone facility. With many government agencies having complex reporting structures, the process for gaining agreement of even the smallest issues can take time. Funding, design, construction and on-going management all needs to be agreed upfront, with everyone agreed on their project obligations. Add to this the complexities of involving not-for-profit and/or the private sector and the process can take even longer. Public transparency and accountability are essential components of a joint project but these again can be time consuming and complex.

For Landcom, the early identification of potential joint projects is an important requirement. Where new neighbourhoods are being built, joint projects need to be identified as part of the strategic and statutory planning system in master plans, local environmental plans and development control plans. This ensures that land is identified, appropriately zoned and staged for early development, negotiations begin with potential partners and supporting hard and soft infrastructure is included as part of the planning process. Unless this occurs, potential joint projects may not be able to locate suitable land and lack the supporting infrastructure required for success.

Overall, the planning process is important to joint projects. Where possible it should be initiated in the initial planning of new or redeveloped neighbourhoods and it must be a participatory process.

5 EXAMPLES OF JOINT USE AND CO-LOCATION

Landcom is involved in several joint projects involving public buildings in NSW. These include:

- **Warnervale Town Centre** – located in the Wyong local government area, the Warnervale Town Centre will provide a focus for education, recreation, entertainment and community support services for the surrounding community of 40,000 new residents. Landcom is working with other stakeholders to identify potential joint projects to assist the delivery of important services to the new community. Potential joint projects currently being assessed include the development integrated health and social services appropriate for the significant retiree population moving to the area. A partnership between public, private and the not-for-profit sector may be developed for the project.
- **Green Square Town Centre** – the redevelopment of the South Sydney Growth Centre covers some 175 hectares of land in Sydney's oldest industrial area off South Dowling Street in Sydney's south. Landcom is a key player in facilitating the development of the community and commercial heart of Green Square which is proposed to include a range of multi-use public buildings. Together with local and state government, potential joint projects for public buildings have been identified and Landcom is facilitating the development of implementation plans.
- **Alliance with the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) to improve the planning for schools in new residential communities** – this initiative is currently being developed with significant potential benefits for all stakeholders. As outlined earlier, very often a public school is not built in a new neighbourhood for several years. The negative impact on the new community is significant with schools typically being a major community focal point and place for the development of new friendships and networks. Landcom and the DET are investigating how they might work more closely to achieve better planning outcomes. The Second Ponds Creek project is being used as a case study.

In addition, it is evident that many other joint projects have been developed by other agencies and these initiatives are strongly supported by Landcom. They include:

- **Public schools with community centres** – schools provide a place for people to meet, interact and form friendships. By locating community centres with public schools, the synergies are evident resulting in many of the benefits outlined in Section 3. The Wadalba Community School in the Wyong local government area is good example of the benefits of this approach. The school houses a community centre, has playing fields which are jointly used by the school and community, is used for adult education classes and is actively involved in a range of community activities.
- **Dual use of sportsgrounds and facilities** – there are many examples of where either school sports grounds are used by the public and/or Council grounds are used regularly by a local school. However, whether there have been specific upfront agreements on sharing of acquisition and on-going maintenance costs is not so evident.
- **Public libraries with community centres and arts facilities** – with demonstrated high levels of usage by a broad cross section of the community, public libraries are extending their role to provide more than information and education resources. Many now provide community meeting rooms and/or are co-located with council community services. They provide space for cultural/arts exhibitions and performance space for youth activities. Examples include the Corrimal District Library and Community Centre built by Wollongong City Council; the joint library/community centres/council service centres built by Great Lakes Council and the joint library, art gallery, function space and council administrative offices provided by Wagga Wagga City Council.
- **Multifunctional youth facilities** - the PULSE concept used by the Police Citizens Youth Clubs in Queensland combines youth entertainment and unstructured activity spaces in one purpose-built facility. A centre may include sports courts, audio/visual rooms, internet cafes, pool rooms, skate bowls and recording studios.

6 ISSUES

In practice, a joint project is often difficult to achieve. It may be nominated in a plan but unless there are mutual benefits and/or ongoing commitment, it is often difficult to implement. The common challenges for joint projects are identified below:

- **Lack of ongoing commitment and management of joint projects** – as outlined in Section 2, commitment to a shared philosophy is required throughout the full life time of a joint project. When this falters, the joint project may fail any benefits lost. For example, although the DET has been actively involved in joint projects, very often their success is reliant on the commitment of the local school principal. Concerns over school security and non-monitored access; management issues related to bookings, repairs and noise; and priority of use for different users often are issues for school principals.
- **Poor design of public buildings used for joint projects** – very often, not enough consideration is given to how different services and users will interact in a joint facility. Where joint school and community facilities are developed, buildings for community use such as halls, gyms and meeting rooms need to front the street to enable controlled access and monitoring. Dual use sportsgrounds need to be easily accessed by the public without requiring access to the main school buildings. Joint use buildings need to consider appropriate access for different users and the potential to close off areas while others are in use. Privacy may be important for some agencies with shared staff areas and equipment may not be appropriate. The needs of each of stakeholder must be carefully assessed and planned for.
- **Poor adaptability of public buildings for changed uses** – even though joint projects may be designed with the users in mind, the building may not be flexible enough to meet changed service needs. For example, changes in government programs may require an agency which entered into a joint building project to relocate or reduce its service. This not only impacts one the individual agency but also the other stakeholders. The adaptability of the building to be used for alternative uses may be limited.
- **Difficulties with operational issues such as public liability insurance and sharing of recurrent costs** - these issues can add complexity to joint projects, are often not considered in the early stages of a project and are typically difficult for stakeholders to resolve.
- **Ability of key stakeholders to pool funds** – restrictions are in place to ensure that any public funds are appropriately used and publicly accountable. Projects involving funding agreements with other stakeholders need to be carefully scrutinised and assessed. The impact of these requirements on the viability of joint projects needs to be considered.
- **Changing funding sources** – in NSW, local government in metropolitan areas typically source funds for public building projects from developer levies, commonly known as Section 94 contributions. As local government is a major provider of public buildings at the local neighbourhood level, any changes to the existing system must consider the implications for joint projects.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident that joint projects can deliver significant benefits to the community. To ensure that successful projects are achieved, Landcom considers that the inquiry should recommend;

1. **Development of a joint project assessment tool kit and best practice education process for key government agencies, local government and the not-for-profit sector.**
2. **Mandatory requirement that all government agencies use this tool kit to assess and report on the feasibility of a joint project when considering the development, construction or redevelopment of a public building.**
3. **The Department of Education and Training to review its current policies and procedures for the joint use of public school facilities with the objective of achieving greater shared use of school facilities. This should be done in consultation with key stakeholders.**
4. **The Department of Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources to report on the implications of the Section 94 Contributions Review on the funding of joint projects.**
5. **Review of mechanisms in place which may restrict government agencies for entering into pool funding agreements with other government agencies to achieve a joint public building.**