

**Submission
No 33**



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The Committee Manager
Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Ms

Inquiry into the Joint Use and Co-Location of Public Buildings

In response to the call for submissions by the Standing Committee on Public Works for the "Inquiry into the Joint Use and Co-Location of Public Buildings", I am pleased to provide the following submission.

Sutherland Shire is located on the southern coastal edge of metropolitan Sydney and has the second highest population of all local Government areas in NSW (215,089 people), with a total area of 370 square km's.

Sutherland Shire Council manages over 300 buildings for varying uses including senior citizens and youth centres to children's services, community halls and baby health centres. These facilities have been constructed over a number of years and reflect the needs of the community and relevant planning policies at the time.

There is great value in the joint use and co-location of public buildings, providing there is a genuine commitment to the initiative of resources (both time and administrative) and genuine good will and partnership on the part of all facility managers, coordinators and school principals.

It is recognised that the key providers of public buildings are Local and State Government and the scope of this submission is prepared accordingly. From the experience of Council, attempts to provide public buildings through joint use and co-location as outlined in the inquiry overview have met with varied success.

Many School / TAFE sites now seek to restrict access for security management. Negotiations for use are often handled at the local level with staff not skilled in property development and effective asset use. Also, approval mechanisms within relevant State Government bodies can be extremely slow.

Negotiating ownership and use of facilities needs to be explored carefully. An analysis of best practice procedures will need to be undertaken involving all stakeholders, ensuring genuine and equal participation in decision making and policy formulation by Local Government. Present State occupants can be in a position to control the availability of such buildings for use by external parties.

The processes concerning the adaptation or retrofitting of existing public buildings and facilities for the purpose of joint use, needs further examination to ensure its cost effectiveness over a long term period. This is particularly relevant where adaptation is required due to evolving building standards.

Current processes for providing joint use and co-location is unplanned and provides little advance warning of opportunities. A more planned, strategic approach linked to demographic projections and qualitative identification is undoubtedly needed. Appropriate resourcing of such an approach would be crucial to it's success.

Current Best Practice Example of Joint Use

A recent initiative of Sutherland Shire Council, the Sutherland Shire Hub for Economic Development (SSHED) can be held as an example for consideration of the shared use of public buildings.

The SSHED is a new \$2.4M business accelerator designed to support small businesses planning to grow. Our aim is to fast track the pace of business growth and increase the possibility of success through workshops, networking, mentoring and coaching.

A business accelerator provides a supportive and dynamic environment where entrepreneurs can meet, network and share ideas. At the SSHED, we strive to help entrepreneurs expand their expertise and build better businesses.

The SSHED is a not-for-profit business accelerator established by Sutherland Shire Council in 2003. The council developed and invested in the SSHED following extensive economic research and analysis. Council's Economic Development Committee (EDC) identified that the Shire needed new kinds of businesses.

The SSHED is part of council's strategy to stimulate economic growth and create employment opportunities, by attracting new enterprises to the Shire.

In a strong, three-way partnership, Sutherland Shire Council, TAFE NSW and the University of Wollongong (UOW) worked together to provide the first university presence in southern Sydney and a world-class business accelerator for small and medium-sized enterprises in new premises located on the Loftus TAFE campus.

The building is occupied jointly by the University of Wollongong Loftus Education Centre and the Sutherland Shire Hub for Economic Development (SSHED).

The SSHED is a business initiative of Sutherland Shire Council with assistance from the Commonwealth and NSW state governments, the University of Wollongong and the Southern Sydney Institute of TAFE.

Given a genuine commitment to the initiative, there are a number of opportunities to progress this concept of joint use or co-location of public buildings further.

Opportunities

- Key stakeholders need to be identified for the purposes of formulating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other form of agreement, to formalise and legitimise the process
- Centralise and coordinate State Government into regions to streamline joint venture opportunities
- Arising from the MOU – stakeholders will need to assess and articulate the processes required for the ongoing maintenance of the physical structures (shared facilities) with clear lines of responsibility established to achieve this
- An allocation of recurrent resources to ensure facilities are maintained to legislated standards, regulations, controls and guidelines
- Arising from the MOU, stakeholders need to assess and articulate the processes required for the effective and efficient administration of the shared facilities (insurance, bookings etc).
- An allocation of recurrent resources to ensure the effective and efficient administration of shared public facilities, both on a micro site-based level, and a macro State Government management structure
- Allow more flexibility for multiple use in any new State buildings
- Provide at least 12 months advance warning of opportunities
- Provide State grants as an incentive for joint venture partners
- Create a central database on State asset infrastructure to assist councils to plan around the re-development or refurbishment of state buildings. This should reduce duplication.

It should be noted, that careful consideration will need to be given to the potential services and activities that are selected for joint use of facilities and co-location. It is essential that services be complementary in nature, adding value to service provision on efficiency.

Many State & Council buildings are used for the provision of services to young children. Careful consideration needs to be given to joint use of facilities having regard to current child protection issues.

I hope these comments are of benefit and assistance to the inquiry. If I can be of any further assistance, please contact me on 9710 0524.

Yours faithfully

David Ackroyd
for J W Rayner
General Manager