



The Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC
Minister for Early Childhood Education
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Assistant Minister for Education

14 August 2017
Clerk of the Council
NSW Legislative Council
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Blunt,

Please find attached the Government response to the report entitled Inner city public primary school enrolment capacity and redevelopment of Ultimo Public School by General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3 for tabling in the Legislative Council.

Sincerely


Sarah Mitchell MLC

Received at 4:25 pm
Tuesday 15 August 2017


NSW Government response to the final report of the Legislative Council Standing Committee into inner city public primary school enrolment capacity and redevelopment of Ultimo Public School

The NSW Government welcomes the final report of the Legislative Council Standing Committee into inner city public primary school enrolment capacity and redevelopment of Ultimo Public School. In its final report, the Committee has made seven recommendations to enhance the NSW Government's capacity to meet enrolment pressures on inner city public primary schools, particularly in the context of urban transformation projects.

The recently announced School Assets Strategic Plan and the record funding levels invested to meet projected enrolment demand and address maintenance backlog in schools further addresses the issues raised by the Parliamentary inquiry. The new delivery unit 'School Infrastructure NSW' will take the lead on these important reforms to school infrastructure planning and delivery.

The NSW Department of Education will take the lead to implement the recommendations supported by Government, and many actions are consistent with its current work program. The department will continue to work closely with other state agencies and with councils to implement a growth focused planning strategy for inner city areas.

The Government response to the report recommendations is outlined below.

Recommendation 1

That the NSW Department of Education amend the inner city school [school community] model to acknowledge that public schools provide an important sense of community and to afford greater emphasis to connecting schools with their immediate neighbourhood and community.

Supported in principle

The department welcomes the Committee's findings that 'A [schools community planning] model is plainly more efficient and offers the department great flexibility in managing fluctuating demand which is particularly important in an area as densely populated as inner city Sydney'. It should be noted that the inner city school community was a pilot of this approach. Since then the model has been further refined and formally endorsed by the Government.

Schools community planning is inherently a place-based planning approach. It seeks to strengthen education provision across local areas and improve the connection between schools and communities.

The new schools community planning model, which has been endorsed by Infrastructure NSW, recognises the importance of joint use agreements with local councils to foster the development of shared facilities and open space. In doing so, schools community planning will emphasise the connections between schools and their local communities. The department has successful examples such as:

- Victoria Avenue in Canada Bay where libraries and childcare centres are commonly shared
- Ballina Council which has an agreement to upgrade a school hall to a regional basketball complex for community use
- An emerging agreement with Ku-ring-gai Council for a joint use regional theatre and shared use of the oval at the former UTS site at Lindfield
- An emerging agreement with the Hills Shire Council to jointly share a number of upgraded ovals across a group of schools.

NSW Government response to the final report of the Legislative Council Standing Committee into inner city public primary school enrolment capacity and redevelopment of Ultimo Public School

The department is also exploring how to engage developers in greenfield sites who are building community infrastructure to identify ways to co-locate shared services onto school sites.

The new schools community planning model has inbuilt community and engagement methodologies in keeping with the IP2A standards to ensure communities are kept informed of the challenges and proposed solutions within their local neighbourhoods so that their views can be heard and considered.

Recommendation 2

That the NSW Department of Education subject its demographic projections to a regular third party review process

Supported

As part of the development of its School Assets Strategic Plan, the department has had its approach to demographic projections reviewed by: Ernst and Young; Demographers at the Department of Planning and Environment; Treasury; and the Audit Office of NSW.

All of these reviews validated the department's current approach, however to further ensure and improve the accuracy of demographic projections, the department is:

- working closely with the Department of Planning and Environment, Greater Sydney Commission, UrbanGrowth NSW, Land and Housing Corporation, various local Councils, non-government school sector and the NSW Data Analytics Centre
- developing a new population projection/school supply modelling tool – the School Planning Assistance tool, which will assist with schools community plan demand and supply forecasting
- reviewing its population forecasts against actuals every two years to verify its accuracy, which leads to a further review of currently used methodologies
- currently negotiating with the non-government schools sector to share more information on trends in the sector, to help assess and meet potential growth demand resulting from movement between the sectors
- developing a partnership with Charles Darwin University, and in particular Dr Tom Wilson, one of Australia's leading demographers, to conduct a holistic analysis of its demography projection. This project will also involve partnership with the ACT Government and Northern Territory Government. The project is expected to begin in September 2017 and will conclude at the end of the 2017/18 financial year. There are three key components to the project:
 - i. review of the projection environment within which the department operates including an overview of data received from the NSW Department of Planning & Environment, Greater Sydney Commission, Urban Growth NSW, Land & Housing Corporation and other relevant sources
 - ii. evaluate the department's demography projections and provide recommendations for refinement and improvement
 - iii. propose appropriate methods for the ongoing evaluation and review of demographic projections.

NSW Government response to the final report of the Legislative Council Standing Committee into inner city public primary school enrolment capacity and redevelopment of Ultimo Public School

In line with current practice, the department will continue to subject its demographic projections to third party reviews. It should be noted that the department's public school student population forecasts are highly sensitive to economic trends (flight from non-government to government schools in times of high unemployment for example), federal immigration policy, state inward immigration trends and birth rates.

Recommendation 3

That the NSW Government formalise coordination between UrbanGrowth NSW, the NSW Department of Planning and Environment and the NSW Department of Education to ensure that school building programs are determined with the most up-to-date and accurate information on development pressures.

Supported

As per the Premier's direction, the department's student population projections use the baseline data provided by Department of Planning and Environment. This is whole-of-government policy. For projections beyond five years, population projections and dwelling forecasts (both provided by Department of Planning and Environment), Medicare births data and travel zone data provided by the Department of Transport are used.

The department is also working with the Greater Sydney Commission who are establishing new priority precincts in collaboration with Urban Growth NSW and Land and Housing Corporation. Greater Sydney Commission is seeking to stabilise the growth projections for metropolitan Sydney (where 80 per cent of the state's public student growth is projected occur to 2031).

The department also works closely with Infrastructure NSW as part of the State Infrastructure Plan for NSW. The department is working with these agencies to support more accurate and stable population data. Frequent and unscheduled changes in population or dwelling projections requires the department to rework its analysis and can cause significant fluctuations in demand supply calculations for schools if there are variances.

For short term projections (up to 5 years) the department uses census data conducted annually in February for each NSW school to monitor trends in student enrolments compared to previous years. The movement of students who attend schools is understood and their living addresses are analysed against the schools they attend in order to better understand out-of-area enrolment patterns.

Government/non-government school attendance ratios across the state are also monitored. The department also undertakes specific studies on student living in multi-unit dwellings such as Green Square in order to monitor the impacts of multi-unit development. Based on this information, the department reviews and revises catchment boundaries in order to ensure enrolment growth can be met.

While it is possible to speculate on the likelihood of significant residential rezoning or developments being approved via relevant planning authorities, this data cannot be relied upon until Department of Planning and Environment incorporates it into its population and dwelling projections. Department of Planning and Environment dwelling projections use a large range of data sources to not only predict population trends but also to predict housing 'take up' trends. This is the most consistent source of data for the department to use because it better reflects new dwellings and the likely timing of such, and is utilised across the whole of government.

NSW Government response to the final report of the Legislative Council Standing Committee into inner city public primary school enrolment capacity and redevelopment of Ultimo Public School

The department values inter-agency and sector-wide coordination, and sees this as a key component in the planning and delivery of schools infrastructure. The department's active involvements include but are not limited to the following initiatives:

- regular contact with UrbanGrowth NSW and has been negotiating the development of a formal memorandum of understanding in relation to an ongoing partnership
- consultation with Transport for NSW to share transport and planning data so that transport and travel impacts are known at a strategic planning level for groups of schools involved in schools community plans
- liaison with the Department of Planning and Environment on a number of issues including, developer contributions, the Education SEPP and land release areas
- active involvement with the Greater Sydney Commission as part of their collaboration areas, Greater Parramatta Olympic Peninsular Committee and the Common Assumptions Working Party. It is also a member of the Senior Officers Group which assists with the shaping of The Plan for Growing Sydney and its associated District Plans
- regular meetings with the Land and Housing Corporation to identify housing estate regeneration areas
- entering into a number of MOU's with local Councils on areas of joint use development
- regularly convenes a Schools Planning Alliance Forum with the non-government schools sector and regularly meets with developers to understand their development and investment plans across the state
- partners with Property NSW to provide input into property information as part of schools community planning.

These measures enable the department to understand the likely trends in housing development, however until incorporated into Department of Planning and Environment population projections this data is not used in official calculations in accordance with the Premier's direction.

Recommendation 4

That the NSW Department of Education share its demographic projections with councils in appropriate cases and on a confidential basis, to ensure a cohesive and consistent approach to city planning

Supported in principle

The department provides demographic projections to local Councils where appropriate and has recently done so with: Parramatta Council; Ku-ring-gai Council; Willoughby Council; Northern Beaches Council; Newcastle City Council; and Yass Valley Council.

The Government has recently announced the creation of School Infrastructure NSW and is committed to openly sharing data about school infrastructure planning and delivery. The new website was launched in June 2017 with the second release to follow, which will include information of the projected percentage of student population trends for every school in NSW. This will ensure better access to demographic projections and will help to ensure a more cohesive and consistent approach to city planning.

NSW Government response to the final report of the Legislative Council Standing Committee into inner city public primary school enrolment capacity and redevelopment of Ultimo Public School

Recommendation 5

That the Minister for Education consider strengthening whole of government oversight and support for the NSW Department of Education in future land negotiations for schools.

Supported in principle

Under the Property NSW Act and Premier's Memorandum 2012-20, Property NSW has the mandate to improve the management of the NSW Government's owned and leased real property portfolio, which includes serving as the Government's central acquisition and disposal agency and reviewing and endorsing all proposed real property acquisitions and disposals. As part of its whole-of-government property management role for the implementation of the School Assets Strategic Plan, Property NSW will work closely with the department and Department of Planning and Environment to develop an enabling framework to facilitate greater intra-government land exchange.

Recommendation 6

That the NSW Government conduct an audit of public land in all areas of significant population growth in New South Wales to identify suitable locations for new schools and expansion of existing schools.

Supported in principle

The department works closely with Property NSW to continually assess opportunities on public land for new schools and expansion of existing schools. Under Premier's Memorandum 2012-20, Property NSW assumes responsibility for the management of the Government Property Register. All agencies are required to cooperate with Property NSW in mapping all real property asset ownership data to the Government Property Register with accurate, relevant and useful information as required to populate the register. Property NSW utilise these functions to support the department in identifying available land held by other Government agencies which may be suitable for new or expanding schools.

Recommendation 7

That the NSW Department of Education, when assessing land for the purposes of remediation, rely on the standards set by the relevant authority such as the Environment Protection Authority, unless the department can demonstrate that a higher standard is required.

Supported in principle

This recommendation aligns with current practice. The department will continue to conduct its own risk assessments and due diligence when investigating and developing potential sites for government schools. In some instances this may lead to the adoption of a higher standard than Environment Protection Authority assessment standards. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff.

