

## **Questions on Notice from the Committee to the Department of Education**

### **1. What is the cost of redeveloping Ultimo Public School?**

### **2. Will the Wentworth Park temporary school demountables be made from Australian steel?**

The steel in existing Department of Education demountables is Australian made. Steel used as part of the refurbishment of demountables for the Wentworth Park temporary school may be a mix of Australian and foreign steel.

### **3. What is the last most expensive school built?**

The cost of a new or redeveloped high school or primary school is dependent on a wide range of factors. Developments in densely populated areas, for example, are often more expensive due to higher land acquisition and remediation costs. They can also take longer than other builds and tend to involve increased complexity in the management of traffic, site safety and safety of the public and neighbours.

Victoria Avenue Public School, for example, is a recently constructed primary school in the urban location of Concord West, completed in January 2015 at a total cost to the department of approximately \$40.65 million. This total cost included remediation works to address significant contamination at the site; an allocation to upgrade a nearby intersection; and the construction of a community precinct on the site. In exchange for the commitment to remediate the site and provide the community precinct, the department was able to acquire the site from the City of Canada Bay Council on a 99 year lease for \$1. The community precinct includes space for local health providers and an early childcare facility, providing services and educational programs to people of all ages in the Canada Bay area.

Anzac Park Public School in Cammeray is another recently constructed primary school in an urban location. The total cost to the department to deliver the school was approximately \$49.14 million. This includes the cost of acquiring the site from North Sydney Council for \$20.1 million. The construction cost of Anzac Park Public School is representative of a conventional urban school build including site remediation costs of \$1.8 million as well as a minor road infrastructure upgrade. The project did not include additional infrastructure for community services.

**4. Peer review of the Douglas Partners report – when was it received?**

The department received the report entitled “Peer Review of Draft RAP – Ultimo Public School and Childcare Centre” in late March 2015.

**5. Why was the peer review initiated?**

The department asked for a peer review to satisfy itself that the remediation options proposed for the site would meet its requirements to use the site as a school.

As stated in page 3 of the report, *“The purpose of the peer review is to ensure that risks are identified and the client has the opportunity to consider the best and most innovative remedial options to achieve the best outcomes for the site.”*

**6. Was the Minister aware of the Douglas Partners remediation report and the peer review?**

As per briefings provided to the Committee as part of the department’s submission (Item C, Tabs 26, 27 and 28, attached at **Tab B**), the Minister was briefed on site remediation reports and decontamination options for the site.

**7. DGS15/917 of 24 May 2015 – did the Minister sign it on the same day? If yes, why was there a delay in the letter that was sent to City of Sydney (sent on 12 June 2015), especially since there was a note on the brief from the Minister’s Office that it was to be dealt with ‘sooner rather than later’?**

The Minister signed briefing DGS15/917 on 26 May 2015. The department’s letter to City of Sydney was sent on 12 June 2015 because it formed part of a further briefing and advice to the Minister (dated 11 June 2016, DGS15/1056). This briefing has been provided to the Committee (Item C, Tab 27, as attached at **Tab B**).

**8. Could the House be provided with some photos of the demountables proposed to be used in the ‘pop up’ school for Ultimo PS?**

Attached at **Tab C** are photos of demountable buildings currently being used for a temporary school in Barton Road, Artarmon while Artarmon Public School is redeveloped. This is similar to the demountables that will be used for the temporary school at Wentworth Park.

**9. When does the department expect the Alexandria Park project to go to tender?**

A redevelopment of Alexandria Park Community School is expected to go out to tender in late 2017.

**10. Have there been lessons learned by the department on negotiations with local government as a result of their experience with the City of Sydney?**

The department believes that negotiations with local government authorities can proceed to a speedy resolution when the authority is willing to disclose all information to hand regarding the subject of negotiations. In the case of the Fig & Wattle Street transaction, the City of Sydney failed to adequately acknowledge the department's concerns regarding the extent and severity of site contamination and the costs to remediate the site to a state suitable for a primary school.

The department paid a considerable amount of money to determine the levels and severity of the contamination before becoming aware that the City of Sydney had prepared a detailed contamination report in 2005 (refer **Tab A**). We refer the Committee to the front cover of the report and to the Site Audit Statement, prepared by Dr Ian Swane. In particular, we refer the Committee to Section B and page 4 of the Site Audit Statement. In the expert's opinion, the Fig and Wattle Street site was not suitable for a primary or secondary school.

It is the department's view that early disclosure of the City of Sydney's report could have led to the mutually acceptable position that the only acceptable course of action would be to completely remove all contaminants from the Fig and Wattle Street site.

The department is charged with the safety of staff and children. This has been the department's position all along.