

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO NSW GOVERNMENT'S
MANAGEMENT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

HEARING 3 – 23 SEPTEMBER 2021

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING

ANSWERS TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

Who has provided you with independent advice around ventilation in NSW Public schools?

ANSWER

Mechanical engineering and building services consultants Steensen Varming has provided independent expert advice on air quality in schools. Their report, which has been peer reviewed, provided specific advice around the effectiveness of natural ventilation to achieve internal air quality, in line with international health recommendations for COVID-19. In particular the advice focused on the number of air changes and external opening areas required to meet these recommendations.

The report, which is available on the School Infrastructure NSW website, confirms that using fresh air to ventilate our schools is preferable over any other filtration system and that our buildings, along with sensible operating measures have sufficient natural ventilation. Even on a still day, the buildings allow sufficient ventilation for us to operate safely and to meet the recommended ventilation guidance from the World Health Organisation (WHO).

This advice, along with findings from the comprehensive asset audit and NSW Health's advice, has informed the ventilation and asset use recommendations within the return to school plan.

QUESTION 2

When did you seek this independent advice? Do they provide you with regular updates?

ANSWER

Advice was sought on the 21 September 2021.

QUESTION 3

Did the independent experts you consulted recommend conducting an audit of ventilation systems at NSW Public Schools?

ANSWER

No, the audit of schools was already underway.

QUESTION 4

What advice have these independent experts provided?

ANSWER

Refer to the answer to supplementary question 1.

The Steensen Varming report is publicly accessible on the Department of Education School Infrastructure NSW website at

https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/infrastructure/general/documents/Steensen_Varming_Consultant_Advice.pdf

QUESTION 5

What was the cost involved?

ANSWER

The cost as of 8 October 2021 is \$26,800 excluding GST.

QUESTION 6

Which NSW Public schools are classed as ‘Sealed Schools’?

ANSWER

There are 48 sealed schools (more than 2,200) across NSW, with windows that cannot be opened in order to mitigate noise, pollution etc. These schools are fully air conditioned. The design and operation of these schools has been audited and they have the required flow of fresh air.

Alexandria Park Community School
Annandale North Public School
Arncliffe Public School
Arthur Phillip High School
Ashfield Boys High School
Ashfield Public School
Auburn North Public School
Bankstown North Public School
Beecroft Public School

Botany Public School
Camdenville Public School
Canterbury Girls High School
Central Sydney Intensive English High School
Chatswood Public School
Croydon Park Public School
Daceyville Public School
Drummoyne Public School
Eastern Creek Public School
Fairfield Public School
Fort Street High School
Georges River College Oatley Senior Campus
Grahamstown Public School
Hurstville Public School
Kurnell Public School
Kyeemagh Infants School
Leichhardt Public School
Lindfield Learning Village
Liverpool West Public School
Lucas Gardens School
Marayong Public School
Marrickville Public School
Marsden Park Public School
Orange Grove Public School
Parramatta High School
Parramatta Public School
Punchbowl Public School
Rockdale Public School
Salt Ash Public School
Seven Hills Public School
St Peters Public School
Stanmore Public School
Sydney Distance Education Primary School
Sydney Secondary College Leichhardt Campus
Taverners Hill Infants School
Tempe High School
Tempe Public School
Warrawee Public School
Wiley Park Public School

QUESTION 7

As part of the audit of ventilation systems at NSW Public schools.

- (a) How many fans needed to be repaired? What was the cost?**
- (b) How many fans were replaced? What was the cost?**
- (c) How many windows needed to be repaired? What was the cost?**

(d) How many windows were replaced? What was the cost?

ANSWER

The Department of Education conducted a state-wide review of all windows, fans and ventilation systems in more than 150,000 spaces across our more than 2,200 NSW public schools, including preschools, to ensure to ensure parents, students and staff can feel confident that they will return to COVID-safe settings.

The comprehensive nature of the audit in an asset portfolio of this size was unprecedented. Detailed school-specific ventilation audit reports can be viewed at <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/we-look-after-our-schools/audit-reports.html>

Approximately 80,000 of the 650,000 windows required rectification works, along with approximately 17,000 of the more than 200,000 ceiling and wall mounted fans and 2,000 of the 19,000 extractor fans.

The Department is working with schools to prioritise areas requiring rectification works, and issues have been fixed as they have been identified.

QUESTION 8

What is the total amount spent on the audit of ventilations systems at NSW Public Schools?

ANSWER

This information will be published in the Department of Education's Annual Report.

QUESTION 9

How many air-conditioning systems needed to be repaired? Please provide a list broken down by school.

ANSWER

As of July 2021, 4,275 learning spaces and 300 libraries across 347 schools have had heating, cooling and fresh air ventilation systems installed as part of the Cooler Classrooms program. These systems are designed to create optimal learning environments and will notify staff when additional fresh air is required to boost indoor air quality. All new learning spaces delivered as part of the NSW Government's school building program are also fitted with these systems.

There are 48 sealed schools (out of 2,200+) across NSW, with windows that cannot be opened in order to mitigate noise, pollution etc. These schools are fully air conditioned. The design and operation of these schools has been audited and they have the required flow of fresh air.

The air conditioning systems in these schools will be set to run 24/7 with maximum fresh air settings to support maximum ventilation. Filters have been replaced and the frequency of filter servicing and cleaning has been increased to occur on a monthly basis.

QUESTION 10

What was the cost of these repairs? Please provide a list broken down by school.

ANSWER

This information will be published in the Department of Education's Annual Report.

QUESTION 11

How many air-conditioning systems needed to be replaced? Please provide a list broken down by school.

ANSWER

Please refer to the response to Supplementary Question 9.

QUESTION 12

What was the cost of these new systems? Please provide a list broken down by school.

ANSWER

This information will be published in the Department of Education's Annual Report.

QUESTION 13

Who is conducting the inspection of fans, air-conditioning systems and windows as part of the audit?

ANSWER

The audit has been conducted by a combination of Facilities Maintenance Contractors and Asset Management Staff

QUESTION 14

Did NSW Health recommend an audit of ventilation systems in NSW Public Schools? If so, when did this occur?

ANSWER

The Department of Education initiated the audit of ventilation in NSW public schools in preparation of students returning to on-site learning.

QUESTION 15

How many of the 156,000 learning spaces have been audited?

ANSWER

Safety audits of all 156,000 learning spaces were completed, including libraries and halls in every public school across the State.

QUESTION 16

Will every air-conditioning system in NSW Public schools be cleaned and serviced every month?

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to supplementary question 9.

QUESTION 17

Will schools be required to pay for the cleaning and servicing costs of air-conditioning systems?

ANSWER

The Department of Education is responsible for maintaining all systems installed by the Department.

QUESTION 18

How much has the NSW Government spent repairing or replacing fans, air-conditioning and windows as part of the audit?

ANSWER

This information will be published in the Department of Education's Annual Report.

QUESTION 19

Could you please provide a list of schools which will receive air purifiers in October, broken down by school and number of air purifiers?

ANSWER

Air purification is only recommended if adequate natural ventilation cannot be provided. This approach is strongly supported by expert advice. Even on a still day, our buildings allow sufficient ventilation and meet the recommended ventilation guidance from the World Health Organisation.

Notwithstanding the overwhelming expert advice that recommends air purification only where adequate natural ventilation cannot be achieved, the Department of Education retains a stock for emergency purposes such as when air quality is compromised due to bush fire smoke.

Any use of purifiers will need to be under the management of the local asset management unit, as filters will need regular replacement.

QUESTION 20

How many air purifiers are currently in place at schools?

ANSWER

The Department of Education will provide air purifiers to schools as required.

QUESTION 21

How many air purifiers will be in place for the first week of face-to-face learning?

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to supplementary question 19.

QUESTION 22

What advice was provided by the independent experts you commissioned on the return of face-to-face learning?

ANSWER

The Department of Education and NSW Health have worked collaboratively to develop a plan for students' safe return to school. The Department's Return to School planning has been informed by the Doherty Institute Modelling Report for

National Cabinet and ongoing advice from NSW Health. Planning has also been informed by analysis of the approaches and experiences of other jurisdictions, including the United Kingdom, Canada, and others.

Return to school planning will also continue to be informed by school leaders with expertise across a wide range of school settings; key stakeholders including the NSW Primary Principals' Association, the NSW Secondary Principals' Council, the NSW Teachers Federation, the Public Service Association and the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW; as well as subject matter experts and key partners from across government.

QUESTION 23

What advice did NSW Health provide in bringing the date students return to school forward?

ANSWER

The Return to School Plan has been informed by NSW Health advice. The date in which students return to school was a matter for Government, and subject to decision-making by the crisis cabinet.

QUESTION 24

Does NSW Department of Education have any plans to purchase antigen rapid testing for schools?

ANSWER

The Department of Education is exploring with NSW Health the use of rapid antigen testing as a further screening measure to reduce the risk of outbreaks in schools or the length of time students need to isolate after contact with someone with COVID-19.

QUESTION 25

Will schools be able to purchase antigen rapid testing kits themselves?

ANSWER

NSW government schools should not purchase Rapid Antigen testing kits. The Department of Education is exploring any potential use with NSW Health and will provide further advice to schools.

QUESTION 26

What advice has NSW Health provided about close contacts in NSW Public Schools?

ANSWER

NSW Health made changes on 15 October 2021 to self-isolation requirements for close contacts in specific settings where the person is fully vaccinated. This means that if a person is identified as a close contact and is fully vaccinated, they may need to self-isolate for a shorter period of time, and adhere to specific testing requirements in line with the advice from NSW Health. They may also be requested to not return to some venues or settings for 14 days.

Advice will be provided to close contacts based on the specific circumstances of the relevant case. This advice may be reviewed or updated as needed based on NSW Health advice.

QUESTION 27

Will students who are un-vaccinated be required to self-isolate when they have been identified as a close contact?

ANSWER

Students who are not fully vaccinated will need to continue to follow the advice from NSW Health which currently requires them to adhere to testing requirements and self-isolate for 14 days.

This is the process as at 20 October 2021 and may be reviewed or updated as needed based on NSW Health advice.

QUESTION 28

Will schools continue to be closed for cleaning if a student or staff member on site tests positive to COVID-19?

ANSWER

Where there is a case of COVID-19 in the school community, the Department of Education has established systems and protocols with NSW Health to manage and respond accordingly to keep our staff and students safe. This may mean making a school non-operational for contact tracing if there is a confirmed case who has been infectious while on school grounds. This is the process as at 20 October 2021 and may be reviewed or updated as needed based on NSW Health advice.

The Department continues to work with NSW Health to identify opportunities to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on school communities and face-to-face learning.

QUESTION 29

Could you please provide a breakdown of the number of NSW public schools which have had to close due to COVID-19 in 2021 as at 1 October, broken down by LGA and the number of times each school has had to be closed?

ANSWER

157 NSW public schools have been made non-operational for contact tracing and cleaning due to a confirmed case of COVID-19 between 26 June 2021 to 1 October 2021.

There are nine schools that have been made non-operational twice during that time, all others have been made non-operational once.

The breakdown of schools by LGA is listed below:

Local Government Area	Number of Schools
(A) stands for Areas (C) stands for Cities	
Armidale Regional (A)	1
Bayside (A)	4
Blacktown (C)	16
Burwood (A)	1
Camden (A)	2
Campbelltown (C)	3
Canada Bay (A)	4
Canterbury-Bankstown (A)	14
Central Coast (C)	6
Cowra (A)	1
Cumberland (A)	11
Dubbo Regional (A)	9
Fairfield (C)	3
Georges River (A)	2
Hawkesbury (C)	1
Hilltops (A)	1
Hornsby (A)	1
Inner West (A)	8
Lake Macquarie (C)	4
Lane Cove (A)	2
Lismore (C)	1
Liverpool (C)	6
Mid-Western Regional (A)	1
Newcastle (C)	2
Northern Beaches (A)	3
Parramatta (C)	6
Penrith (C)	13
Randwick (C)	6

Ryde (C)	3
Strathfield (A)	3
Sutherland Shire (A)	1
Sydney (C)	7
The Hills Shire (A)	3
Waverley (A)	3
Wollongong (C)	3
Woollahra (A)	1
Yass Valley (A)	1
Grand Total	157

QUESTION 30

How many schools that have applied for Round 2 of the Cooler Classrooms program are yet to have any air-conditioning installed at their school?

ANSWER

432 schools that applied under Round 2 of the Cooler Classrooms Programs are yet to be approved for delivery.

QUESTION 31

How many schools that have applied for Round 1 of the Cooler Classrooms program are yet to have any air-conditioning installation completed at their school?

ANSWER

Of the 288 schools in Round 1 of the Cooler Classrooms Program, 53 are in the design and tender stages. A further 95 schools are in delivery with construction works taking place on site. Systems have been delivered in 1,860 learning spaces and libraries with all works completed at 101 schools. 31 schools were assessed as already having fit for purpose air conditioning in all eligible learning spaces and libraries.

Eight schools approved for delivery in Round 1 are now part of the major capital works program. These schools will have air conditioning installed in new permanent learning spaces and libraries, as part of the project scope.

QUESTION 32

Could you please provide a current list of the schools that were successful in Round 1 of the Cooler Classrooms program that are yet to have their air-conditioning projects completed, broken down by the anticipated completion timeframe for each project?

ANSWER

161 schools approved for delivery in Round 1 of the Cooler Classrooms Program are in delivery.

A number of projects are on hold due to major capital works project.

School name	Anticipated Completion Date
Albion Park High School	Term 2, 2022
Albion Park Rail Public School	Term 1, 2022
Anson Street School	Term 2, 2022
Armidale City Public School	Term 2, 2022
Ashbury Public School	Term 1, 2022
Asquith Girls High School	Term 1, 2022
Athelstane Public School	Term 2, 2022
Austinmer Public School	Term 1, 2022
Avalon Public School	Term 1, 2022
Banksmeadow Public School	Term 1, 2022
Batemans Bay High School	Term 2, 2022
Batlow Technology School	Term 1, 2022
Beacon Hill Public School	Term 2, 2022
Berkeley West Public School	Term 1, 2022
Beverly Hills Girls High School	Term 1, 2022
Bilgola Plateau Public School	Term 1, 2022
Birrong Boys High School	Term 3, 2022
Birrong Girls High School	On Hold
Black Springs Public School	Term 3, 2022
Blayney High School	Term 2, 2022
Blayney Public School	Term 2, 2022
Bowral Public School	Term 3, 2022
Bridge Road School	Term 1, 2022
Bronte Public School	Term 1, 2022
Bundeena Public School	Term 1, 2022
Burrawang Public School	Term 2, 2022
Byron Bay Public School	Term 3, 2022
Cammeraygal High School	Term 1, 2022
Canobolas Rural Technology High School	Term 2, 2022
Captains Flat Public School	Term 1, 2022
Caringbah High School	Term 1, 2022
Cecil Hills High School	Term 1, 2022
Cherrybrook Technology High School	Term 1, 2022
Chifley Public School	Term 1, 2022
Chillingham Public School	Term 1, 2022
Cobargo Public School	Term 1, 2022
Coniston Public School	Term 1, 2022

Connells Point Public School	Term 2, 2022
Coogee Public School	Term 1, 2022
Cooma Public School	Term 1, 2022
Crookwell High School	Term 1, 2022
Dapto High School	Term 2, 2022
Dorrigo Public School	Term 3, 2022
Drummond Memorial Public School	Term 2, 2022
Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design	Term 3, 2022
Elanora Heights Public School	Term 1, 2022
Engadine West Public School	Term 3, 2022
Epping West Public School	On Hold
Exeter Public School	Term 2, 2022
Five Islands Secondary College	Term 1, 2022
Georges River College Hurstville Boys Campus	Term 1, 2022
Georges River College Penshurst Girls Campus	Term 3, 2022
Gladesville Public School	Term 1, 2022
Glebe Public School	Term 1, 2022
Glen Innes High School	Term 1, 2022
Glen Innes Public School	Term 3, 2022
Glenroi Heights Public School	Term 3, 2022
Glenwood High School	Term 1, 2022
Goulburn High School	Term 1, 2022
Granville Public School	Term 3, 2022
Greystanes High School	Term 1, 2022
Gymea Technology High School	Term 3, 2022
Hannans Road Public School	Term 1, 2022
Hill Top Public School	Term 2, 2022
Holroyd High School	Term 1, 2022
Hornsby Girls High School	Term 1, 2022
Hurstville South Public School	Term 1, 2022
Illaroo Road Public School	Term 2, 2022
Jennings Public School	Term 2, 2022
John Warby Public School	Term 2, 2022
Kanahooka High School	Term 1, 2022
Kegworth Public School	Term 1, 2022
Kelso Public School	Term 2, 2022
Killarney Heights High School	Term 1, 2022
Kirrawee High School	Term 1, 2022
Kogarah High School	Term 1, 2022
Koonawarra Public School	Term 2, 2022
Kotara South Public School	Term 1, 2022
Lake Macquarie High School	Term 1, 2022
Lake Munmorah High School	Term 2, 2022
Lake Munmorah Public School	Term 3, 2022
Lakelands Public School	Term 3, 2022
Leumeah Public School	Term 3, 2022
Lismore Public School	Term 3, 2022

Lithgow Public School	Term 2, 2022
Marrickville West Public School	Term 3, 2022
Merewether High School	Term 1, 2022
Mortlake Public School	Term 1, 2022
Moruya High School	Term 1, 2022
Moss Vale Public School	Term 3, 2022
Mount Brown Public School	Term 1, 2022
Mount Terry Public School	Term 1, 2022
Muirfield High School	Term 1, 2022
Murwillumbah High School	On Hold
Murwillumbah Public School	On Hold
Narrabeen Sports High School	On Hold
Newtown High School of Performing Arts	Term 1, 2022
North Sydney Girls High School	Term 1, 2022
Northern Beaches Secondary College Mackellar Girls	Term 2, 2022
Northlakes High School	Term 3, 2022
Nowra High School	Term 1, 2022
Oak Flats High School	Term 2, 2022
Orange High School	Term 2, 2022
Point Clare Public School	Term 2, 2022
Port Kembla Public School	Term 1, 2022
Punchbowl Boys High School	Term 2, 2022
Quaama Public School	Term 1, 2022
Randwick Girls High School	On Hold
Randwick Public School	Term 1, 2022
Rose Bay Public School	Term 2, 2022
Rose Bay Secondary College	Term 1, 2022
Ryde Secondary College	Term 1, 2022
Sandon Public School	Term 3, 2022
Sarah Redfern Public School	Term 1, 2022
Sefton High School	Term 1, 2022
Shoal Bay Public School	Term 1, 2022
Shoalhaven High School	Term 1, 2022
Shortland Public School	Term 2, 2022
Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School	Term 1, 2022
South Coogee Public School	Term 3, 2022
St Georges Basin Public School	Term 1, 2022
Stockton Public School	Term 3, 2022
Sydney Boys High School	Term 1, 2022
Sydney Secondary College Balmain Campus	Term 1, 2022
Sydney Technical High School	Term 1, 2022
Sylvania High School	Term 2, 2022
Tacking Point Public School	Term 2, 2022
Taree Public School	Term 1, 2022
Terara Public School	Term 1, 2022
Terrigal Public School	Term 2, 2022

The Rivers Secondary College Kadina High Campus	Term 1, 2022
Thomas Acres Public School	Term 3, 2022
Tomaree High School	Term 1, 2022
Tomaree Public School	Term 1, 2022
Toormina High School	Term 2, 2022
Toukley Public School	Term 3, 2022
Tregeagle Public School	Term 1, 2022
Tullimbar Public School	Term 2, 2022
Unanderra Public School	Term 1, 2022
Urbenville Public School	Term 1, 2022
Vincentia Public School	Term 1, 2022
Wadalba Community School	Term 3, 2022
Walcha Central School	Term 1, 2022
Waratah West Public School	Term 2, 2022
Warrawong High School	Term 1, 2022
Warrawong Public School	Term 1, 2022
Waverley Public School	Term 1, 2022
Wheeler Heights Public School	Term 1, 2022
Willoughby Girls High School	Term 3, 2022
Wollondilly Public School	Term 1, 2022
Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts	Term 1, 2022
Wollumbin High School	On Hold
Woolooware High School	Term 2, 2022
Woonona East Public School	Term 1, 2022
Wyong High School	Term 2, 2022
Yarrowitch Public School	Term 3, 2022
Zig Zag Public School	Term 2, 2022

QUESTION 33

How many students have dropped out of their Year 12 schooling in NSW since June 2021, broken down by LGA and reasons provided for the drop outs?

ANSWER

A total of 551 students from Year 12, 2021 are recorded as having signed out of NSW public schools to leave secondary education between 25 June 2021 (end of Term 2) and 1 October 2021 (before the start of Term 4). This figure includes students where data indicates they left school to pursue full-time work, start a full-time apprenticeship, commence a TAFE/RTO course, or with an unknown reason. A full breakdown by reasons provided for leaving is not available.

The Department of Education does not have student data at this level by LGA.

QUESTION 34

How many students have dropped out of their Year 11 schooling in NSW since June 2021, broken down by LGA and reasons provided for the drop outs?

ANSWER

A total of 2,248 students from Year 11, 2021 are recorded as having signed out of NSW public schools to leave secondary education between 25 June 2021 (end of Term 2) and 1 October 2021 (before the start of Term 4). This figure includes students where data indicates they left school to pursue full-time work, start a full-time apprenticeship, commence a TAFE/RTO course, or with an unknown reason. A full breakdown by reasons provided for leaving is not available.

The Department does not have student data at this level by LGA.