

**Portfolio Committee 3 – Education**  
**Inquiry into The Planning and Delivery of**  
**School Infrastructure in NSW**

Hearing: 25 May 2022

**Questions Taken on Notice**

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**QUESTION 1, PAGE NO – 45**

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you outline the process for acquiring land for a new school in a greenfield site in a new development area?

ANTHONY MANNING: There are a number of processes. There is a VPA process where the department of planning, as part of a rezoning where they are involved, may well negotiate on our behalf for land to be made available to us. There is often a trigger for that land. It may relate to the number of plots they sell. We work with Planning pretty closely to make sure that the site we are likely to get is suitable for our use and make sure that the trigger levels are right so that, as it comes to us, it comes to us in the right space. That is one place we do it. We have some where developers will come and talk to us about what they are planning to do, interested to see whether we are interested in acquiring a site as part of their development in that space. From time to time we find that we have little provision, so we will often look at acquiring existing sites and as a last resort would move to a compulsory acquisition process, if we needed to, to identify land.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What are your criteria? You said that you work closely with the department of planning. What are the criteria that you put on the site? Do you have a minimum size?

ANTHONY MANNING: Yes. Depending on the capacity we think the school will be, there would be an ideal hectare size. I couldn't tell you off the top of my head.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you take that on notice?

ANTHONY MANNING: I can provide that on notice. And we work with the department of planning. Ideally we want a regular shape and we would like it as flat as we can get it, but obviously that is not necessarily available to us.

**ANSWER**

A range of factors are considered when identifying a site for a new school. Each site will require a case-by-case assessment with consideration of:

- Site size – accommodating the required building floor area and open space requirements;
- Location – ensuring safety, accessibility, transport networks and walkability are prioritised;
- Community focus – providing an asset for the community, including consideration of shared use facilities like sports courts, halls;
- Environmental and cultural setting – understanding and embracing the heritage, working with it as part of the school design;
- Risks – understanding the risks associated with a site, including flood and bushfire hazards; and
- Site servicing – access to adequate water, gas and electricity.

Acknowledging the range of factors that can determine the suitability of a site, the figures below are used as a guide when identifying and securing sites for new schools.

School type:	Regional/rural areas:	Suburban/low-medium density areas:	High density/town centre areas:
Primary school for up to 1,000 students	2ha	1.5ha	1.5ha*
Secondary school for up to 2,000 students	4ha	2.5ha	2.5ha*

\*determined based on individual assessment and school design.

## QUESTION 2, PAGE NO – 48

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: If one strategy is gone—and I appreciate that is ancient history and you sound like you are not aware of it—my question therefore is what is the strategy that you are operating by at the moment? Not who are you working with, what is the strategy for the strategic purchase of sites to make sure that the department has good options and adequate sites in areas being unlocked for development?

ANTHONY MANNING: We have a strategic land acquisition agenda. We will understand rezonings that provide us with opportunities to acquire land as part of that process. We will fundamentally work with the department of planning. We will work with the population data. We will understand where we think the next wave of developments will occur and we will get in as part of that, either as part of the rezoning exercise with the department of planning or, if needs be, with individual developers directly to acquire the land that we need. But it is very much informed by the rezoning that is happening and the dwelling forecasts that the department of planning are giving us.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Does the strategic acquisition program have a strategy?

ANTHONY MANNING: I think I have just articulated the strategy. But it is fundamentally not a strategy to buy multiple sites that we profit from.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: I understand what it is not, but if it is a strategic land purchasing approach, I am just asking if you can give us the strategy that they are using for their strategic purposes. I am assuming a strategic investment has a strategy behind it. Is that a document that you may be able to make available to the Committee?

ANTHONY MANNING: I will take that on notice.

## ANSWER

The Department of Education's approach to obtain land is to acquire adequate, and appropriate, sites to meet future anticipated need. Doing so ensures that the Department can plan and react appropriately to meet enrolment needs across the state, especially in areas demonstrating sustained, long-term growth.

### QUESTION 3, PAGE NO – 51 & 52

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I think earlier you suggested that the department wasn't selling land for profit. What, then, is being done at the site that the department owns at Lidcombe South? There's a proposal for rezoning and subdividing an education site. That's with Cumberland council for consultation, and it's mentioned in their submission.

ANTHONY MANNING: I'd have to take that specific example on notice, but I know that we're looking at school infrastructure in that space and looking to reserve and retain land for the purposes that we need it for.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: The whole site could be used for a school, but you're only reserving a small portion. It is intended the rest of the land will be sold for private dwellings.

ANTHONY MANNING: But my understanding is we're retaining sufficient land in order to make sure we can still deliver a school.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How big is the school?

ANTHONY MANNING: As I say, I don't have that data at hand.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: If you get it wrong in terms of your projections for growth in demand, where's the capacity to fix the issue once the land has been alienated from the Crown?

The Hon. WES FANG: They don't get things wrong.

ANTHONY MANNING: Happy to take that specific issue on notice.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:

On notice, can you advise what the estimated enrolments for the school site will be and when that school is likely to come online? How far off is the school?

ANTHONY MANNING: As I said, I'll take that specific example on notice.

### ANSWER

Property and Development NSW (PDNSW) is repurposing the NSW Government-owned site at 80 Betty Cuthbert Drive, Lidcombe. As part of this project, a portion of the site has been identified for a potential future primary school.

The repurposing project is currently in the master planning phase with Property NSW. Sufficient land is to be retained to accommodate a school for up 1,000 students, subject to due diligence and future decision making of government.

The Department of Education uses population projections and student intake area projections to understand where students are likely to live. Population projections estimate student numbers across existing school intake areas. If a school is not in existence then no data is held.

### QUESTION 4, PAGE NO – 53

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Part of the solution, supposedly, to the demountables that are all over Schofields public and Riverbank public is the construction of Tallawong. Another quote from the senior project director of strategic development states:

*It's obvious that the planning people have planned nothing, Site constraints have not been established at any time. The site doesn't really look suitable for the purpose.*

ANTHONY MANNING: You have one individual's view; it's not the organisation's view. It's certainly inaccurate that Planning have done nothing, because we have spent a lot of time with Landcom working out how the site functions, how it works and how that enabling infrastructure would be delivered. We're confident about how that site would develop out. I cannot account for one individual's view in an email between colleagues, but I can assure you that only I have the ability to amend the budget for Tallawong.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You can provide this on notice, but what is the current expenditure?

ANTHONY MANNING: I would have to tell you on notice.

## **ANSWER**

The expenditure for the new primary school in Tallawong is available in the 2022-23 NSW Budget Paper 3 - Infrastructure Statement.

## **QUESTION 5, PAGE NO – 54**

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I have one last question. I have many more, but I will limit them to one. I want to ask you about the new primary school for South Nowra and Worrigeer. There was an election commitment made for a new school in the region, but the business case adviser says there is no population-driven service need. Is that accurate?

ANTHONY MANNING: No, that's not accurate.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: They also say:

*The project team seeks to capture economic and financial benefits of divesting existing schools in the business case.*

ANTHONY MANNING: No.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What existing schools are you investigating for divestment?

ANTHONY MANNING: I don't know. I would have to come back to you on notice. But there is no school to divest.

## **ANSWER**

The Department of Education is not investigating divestment of any schools in the South Nowra/Worrigeer area.

## **QUESTION 6, PAGE NO – 54**

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I ask a question on notice, if possible? There is a range of issues raised in the Concord High School P&C submission. Can we get a detailed response on what's being done to address the specific issues?

## **ANSWER**

A detailed response to issues raised by the Concord High School P&C has been provided through a representation by the Member for Drummoyne.

The NSW Government has allocated funding through the 2022-23 NSW Budget to deliver a major upgrade at Concord High School. The Department of Education will work with the school community as planning on the project progresses.

#### **QUESTION 7, PAGE NO – 54**

**The CHAIR:** Order! I think it is entirely appropriate to ask the agency to address as best it can the issues in the submission. If the member is unhappy with the response, he can ask in greater detail. Given we inspected the site and we have had a pretty good relationship in trying to solve problems, I do not think it is unreasonable to do that. **Furthermore on notice, Mr Manning, could you report back to us on the different cost-benefit options for that sewerage solution at Gillieston?** Thanks. That will help us next week, as well, when we are up there.

#### **ANSWER**

The local School Infrastructure NSW office has engaged with Hunter Water to progress applications in respect to the sewer connection. Work is also underway to engage a hydraulic designer for planning and design works. There are two options for town sewer connection:

1. An existing town sewer system connection point across Northview Street from the school, which requires a rising main and pump system on the school site (circa \$200,000 is a preliminary cost estimate). This system will require ongoing maintenance costs.
2. A new subdivision is planned adjacent to the school across Ryans Road. This would provide a gravity fed sewer connection point (circa \$150,000 is a preliminary cost estimate) with no expected ongoing maintenance costs.

Furthermore, it is noted that the NSW Government has allocated funding through the 2022-23 Budget for the redevelopment of Gillieston Public School.