

**INQUIRY INTO ENROLMENT CAPACITY IN INNER CITY
PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 9 September 2016

I am writing this submission as a resident of Pymont with a daughter currently in year 4 at Ultimo Public School. I am very disappointed with the turn of events regarding the broken promise made by government/Education Department and the lack of transparency and the lack of foresight in what has gone on since. The Ultimo school community was promised a school for 1000 students on the Fig & Wattle st site with sufficient space for play for community use, with before and after school care and a childcare centre BEFORE the election. We were told that the Education Department would work together with the school community to ensure we were happy with the outcome. Well I, along with many other parents were shocked to hear that this was not going ahead especially since so much time, effort and research had gone into choosing the site with the Department of Education fully participating throughout the process! And then to be told the school would be rebuilt on the same tiny block of land in a high-rise with less places for children –only 700 and none of the community benefits ie. Childcare and even less space to run and play for the children!!!!!!!!!!!!???? We were advised that this was due to the costs for remediation being too high for the Fig & Wattle st site. At the very same meeting we heard from City of Sydney council that no one from Department of Education had even come to gain access to the Fig & Wattle st site since they had negotiated and so there could not have been a new investigation into contamination and so this complete u-turn was based on old data which was known prior to the deal being struck between council and Department of Education and prior to the promise being made to the school community. SO at this meeting I believed that the Department of Education probably never had any intention of going ahead with the Fig & Wattle st site and that the whole promise was a ploy for votes! (a) The total costs of the project to date including consultancy fees and (d) the costs of rehousing Ultimo Public School in Wentworth Park while school is rebuilt SO since the renegeing was advised, there has been a real lack of transparency regarding true costs of remediation of the Fig & Wattle site and all I have seen since is a lot of money being spent on consultations with teachers, parents, children, information sessions, leaflets, planning, design competitions, etc, etc etc. . We all know that it must cost the Dept. of Ed truckloads to employ this Leicester & McCallister consultancy firm who send out useless leaflets, maintain a website I don't know who looks at and set up stands trying to appease the school community when clearly we are not happy with what is going on...all in the name of keeping us informed about nothing!!! Then there are the costs for the planning/designing/building for a temporary pop up school, the investigations with potential sites for the pop up school, negotiations with Wentworth Park etc. Then it was found that this site was contaminated too- all this testing, investigation, building, planning, designing just for a pop up school- this seems ludicrous!?? Some parents worry over the standard of the pop-up

school being safe and adequate to school the children for 2 or more years and they are being told that the pop-up school may be even better than the current school- at what cost?????!!!! All this money being spent on a temporary school when it could have gone into building the school that the community was promised and actually wants and needs ??? What is going on here? Then there is the fact that it appears that the current site of the school also needs de-contamination before the new school could be built- so how much is that going to cost? Now we are looking at decontaminating 2 sites!!! And when the community asks for explanations about how much this is all costing- we are told that this is not for public knowledge? Why? The Department of Education must be hiding something because these actions make no sense whatsoever. The government is a body of people elected BY THE COMMUNITY to represent, regulate and serve the needs of THE COMMUNITY, so I cannot understand the actions in regards to the school. (f) any other related matters The media is always stating that Pymont/Ultimo is the most densely populated part of Australia. More and more families are living in the city- this is a known fact, which is being encouraged by government with the explosion of new units being constructed and approved by council. The growth in this area is phenomenal. We need a larger school on a larger piece of land. The children need space to play that is secure. The children in this area are mostly living in units and apartments with NO BACKYARDS. The least we can do is give them some school grounds to play in where there is no concern of homeless people approaching them or fear of them finding syringes left by drug users. Research doesn't even need to come into it (although there is plenty to support ...) – it is common sense: Children need space, need nature, need to be able to run in their school playground- for their emotional well-being, their physical wellbeing and their mental wellbeing! Currently my daughter is not allowed to run in the school playground at Ultimo Public because teachers say it is too dangerous with the amount of children (whoever heard of children not being able to run in their own school playground??) and now the Department of Education wants to put more children on the same tiny block of land with more concrete and artificial surfaces!??? The government is willing to spend millions of dollars on a new convention centre when the old one was working fine (to meet world class standards was the answer given!!!) They are willing to allow 20,000new residences to be built in this already densely populated area. The government is willing to spend money on renewing the Bays Precinct and the Fish Markets. ALL because a profit can be gained! The government is willing to spend over \$20 million on a bridge from Moore Park to the SCG ???? BUT when it comes to the actual NEEDS of the COMMUNITY, the NEEDS of the PEOPLE, the CHILDREN- our future adults- it seems the government is not seeing this as an investment, as a priority because they do not see the immediate profit~!!!! WHAT IS GOING

ON? Have we lost the plot? Where are these country's priorities? Is profit more important than children's well being and the needs of the community at large? If this is the most densely populated area of the country then surely the rates and stamp duty fees and taxes of this community would proportionately be able to cover a larger school? There is no foresight in building the smaller school on the same tiny block of land. The Ultimo Public School was rebuilt 13yrs ago – based on the idea that there would not be that many children living in this area. Well the government got it wrong cause here we are re-visiting the very same scenario! More and more families are living in the city. Is the government going to make the same mistake???

Surely we need to think further than the next 13years??!! If the Fig & Wattle site is not being held as favourable, then a fabulous alternative would be the Wentworth Park Greyhounds Sporting Complex! The children already use this regularly for sporting reasons so it must have been de-contaminated already!! NSW Premier Mike Baird wrote in the local Central Sydney Magazine recently on August 31st, 2016 in the article “Greyhound Race Ban Is About Doing What’s Right” in regards to what will happen to the racing track, “Some claim we are selling off racing tracks to developers. This will not happen; instead this land will be for community use, schools or open space.” Then it sounds like the premier is supporting this as an option for an alternative site for the school!!!! I implore the parliament to consider the points made and listen to the people. We need a larger school for this area and to consider the population growth that is already occurring in this area. We need more childcare centres in the area and our children- our future adults need more secure and green space to play, to grow and learn in -for their emotional, physical and mental health! There is available local land 3 times the size of the current Ultimo School right down the road!!! Let's be intelligent and have foresight and use it!! Let's invest in our children!