

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

**Name:** Mrs Janine Barrett  
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Partially  
Confidential

# **Parliamentary Enquiry into plans to redevelop the inner city schools with a focus on Ultimo Public School**

## **Submission – Janine Barrett President Ultimo Public School Parents and Citizens Association (P&C)- June 2013 to May 2016 – Member Inner City Schools Working Party and Project Reference Group**

The Ultimo Public School (UPS) and wider community have rejected the Department of Education's plans to redevelop UPS on its current site since it was first discussed in October 2012. Our community was outraged by the plan, presented by Tony McCabe (Director Planning and Delivery, Department of Education) to demolish the existing school and build a high-rise mixed-use facility (including residential and commercial facilities) on the existing Quarry St site. The Department took on board the community concerns and promised in a statement from Minister Piccoli on 18/10/2012 ***“that the development would not proceed if the school community decided against it. Not until the school community and the Department have agreed on a proposal would the Government consider any change.*** (Refer to [appendix 1. Statement from the Minister for Education: Ultimo Public School Media release 18 October 2012](#))

At an Extraordinary Meeting held at Ultimo Public School in November 2014 Murat Dizdar, Executive Director Public Schools NSW conceded that the current UPS site could not accommodate projected future growth. Yet here we are only 6 months away from demolition of UPS and forced into a redevelopment of our school that the community has rejected outright for almost 4 years.

As President of UPS P&C for 3 years, I have been a member of the Inner City Schools Working Party (ICSWP) and the Project Reference Group (PRG) working closely with the Department of Education (DoE), City of Sydney (CoS) and the Government Architects office to achieve a new school for the Ultimo / Pyrmont communities. It is these experiences that form the basis of this submission.

During the discussions and negotiations for the new school, I found Minister Piccoli and the Assets Directorate of his Department nothing short of duplicitous, using the promise of a new school for our community on the Fig and Wattle Street site as a deliberate political strategy prior to the last election.

This submission will focus on 6 major areas, namely

- (1) The Inner City Schools Working Party (ICSWP)
- (2) The Project Reference Group (PRG)
- (3) The role of Anthony Perrau, Executive Director, Assets Directorate, Department of Education

- (4) Consideration of the Ministers claim that a school built on the Fig and Wattle Street site would cost \$177 million
- (5) The role of the City of Sydney in negotiations to sell the Fig and Wattle Street site
- (6) Discrepancies in the cost of remediation of the Fig and Wattle Street site.

**Inner City Schools Working Party**

The ICSWP was established in late 2012 and convened on 12 occasions between 13<sup>th</sup> February and 14<sup>th</sup> November. Its function was to find a solution to the lack of primary school places in the Ultimo/Pymont area.

\_\_\_\_\_ had undertaken an investigation into the projected need for primary school places in the Ultimo / Pymont area. His investigation failed to take into account migration and centred on only a handful of apartment blocks in the area.

At this time, the ISCWP was working within the Departments brief of needing to build a school in the area to cater for 1000 students, although I note this has since been revised down to around 750-800.

All new idea’s for suitable sites for a new school on an alternative site were generated by parents and community members, the only options proposed by the Department were **redevelopment of UPS either as a high rise school, mixed use high rise or redevelopment of Glebe Public School (GPS).**

The six options for the proposed new school, in order of preference, were

City of Sydney owned land at Fig and Wattle Street, Ultimo	<b>535</b>
100 Harris Street, Pymont	<b>439</b>
Expansion of Glebe Public School	<b>437</b>
Redevelopment of current site as a high rise school	<b>425</b>
Redevelopment of current 0.59 ha site as a mixed use development, to include child care, commercial and residential	<b>409</b>
Other sites in Pymont, to be developed as a new Pymont Public School.	<b>336</b>

A weighting system was used to score the evaluation criteria to determine which of the proposed options was the best outcome for the Ultimo / Pymont community. The criteria for evaluation were as follows. The final score is noted in the above table in red.

- Meeting of projected demand for teaching spaces
- Consistency with DEC goals and school facilities standards
- Cost and Value for money
- Stakeholder and community acceptance
- Location and accessibility
- Site capability and constraints
- Area and quality of outdoor play space
- Added benefits to community, particularly childcare
- Minimum disruption to school operation

This objective weighting system clearly showed the Fig and Wattle Street site to be the most appropriate and as such it was the unanimous findings of the ICSWP that the City of Sydney owned council depot would be the first choice for a school to serve our community. The Fig and Wattle St site was and remains the obvious choice for a new school as it:

- sits on the border of both Pymont and Ultimo and could potentially be the hub of the community
- is easily accessible to both
- Wentworth Park Light Rail stop is adjacent to the site
- is accessible by lift from Jones Street
- is the only site large enough (in the area) to accommodate a school and community facilities to cater for the growing needs of the community

- is the only site that could provide adequate play space for the students
- could make use of its natural topography to provide a sustainable environment

Chair of the ICSWP and Director of Public Schools Port Jackson area, Dr Sylvia Corish, assured committee representatives at a meeting held in November 2013; **that the ICSWP would be reconvened if necessary in future**, ([Refer to Appendix 2 Action Record ICSWP 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013](#)). I wrote to Minister Piccoli in December 2015 to request that the ICSWP be reconvened, I received a response dated 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016 from

which states; ***“As the working party has already considered a number of options and shortlisted sites including the current site of Ultimo Public School, the working party does not need to be reconvened to revisit options for constructing the new school.”*** ([Refer to Appendix 3 Letter to Adrian Piccoli re ICSWP, and 4 RML Response –Schools](#)) One more meeting of ICSWP was held on the 8<sup>h</sup> December 2014, the site options were revisited as was “Where to from here”, CoS were not invited to this meeting.

**The recommendation of the Fig and Wattle Street site was accepted by the Department of Education and announced by Minister Piccoli on the 15 December 2014.** ([Refer to appendix 5 Statement from the Minister for Education: New site chosen for Ultimo/Pymont school 15 December 2014](#))

### **Project Reference Group**

The Project Reference Group was charged with designing the new school. This group first convened in February 2014, after the Department put the business case forward for the Fig and Wattle Street School. Membership initially comprised;

- members of the Department of Education, including the Assets Directorate
- the Department's consultants MacLachlan Lister
- a representative of the Government Architects office
- the Director of Wentworth Park Trust
- the principal of Hurstville Public School, as her school has similar student numbers to the proposed new school
- the principal of UPS, and

- 2 representatives from UPS, P&C Association (P&C representatives role is advisory only)

Two more representatives have subsequently been added, **of note, is that the City of Sydney was not and is still not represented on this panel.**

Meetings of this group were initially sporadic, following the February meeting the PRG did not meet again until the middle of July. I attended the Treasury Gateway review in May 2014. Four lengthy PRG workshops were held between 30<sup>th</sup> July and 27<sup>th</sup> August 2014, the aim of these meetings was to enunciate the Educational Principles and Vision Statement for the project, these remained confidential.

The vision was that “*the Ultimo/Pymont Public School is the ultimate place for lifelong learning –the heartbeat of the community- honouring our past and inspiring the future*”. Meetings continued through to October 2014 and then were inexplicably cancelled through to the end of the year. Following the Minister’s formal announcement of 15<sup>th</sup> December 2014 that the school would be built on the Fig and Wattle Street site the PRG meetings resumed in February 2015. MacLachlan Lister visited the school in March to consult the students of UPS regarding their ideas for the new school. At a meeting in April 2015 initial concept designs from the Government Architects office were discussed. These concept designs showed clearly how the architects wanted to use the site to finally link the suburbs of Ultimo and Pymont by creating a flow across the top of the school from the Fig Street Park on Jones Street over to Wentworth Park. After this meeting all meetings were again mysteriously cancelled.

**The Department announced on June 15<sup>th</sup> 2015 that they were withdrawing from negotiations to purchase the Fig and Wattle Street site.**

Meetings resumed after the Departments change of plans and the focus of the PRG became redevelopment of the current site and most importantly the site for the temporary school during the redevelopment phase. stated in a PRG meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2016 that Fort Street School would be the next school to be redeveloped.

### **Anthony Perrau – Executive Director, Assets Directorate – Department of Education**

Anthony Perrau was appointed in June 2013 to head the Assets Directorate of the Department of Education. He is responsible for the management of the Departments \$25 billion asset portfolio and responsible for all education planning and demography, property development, property acquisition and disposal, design, construction, maintenance, procurement and *strategic asset policy and direction*.

Whilst the community was buoyed by the announcement of the new School at Fig and Wattle, Bill d'Anthes (P&C representative on ICSWP and PRG member) and I had serious reservations about the viability of the project after our initial meeting with Mr. Perrau,

Between the middle of 2014 and the Ministers announcement, Mr. Perrau attempted to steer Bill d'Anthes and myself in the direction of accepting redevelopment of UPS on its current site, as a high-rise school. On the first occasion, Mr. d'Anthes and I were invited to the office of Murat Dizdar, Executive Director Public Schools NSW. Mr. Dizdar and Dr Sylvia Corish were in attendance, as was Mr. Perrau. It was the first meeting I had attended at the Mary Anne Street offices of the Department of Education that did not have a note taker present. It was clear from the outset that the objective of this meeting was to persuade Mr. D'Anthes and myself that we should settle for redevelopment of our current site. Mr. Perrau, in a manner I considered patronising told us that this was a great option which would be much more cost effective than the school we had already spent months planning for during PRG meetings. He offered to show us "fly throughs" of some other high rise schools and explained that a "cluster" of inner city schools would be redeveloped in this fashion in order to counter the serious overcrowding of public schools in the area. Mr. d'Anthes and I flatly refused to be coerced by Anthony Perrau, stating very clearly that neither the community nor we would accept a high-rise school as a viable option. We were very clear that our school and wider community had been greatly disadvantaged during the previous shortsighted redevelopment of UPS when our students lost up to 1 ½ hours a day of their education whilst they were transported by bus to and from Orange Grove Public School in Lillyfield, during school hours. Mr. Perrau seemed most irritated that we should stand up to him. Dr. Corish requested that we not talk to anyone about the content of this meeting. Mr. d'Anthes and I remarked to each other as we left the Mary Anne Street premises that it was clear Mr. Perrau was against the Department of Education plans and if anything was going to jeopardise the Fig and Wattle St project it would most certainly be him.

Also of concern to us was the lack of an official note taker. Was this so the Department could later deny that such a meeting took place or deny the content of the meeting? It is further noted the Department never called notes taken at meetings "minutes of meetings", was this to avoid the legal status afforded to formal minutes?

On December 8th 2014, Nic Accaria, UPS Principal, Mr. d'Anthes and I were called (at very short notice) to the Mary Anne Street Office for a meeting with Murat Dizdar, Sylvia Corish and Anthony Perrau; The Agenda was headed with the ICSWP title and [redacted] took notes at this meeting. Anthony Perrau again tried to persuade Mr. d'Anthes and I to accept the high-rise redevelopment of UPS and again seemed irritated that we would not accept an option that would save the Department many millions of dollars. He went on to scoff at our objections and accused the City of Sydney of unprofessionalism during the negotiations for the site. After Anthony Perrau left the room Dr. Corish and Mr. Dizdar disclosed that

someone would attend the school the following Monday morning to make an announcement and that we should be there. We were told this was confidential and not to disclose to anyone, particularly the press. The Minister subsequently announced the Department would purchase the Fig and Wattle Street site.

On June 12<sup>th</sup> 2015 Bill D’Anthes, Nic Accaria and I were again called to the Mary Anne St offices at very short notice. Anthony Perrau, Murat Dizdar and Sylvia Cornish were in attendance; it is my recollection that there was no note taker at that meeting. Anthony Perrau explained that the Fig and Wattle Street project would not be going ahead due to greater than anticipated remediation costs. Anthony Perrau produced a remediation document on MacLachlan Lister letterhead. This showed options for remediation, the most costly being \$53 million, although it was Anthony Perrau’s view that it would be more likely to be in excess of \$60 million. My request to have a copy or take a photograph was denied. A remediation document was made available on the DoE Website following the announcement the project had been cancelled; it is dated 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2015, 11 days after we were shown a remediation report by Mr. Perrau. ([Refer to Appendix 6 DEC-Consolidated-Report-Contamination](#)) Mr. d’Anthes requested a copy of the notes from this meeting; Dr. Corish told him that there are none.

In June 2015, a Public Meeting was held at UPS after the Minister reneged on the promise for the Fig and Wattle St site. Anthony Perrau, Murat Dizdar and Sylvia Corish met with the Executive of the P&C prior to that meeting. Anthony Perrau took this opportunity to “sell” the concept of high-rise redevelopments for the cluster of seven inner city schools, which included Ultimo, Darlinghurst, Glebe, Forrest Lodge, Bourke Street and Fort Street. Mr. Perrau again blamed CoS for the fact there would be no school on the Fig and Wattle Street site. Whilst Mr. Perrau made himself available he did not attend the Public Meeting that followed. It was left to Dr. Corish and Mr. Dizdar to explain a decision that was clearly driven by Mr. Perrau.

I requested meetings with Minister Piccoli and the Premier after the backflip for the Fig and Wattle Street site. ([Refer to appendix 7 Meeting Request Minister of Education](#), [appendix 8 Meeting Request with the Premier](#)). When the Minister met with myself and Mr d’Anthes, Mr Perrau was present as was Dr Corish and \_\_\_\_\_ a member of the Minister's staff. Mr Perrau was the driving force of the meeting, answering in a most condescending manner, many of the questions that I put to the Minister. Mr. Perrau did most of the talking; again stating that redevelopment of the cluster of inner city schools would solve the issue of surging enrolments in the inner city area.

Since the June 2015 backflip over the Fig and Wattle St site, the Minister refused to engage with the community, the community’s frustration was compounded by his failure to respond to any correspondence from either myself or concerned community members, preferring to delegate this task to Mr Perrau and most recently \_\_\_\_\_. ([Refer to Appendix 9 letter to the Minister to call for independent testing and Appendix 10 Ms Janine Barrett 2](#)) In the letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> August 2015 Mr Perrau



states that ***“As agreed, I attach the relevant correspondence between the Department and/or its consultants and the City of Sydney regarding the City of Sydney’s position, the Department lost faith in the negotiation process and made the decision not to proceed with the sale in early May 2015.”***

The correspondence attached to the letter is not a complete representation of the correspondence between the three parties’ and as such is misleading.

Documents requested by the P&C through GIPA demonstrate clearly the cynical manner the Department employed in dealing with the school and wider community over the government backflip into the Fig and Wattle St site. The department states that ***“there is a very high risk of community dissatisfaction with this decision, which is likely to lead to a concerted campaign to proceed with the purchase of the Wattle, Jones and Fig”*** and that ***“there is also a very high risk of a City of Sydney Council campaign seeking to hold the Department responsible for a less than satisfactory outcome and a loss to rate payers”*** the document goes on to say ***“The Department proposes to mitigate these risks by quickly moving to prepare concept design options for redeveloping the existing Ultimo Public School site as a means of moving the process on and demonstrating a renewed commitment to investing significantly in public education in the Ultimo/Pyrmont area.”*** Further, ***“with respect to a possible campaign by the council, the Department recommends any response focuses on the very high levels of contamination, how the extent of the required decontamination works is now so high as to make the development of a school on the site, so a safety level appropriate for a school and the wider community, unviable”***. (Refer to [Appendix 12 GIPA Documents 1](#)) The author of this document is Anthony Perrau and is dated 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015, 4 weeks prior to the decontamination documents being released

Documents procured through GIPA by the office of David Shoebridge MLC clearly demonstrate that the “finger prints” of Anthony Perrau are all over this project. In a briefing for the Minister dated 6th July 2015, the cost of the Fig and Wattle Street School is quoted as being \$177 million; it states that this could be reduced by approximately (value redacted) for the sale of the current UPS site. Anthony Perrau

endorsed this briefing. Anthony Perrau also prepared a timeline of events that neglect to include a meeting with CoS on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015 between CoS and DoE Lawyers where an agreement was made to exchange and settle on the sale of the Fig and Wattle St site in June. On 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015 Fred Nile placed a question on notice in the Legislative Council regarding the current situation of UPS, in a briefing for the Minister it is recommended that the Minister sign the answer, Anthony Perrau endorsed this document. ([Refer to Appendix 13 GIPA Documents 2](#))

### **Adrian Piccoli and the \$177 Million School**

I wrote to Minister Piccoli in late October 2014 to express disappointment that the Department of Public Works had ceased work on the Fig and Wattle Street project and to urge him to honour the Lord Mayors invitation to meet to finalise the purchase of the Fig and Wattle Street site, his response on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014 stated "***The department has determined that the purchase price proposed by the City of Sydney does not represent value for money, and due to site contamination represents an unacceptable financial risk to the Department***". ([Refer to Appendix 14 Signed Response from the Minister](#)) After much procrastination by the Minister the project to build a new public school in Ultimo/Pymont was announced in the 2014 State budget. The Minister announced in a statement on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2015 that; "**Some of the costs of the project will be offset by the sale of the existing Ultimo Public School site.**"

During the Meeting between the Ministers office and P&C representatives in July 2015, I questioned the Minister as to why his department had disregarded the advice of MacLachlan Lister regarding remediation, ([Refer to Appendix 15 ML letter to the Department](#)) he stated that "***we have to build a school for the Future and we are not going to spend \$177 million on a school***". I then questioned, why, when and by whom was the remediation report commissioned, given that the Department and Project Manager had not carried out their own drilling to gauge the actual level of contamination and cost of remediation? ***The minister responded, "It is still going to be the same answer, we are not going to revisit this, there will be no more reports no more tests and no school built on that site, the matter is closed"***. ([Refer to Appendix 16 Questions for the Minister](#)) The Minister was not fully conversant with all the details particularly the prior history of redevelopment of UPS outlined in the submission by Mr. d"Anthes.

Minister Piccoli has oft repeated in the media that the cost of a school on the Fig and Wattle Street site would be \$177 million his calculations are as follows:

- Site - \$74 Million

- Remediation - \$53 million.
- Build - \$50 Million

Minister Piccoli has neglected to factor into his calculations that:

- Clover Moore is willing to renegotiate the \$74 million for the site and has invited the Minister to re enter into negotiations no less than six times.
- the City of Sydney are prepared to accept a minimal cash settlement and provide other critical community infrastructure on this site including, two childcare Centres, community hall, library and sporting facilities as part of the school build, reducing the overall cost of the build by millions of dollars.
- Remediation would cost according to CoS and MacLaclan Lister (the experts hired by the Department) somewhere between \$23 and \$31 million.
- the community is prepared to consider, removal of the entire fill from the site to provide an underground car park below the school. This could serve as a "Park and Ride" stop (site adjacent to Wentworth Park Light rail), providing ongoing revenue that would overall, subsidise the cost of the site
- the existing school site could be sold, to offset the cost of the new build, raising approximately \$50 million for the Department (although this figure is likely higher now).

These options could potentially save the Department millions of dollars and provide critical services to the densest population centres in Australia.

In January 2016 the Ministers office and Anthony Perrau (the Minister failed to attend) told Alex Greenwich MP that they would consider the Fig/Wattle St site as a potential site for a school for the Bays Precinct development. Begging the obvious questions:

1. If, as you state a school on this site would cost \$177 million now, how much would it cost 10 plus years down the track, assuming the land was still available?
2. If this site is too contaminated for a school now, why will it be acceptable for a school as part of the Bays Precinct?
3. Why build a school now that will only cater for the needs of the community for 10 - 15 years when it is possible to build a school that will meet the communities needs for the foreseeable future?

## **City of Sydney**

I worked closely with CoS from June 2013 to the present. Lord Mayor Clover Moore and her team always demonstrated great commitment to achieving the right outcome for our community with regards to a primary school for the Ultimo Pyrmont area. Clover Moore, Deputy Lord Mayor Robyn Kemmis, CEO of CoS Monica Barone and [redacted] always went above and beyond in terms of their willingness to support myself and the community with the Fig and Wattle St project. The Lord Mayor and senior representatives from CoS attended both Public Meetings at UPS and Ms. Moore phoned me on a number of occasions to update me personally on major developments in the project, demonstrating her personal involvement and that she was truly invested in the project.

I met with Monica Barone in January 2016, she and Council staff outlined the City of Sydney's policy for remediation of contaminated land and discussed events leading up to the failure of the land purchase. Ms Barone gave a commitment to provide the P&C will all correspondence between the CoS and the Department of Education regarding the purchase of Fig / Wattle Street. These documents clearly show the CoS negotiated with the Department in good faith. Further, that they were prepared to accept a minimal cash settlement for the land and provide many community facilities, including two childcare centres, a Library, a school hall, sporting and community facilities. This is evident in a letter from the Lord Mayor to Adrian Piccoli on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014 where she states that she "could meet the remaining gap in the sale price through additional in-kind public benefit for CoS such as a second childcare facility. (The Department churlishly responded to the offer of a second childcare by saying the site could not support it, an absurd claim given the site occupies 1.2Ha).

The documents strongly suggest at best the Department were incompetent in the handling of these negotiations or at worst had no intention of ever purchasing the land, but rather used the promise of our school as a deliberate political strategy to neutralise the issue prior to the last election. ([See Appendix 17 Summary CoS Documents](#))

## **Remediation Discrepancies**

During the deliberations of the ICSWP, remediation was a topic often brought to the table. We were all aware that irrespective of which site was chosen some level of remediation would be necessary. Documents from the CoS show the disparity between the City and Department over the cost and level of remediation necessary.

I note the following correspondence between the CoS and the Department of Education.

**13<sup>th</sup> August 2014** - CoS letter to Anthony Perrau (AP), Executive Director Asset Management - questions the cost of remediation CoS estimates \$5m as opposed to DOE figure of \$25M. CoS request information that DOE has relied upon to substantiate their costings and how it aligns with May 2014 Douglas Partners report. CoS state that this has been requested before but now this information is urgent in order to progress. CoS say it is interesting to note that the latest Douglas Partners report includes soil and water testing that indicate no new additional sources of contamination and significant decreases in contaminant concentrations. CoS cite again their intention to appoint an independent site auditor to oversee the next steps leading to the preparation of a remediation action plan, which would include any further testing.

**15<sup>th</sup> August 2014** - CoS state that emails issued to DoE have failed to provide supporting material required for substantiating remediation costs. Department of Public Works (DPW) says remediation \$23.27m, as opposed to CoS - \$5.35m

**19<sup>th</sup> September 2014** - CoS state DoE have presented an Executive summary update based on DP report that suggests that remediation will now be \$22.54m, this estimate reflects an option to remove all the soil. The City reviewed the remediation strategies and determined a remediation cost of \$9.5m, this estimate would exceed EPA guidelines for an education facility.

**3<sup>rd</sup> November 2014** - Lord Mayor (LM) Minutes state that DOE proposed remediation significantly in excess of EPA guidelines at a cost of \$18m resulting in an \$8.5m variation that needs to be resolved – minutes also state that LM will negotiate to resolve matter. File note - CoS states that principal difference is \$14.6m for additional soil removal – this is unsupported in any remediation methodology by either DOE or council’s environmental consultants. CoS says it is “unreasonable to expect the City to pay for works significantly beyond EPA requirements to satisfy the standards that are a result of internal decisions by the department.”

**25<sup>th</sup> November 2014** - *Meeting of CoS with DoE, City staff did not have an opportunity to present and discuss options to reach an agreement as the meeting lasted just 10 minutes.*

**4<sup>th</sup> December 2014** - *LM wrote to Minister proposing that the City and State reach an agreement by putting \$4.25m each to bridge the gap between the DE’s last offer and the offer endorsed by council. LM also states that she “could meet the remaining gap in the sale price through additional in-kind public benefit for City of Sydney, such as a second place childcare.*

**12<sup>th</sup> June 2015** - *Tony McCabe writes to CEO CoS to advise that the Department of Education has made the decision not to proceed with relocating UPS to the Fig and Wattle St site. “The*

***Department's decision has been made following a further site remediation report, which indicates significantly higher decontamination costs than anticipated."***

On June 24<sup>th</sup> 2015 MacLachlan Lister responds to the DoE to indicate the \$53m remediation option was unnecessary and not their recommendation.

29<sup>th</sup> June 2015 LM Minute states

- No further testing has been conducted since July 2014, well before the Minister agreed to the Purchase price in December 2014.
- The report provides no justification for the recommended 3-metre depth for excavation or that it be across the entire site.

At an Extraordinary P&C meeting held at UPS in June 2015, Murat Dizdar stated that ***"the Department fully decontaminate sites: they do not cap sites where they build schools. Full Decontamination is a benchmark set by the DEC and they will not deviate from this."*** (Refer to [Appendix 18 Minutes of Extraordinary P&C Meeting](#)) One needs to question whether this is official Departmental policy or whether it is "policy made on the run" as an excuse to extract themselves from an agreement the Department had no intention of honouring. Of course the community expects schools to be free of contaminants but it seems the standard set by the Department would make it prohibitive to ever build facilities for children in the inner city and many other areas of Sydney.

Will full remediation be implemented if the re-development goes ahead on the current school site?

## **Conclusion**

Estimates suggest that a further 10,000 classrooms will be needed to meet demand across NSW by 2031. In the inner city alone primary and secondary schools are bursting at the seams with little or no provision being made for the extra 16,000 new dwellings that will be built for the Bays Precinct Development, nor the developments at Barangaroo, Haymarket and Green Square.

There is little to no land available in the Inner City to provide the extra classrooms that are so desperately needed. A policy of high rise redevelopment will not meet demand and will disadvantage students, families and whole communities who suffer not only during the redevelopment phase but through lack of play and recreation space throughout their entire education.

It is critical the Government ensures that appropriate available land is bought and used to provide enough student places for generations to come. There is land available in the Ultimo /Pyrmont area, it sits on the corner of Fig and Wattle Streets on the border of these two suburbs. Failure by the government to

purchase this land means the opportunity to future proof the educational needs of our community is lost forever. I believe the Fig and Wattle Street site has more than sufficient space to cater for not only a primary school for our community but could cater for a Kindergarten to Year 10 facility. The Minister and his Department have used overinflated remediation costs and grossly exaggerated overall costs to justify their inaction. There is no question this land could be bought and remediated following EPA guidelines, and the resulting school would fall within the budget of the Department. Yet the Department propose they tear down the newest school in the city, relocate the students for up to half their primary school years on a contaminated interim site, remediate to the levels deemed necessary for the failed project and build a new school that only adds a further 300-400 student places on a minute 0.54 Ha site. One must surely question the cost of such an inadequate plan (not monetary) and how much money has been wasted to date on consultancy fees etc. (Refer to appendix 19 Costs To Date). Why does the Department insist on such a shortsighted development when they will unquestionably need to provide further student places within the next ten years? At that time it is almost certain there will no longer be land available to fulfill the Governments obligation to provide enough Public School places, as necessary?

This is not an issue exclusive to the Pyrmont / Ultimo community. The CoS have unsuccessfully tried to negotiate with the Department of Education to commit to a school at Green Square.

The debacle over the redevelopment of UPS has led to fewer families enrolling at the school due to its uncertain future. This leads to the false perception that there is reduced demand for school places in the area and inevitably plays into the hands of the Department and specifically Anthony Perrau who continues to push the line that there are enough classrooms in the area to meet demand.

At a P&C meeting at Ultimo Public School in December 2015, Sylvia Corish, Director of Public Schools NSW Port Jackson Area said that ***“the Assets Department are concerned with Dollars and cents, bricks and mortar.”*** It is my aim through this submission to demonstrate that that is indeed the case. It is my strongly held view that Anthony Perrau was handpicked, most probably by the Minister, to save the Department many millions of dollars by implementing and rolling out the High Rise Redevelopment of the cluster of Inner City Schools (starting with UPS as its test case). I further believe that the Department, specifically Anthony Perrau, failed to deal with the school and wider community and the CoS in good faith, in that, there was never any intent to acquire the Fig and Wattle Street site for a new school. It is my hope the Inner City Schools Working Party will be reconvened as a result of this enquiry to solve the lack of school places in Ultimo and Pyrmont once and for all.

