

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

Name: Mr Ron Powell
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16 September 2016

UPPER HOUSE INQUIRY INTO THE ENROLMENT CAPACITY IN INNER CITY PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS, FOCUSING ON ULTIMO PUBLIC SCHOOL.

I write to offer my knowledge and expertise which I believe to be unique and particularly relevant to this enquiry.

I was Principal Architect Schools in the NSW Government Architect's Office from 1988 – 1991. That position culminated a long career as an architect, landscape architect and environmental professional working on major projects for the NSW government.

From 1992 – 1999 I consulted in the redevelopment of Pyrmont and Ultimo, being responsible to CityWest Development Corporation (CWDC) for the public domain (all open spaces, public and private).

My role at CWDC was to liaise with the Director of Projects at City of Sydney and the Director of the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP) and thus developed a detailed and intimate knowledge of Pyrmont and Ultimo.

In 1999 I re-joined state government to manage the Stone Conservation Program, a major component of which was to obtain Yellow Block sandstone from building sites in Pyrmont.

I was also a resident of Pyrmont Point until 2010 when I resumed my private practice and moved to Leura.

Through my practice I was the stone consultant to the Barangaroo Delivery Authority for the new headland park and am currently consulting to UrbanGrowth NSW for the Bays Precinct.

The NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) engaged the Government Architect to design a new school for the Fig and Wattle Street site, known as the "Depot", which they had agreed to purchase from City of Sydney.

I was asked to assist the Government Architect in regard to the heritage significance of the Depot's remnant cliff face of the former Hell Hole Yellow Block sandstone quarry including its potential to yield some fresh supplies of Yellow Block required for the Minister's Stone Program.

When DEC announced it would not proceed with that project, and resolved instead to redevelop the existing Ultimo Public School site, I wrote to Minister Piccoli on 19 August 2015 expressing my view that the decision was "**short sighted and wasteful**" (letter attached).

Ron Powell

B.Arch Dip.LD Dip.EnvStud

Soon after I was invited to join the Ultimo/Pymont Education Campaign Committee (UPECC) and have continued my investigation and considerations of the various preferable options.

In summary they are:

- The proposed demolition of Ultimo Public School cannot be justified economically.
- I have proposed several options to provide additional accommodation at Ultimo Public School to meet foreseeable demands for 2-3 decades whilst retaining the existing buildings.
- The Wattle Street Depot site offers enormous potential for mixed use development including:
 - Multi-level, below ground carparking strategically located adjacent to the Wentworth Park Light Rail stop and Sydney Fish Markets.
 - The topography offers the opportunity to physically link the public domain at the top of Jones Street clifftop and Fig Lane Park throughout and on top of the mixed use development across Wattle Street to Wentworth Park and the waterfront.
 - Sufficient multi-level building space to accommodate education facilities, a childcare centre, community facilities as well as some commercial and retail, perhaps focussing on the area's already established credentials of communication and high tech industries.

I strongly believe DEC MUST be stopped from demolishing the existing school.

The Wattle Street Depot site offers ONE opportunity to provide for future education and community needs for this most important inner city precinct.

I would be happy to expand upon this brief summary or answer any questions at the Inquiry.

Yours faithfully

Ron Powell

19 August 2015

The Hon. Adrian Piccoli MP
Minister for Education
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Email: office@piccoli.minister.nsw.gov.au

Dear Minister

ULTIMO PUBLIC SCHOOL

As reported in several stories in the press, you have received many objections to your Department's proposal to demolish Ultimo Public School.

I write, not only to record my objections, but also to offer a proposal for consideration by your Department.

My proposal has been developed from considerable and detailed knowledge and experience of the issues involved.

For several years of my career as an architect and landscape architect in the Office of the NSW Government Architect, I designed many schools and their landscapes.

I received acclamation when I was appointed to the position of Principal Architect, Schools (1988-1991) and worked very closely with the Department of Education's Director of Properties. Perhaps my most noteworthy achievement occurred in 1973 when, as project architect for the new Cromer High School, I proposed a "land swap" with Warringah Council as the Department's site was almost a swamp and very expensive to build upon.

The result was a saving of nearly \$700,000, which represented approximately 100 years of my, then, Grade 3 architect's annual salary.

On leaving the NSW public service I became a consultant to the City West Development Corporation (CWDC) from 1992 to 1999. As CWDC's Public Domain Coordinator, I worked with the Director of the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning and Sydney City's Director of City Projects and gained an extensive knowledge of the public domain and general development issues of Pyrmont/Ultimo.

I also worked with CWDC's stone consultant and subsequently rejoined the NSW public service as Manager of the Government's Stone Conservation Program (1999-2009). A major task of that role was to source the rare Yellow Block sandstone essential for the conservation of the state's valuable heritage sandstone buildings.

Ron Powell

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I continue in that quest today as a private individual with occasional consultancies including the new sandstone foreshore at Barangaroo Reserve.

Through this quest I became interested in Sydney City's Wattle Street site, which was the former Hell Hole Yellow Block quarry, as a potential source for limited quantities of Yellow Block still needed for conservation work.

In summary, I believe I can claim "to know what I'm talking about" in regard to Ultimo Public School and Sydney City's Wattle Street site.

I believe it would be a short sighted and wasteful outcome to demolish the existing school.

One of my projects as Public Domain Coordinator for CWDC was to build the pedestrian bridge over Wattle Street to give Ultimo Public School students safe access to Wentworth Park for outdoor activities as their site is, as we know, quite small.

My proposal, put quite simply, is to extend that principle and build the required additional accommodation also on Wentworth Park.

This proposal would need cooperation with Sydney City for them to require an equivalent amount of open space to be incorporated into the eventual development of the Wattle Street site to compensate for Ultimo Public School taking up a small portion of Wentworth Park south.

I believe the development of Council's site SHOULD involve total removal of the contaminated fill. Once this "ultimate safety" situation has been achieved the potential for some Yellow Block extraction can be examined.

The other major benefit of regaining the former quarry's hole is for underground parking associated with the development. Perhaps a crèche could be included that, given its location alongside the Wattle Street light rail stop, would offer commuting parents direct access to city businesses.

The attached "mud maps" add some images to my words. They are conceptual only. I expect officers of your Department will rightly raise many questions about my proposal.

What I would urge is for the positive aspects to be considered in an open, objective manner. I would be very happy to expand upon my concepts to yourself and/or officers of your Department.

Yours sincerely

Ron Powell

