

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

Name: Ms Susanna Segal
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Susanna Segal

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To: Inquiry into inner city public primary school enrolment capacity and redevelopment of Ultimo Public School.

Dear Committee members,

Where I live:

I have been a long term resident of Ultimo since the mid 1990's. I do wish for my submission to be open to the public. I am very happy to talk to you.

Ultimo has seen many changes since I've lived here. Today it's being built up with property developers swooping in. Many more apartments and the revitalization of Ultimo/Pymont and Darling Harbour are surreal. I have been a homeowner since 2004. I live in Ultimo with my two bright and adorable children, our son who is five and our daughter is four, with their father. We have been surrounded by the hum of cement trucks roaring up Harris St. since our son was born. We look on with disbelief at how fast Ultimo is changing. We are footsteps away from Central Park up at Broadway, Darling Harbour and now Darling Quarter down near China Town, not to mention the Bays Precinct development, which we are connected to via the Fish Markets down on Wattle St and Bridge Rd. The Goods Line next to the Powerhouse museum is fabulous. In every direction we turn we see a massive, uprising of new development. It promises urban development on a new scale with many more families moving into the inner west and living moments from the city, here in Ultimo. Pymont/Ultimo have long held the highest density rating in Australia – many more families are quickly moving into our area.

What do I feel is missing:

Lots of new development is in stark contrast to the short-sighted redevelopment of Ultimo Public School. A lot of stamp duty is being happily grabbed but much needed and very valuable infrastructure of a new Ultimo Public School for our dearly loved local children that matches the numbers of families living, and continuing to move into our local area, has been dropped out of the blue and completely wiped off the table.

The school would also help with before and after school care, a new childcare centre was also going to be included – really needed, indeed.

A preschool attached to Ultimo Public School would provide a complete educational experience for Ultimo Public School. I realize this wasn't part of the Ultimo school plan but I do feel it is an extremely worthwhile issue to include. Our children attend KU Ultimo Children's Centre in their preschool program. I would have loved to send them to Ultimo Public School preschool program if there was one. It would be a wonderful opportunity to have additional space for a preschool attached to Ultimo Public School. Early Childhood learning is a national issue where more attention needs to be given to both teachers and carers working in the industry and also most importantly to the children who receive childcare and attend preschool. It gives young children a dynamic start to life. Having a preschool attached to your local school would mean many things such as: more affordable preschool care and more resourceful options. NSW has the lowest attendance of children attending preschool in Australia due to the high fees.

The developers are quickly moving in; plots of land are being taken for only apartments. We have only a short moment in time to take land for our community. To build a new Ultimo Public School that has enough room for ALL the families who live here in Ultimo and Pyrmont and future enrolments is much needed. All spaces in our local area that could be used for a new Ultimo Public School need to be looked into, including The Bays Precinct.

How it affects our family and myself:

I am writing to you to let you know how I feel about the redevelopment of Ultimo Public School. I realise I'm not presenting statics but I hope it does convey a sense of how a community family feels about what's happening in their local area. It's an odd and unexpected experience as a new parent to have to consider that your local public school will need to be completely demolished to make way for a new school. It was recently refurbished back in 2002- not long ago in terms of redevelopments for schools. I was initially thrilled when the Wattle, Jones and Fig streets site in Ultimo was given the green light to be the new school. It felt like a great initiative that would most importantly have enough room to educate our local children into the future and help the community out as well. It was a wonderful plan that wouldn't disrupt the learning space of our children. Once the new school was complete it was a straightforward and smart process of our children simply walking down into their new school. Stay in the original school grounds while the new school would be built - it does offer high quality security and consistency young children thrive on. It can be fixed by allowing this plan to continue. I do hope this plan can be resumed.

I found the initial plan to be exciting, sensible and easy to be able to show and tell my three-year-old son what was happening. I think those words 'show and tell' would come to haunt and disturb me the most. My son is a child who is directly affected as a new kindergarten student of Ultimo Public School in 2017. As a new parent being able to talk about your local school early on and actually being able to show them where their new school is going to be is what I felt would be most helpful. Sounds easy, right? Show them where their school will be. Since the Wattle, Jones and Fig streets site in Ultimo was abandoned by the NSW Government, it has effectively stolen 12 months of valuable time of not being able to 'show and tell' my son where he will go. Not being able to talk to my children about where they would go was disheartening and devastating. I have certainly tried to offer my children stability and security by living in Ultimo, our home for many years. It has felt like a rough ride into the next step of my children's learning steps. Yes, we could move but why should we as permanent long-term residents be bullied out of our beloved Ultimo? Why should we feel bullied into going the private route in education? We do not have the funds or the enthusiasm for private schooling. I felt this way because it was a major concern where they would move the children and how they would do it. The past refurbishment of Ultimo Primary School in 2002 moved the children some distance outside of Ultimo into Orange Grove Public School. Our children are kindergarten aged children; they are young. I have purposely keep their life living around the block in Ultimo to offer stability and safety; they know where their home is. It was only in June this year we learnt they would keep the children in Ultimo. The upheaval of moving was a very real thought process for us which was upsetting. We love living in Ultimo.

Some questions I've wondered about:

Why was the Wattle, Jones and Fig streets site, for the new Ultimo Public School, just abandoned by the NSW Government? It had spent 18 months of taxpayer's money working on the project. By all accounts they were doing a wonderful job.

Why weren't more alternative quotes taken on board for the remediation of the new Ultimo Public School on Wattle, Fig and Jones St site?

Why couldn't Clover Moore offer the land at a more reduced price? Sydney City Council is a wealthy council. Presently communication between the NSW Government and Sydney City Council is non-existent. We need both parties to communicate again for the best possible outcome for our communities needs.

What's happening today?

Many thoughts do run through my mind today before our son starts at Ultimo Public School next year. Our daughter will follow suit in 2018. It was only formally announced this June where the temporary site will be located. Today there is no formal set time to move into the temporary 'pop-up school' in Wentworth Park, Wattle Street. They are verbally talking about a mid year move? It always seems to change. The size of the temporary school completely bothers me. The hall is half the size and apparently the room sizes will also be greatly reduced. The outside play area for the younger kindergarten children to Grade four children have less play area space too. Our children could be squeezed into this temporary scenario for almost half their primary school education; certainly our son could be. New buildings can easily go over timeframes.

It doesn't provide a learning environment that offers a sense of common decency, with regard to the size of space in their day-to-day activities inside the school or outside for the younger children to play in. I'm relieved and grateful the temporary position of the current school is in Ultimo. I'm very concerned about the limited space being allocated in the 'pop-up school'. Young children do need sufficient room to learn, run and play. Playtime is such a vital aspect of learning in primary school. Our community want the space given to our school to be the best it can be; strive for what's best.

Please do help us and find a best solution:

We need your help to provide our community with a new Ultimo Public School our local area actually needs to survive and most importantly flourish. I don't want to see another rebuild in 15 years time. It is disruptive to families. We care about our local children. We can only hope you too will help to give Ultimo/Pymont back the school it really does need for our children's future and our community. I believe the original plan of the Ultimo Public School build on Wattle, fig and Jones St certainly does fit the needs of our area because it offered the right amount of space. It would be a perfect school if a preschool can be included within the plans. I would be happy for any further investigations into space that could be offered within Ultimo or The Bays Precinct too.

One solution I heard which sounded interesting and viable was to build an underground car park underneath the Ultimo Public School on Wattle, fig and Jones St. Keep the car park private from the primary school and community activities. The more you dig the more hazardous parts of the soil is removed and will be a clean space for the school to sit on. The money collected from the car park could help pay towards the remediation of soil, that's needed for the new school to sit on.

The Bays Precinct is a much welcome development. The upgrade of the Fish Markets has been spoken about for many years. It's a relief to think it will finally happen. The Fish Markets are an eye sore as it currently stands. It has so much potential. A car park to help service the Fish Markets is a great idea. Parking around our local area is impossible to find. You have to circle the block one too many times. Residents and businesses would be interested in buying a car space too. Parking in Ultimo is notoriously difficult. We often need to park our car a block away from our home. Some of the spaces could be offered as car parking/storage spaces to buy.

Another idea I heard spoken about was for **developers to buy the land, build the school and sell it back to the NSW government**. I'm certainly not an expert in this area but it also sounded feasible.

Big solutions are needed to help our community. I felt those two ideas could help service the school and our growing space needs for Ultimo Public School. Our school is a beautiful school that creates children who are productive, helpful and amazing individuals - everything you want an adult to be.

Thank you:

Thank you so much for your time and this unique opportunity to tell our story. I do sincerely appreciate and value your commitment to this issue. Again, thank you.

Your Sincerely,

Susanna Segal.