

Supplementary
Submission
No 25a

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

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Inquiry into inner city schools

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WHY WAS THE CITY OF SYDNEY WATTLE STREET DEPOT SITE THE UNANIMOUS CHOICE FOR THE NEW ULTIMO PYRMONT PUBLIC SCHOOL?

When the City of Sydney Wattle Street Depot Site was suggested as a prime site for the construction of a new Ultimo Pyrmont Public School at the first meeting of the Inner City Schools Working Party on 13 February 2013, it was well known that, like most other sites in Sydney, remediation would be required before construction could begin. The City had previously undertaken two reports to determine the scope of remediation.

In most meetings, the Working Party was composed of representatives from the Department of Education (including the Assets Directorate, demographers, and administrators), the Principal, the P&C, the Community, and the City of Sydney. In detailed discussions of requirements during the ensuing 11 meetings, seven sites in total were investigated. The Depot site was the unanimous first choice of the Working Party.

Some of the major reasons that the Wattle Street Depot was selected:

- 1) It was the last large site available in the Pyrmont Ultimo area
- 2) It was large enough to build a 1000 student school
- 3) It could provide adequate outside sport and play spaces
- 4) It could incorporate childcare facilities required for city families
- 5) The OOSH service could be brought on-site
- 6) The design could allow for community use of school facilities
- 7) It was adjacent to the Wentworth Park Light Rail Station for student travel
- 8) It was on the border of Pyrmont and Ultimo and was accessible to both
- 9) The school bus and most pedestrians would have more direct access.
- 10) A public lift was available to and from upper Jones Street
- 11) Students could remain in existing school until new school was finished
- 12) The site would reconnect Ultimo and Pyrmont split by the expressway
- 13) A pedestrian bridge could allow easy and safe access to Wentworth Park
- 14) The site had natural and historical features for educational purposes

After the Depot site was chosen for the new school in late 2013 (announced at a P&C Meeting on 17/02/14), the new Project Reference Group (PRG) met on 9 occasions and agreed on Educational Principles, and discussed various elements of design. Meetings continued until 24/09/14 when negotiations between the Assets Directorate and the City stalled over the cost of remediation. An angry Community Meeting led to a multi-million dollar reduction in the sale price by the City. The price seemed to be agreed upon and negotiations then dragged on for six more months until the Ministry refused to complete the contract in mid-2015. Instead the Minister reneged on his agreement and chose the highly unpopular option of a high-rise school on the present small site.

Since that time, among other alternatives raised by the community to make the development of the Depot site less expensive for the Department included:

- 1) Negotiate a 99 year lease of the site from the City
- 2) Excavate contaminated material then quarry and sell the sandstone
- 3) Sell underground space for a car-park serving Light Rail and Fish Market

The Ministry has since refused multiple invitations to negotiate any further with the Lord Mayor and the City of Sydney. The site is still available.

William James Day d'Anthes

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