

**INQUIRY INTO PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF SCHOOL  
INFRASTRUCTURE IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 30 January 2022

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Partially  
Confidential

# Submission to Portfolio Committee No. 3 - Education

Inquiry into the planning and delivery  
of school infrastructure in New South  
Wales

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## Introduction

Dear Committee,

Thank you for this chance to provide my input into the planning and delivery of school infrastructure across NSW public schools.

One of the Terms of Reference for this review concerns “*delays in converting new school announcements into site identification and school construction*”. I think it must be acknowledged that school site identification in metropolitan Sydney is extremely challenging, as most viable land has already been built upon, is not in an appropriate location or is too small for a new school. Due to this, I contend that site identification needs to be done not only **reactively**, after a new school has been announced, but done **pro-actively** when rare opportunities to secure ideal sites and facilities present themselves. Such an opportunity has recently appeared with the Western Sydney University (WSU) Milperra site due to be vacated, providing purpose-built educational facilities in a key population growth area. The NSW government has so far shown a complete lack of vision in failing to secure this site or its facilities, however it is not too late to correct this.

My submission will highlight the poor state and lack of investment in the local public schools in my area, the East Hills electorate. It will also provide information about the potential of the WSU Milperra site and argue that the Government has demonstrated a complete lack of vision and strategic planning in failing to secure this site for future public educational use. The conversion of the site from educational use to residential housing requires Ministerial approval, it therefore fully within the control of the NSW Government to save this site for the benefit of the community.

Sincerely,

# The Western Sydney University Milperra Site

## Background

The Western Sydney University is in the process of moving its Bankstown Campus from its current Milperra location (Horsley Rd &, Bullecourt Ave, Milperra NSW 2214) to a new location in Bankstown CBD. The plan is for the existing university buildings and facilities to be demolished and replaced with approximately 440 residential dwellings in a joint WSU-Mirvac partnership. Another part of the WSU site will be / has been sold to a local Catholic girl's school.

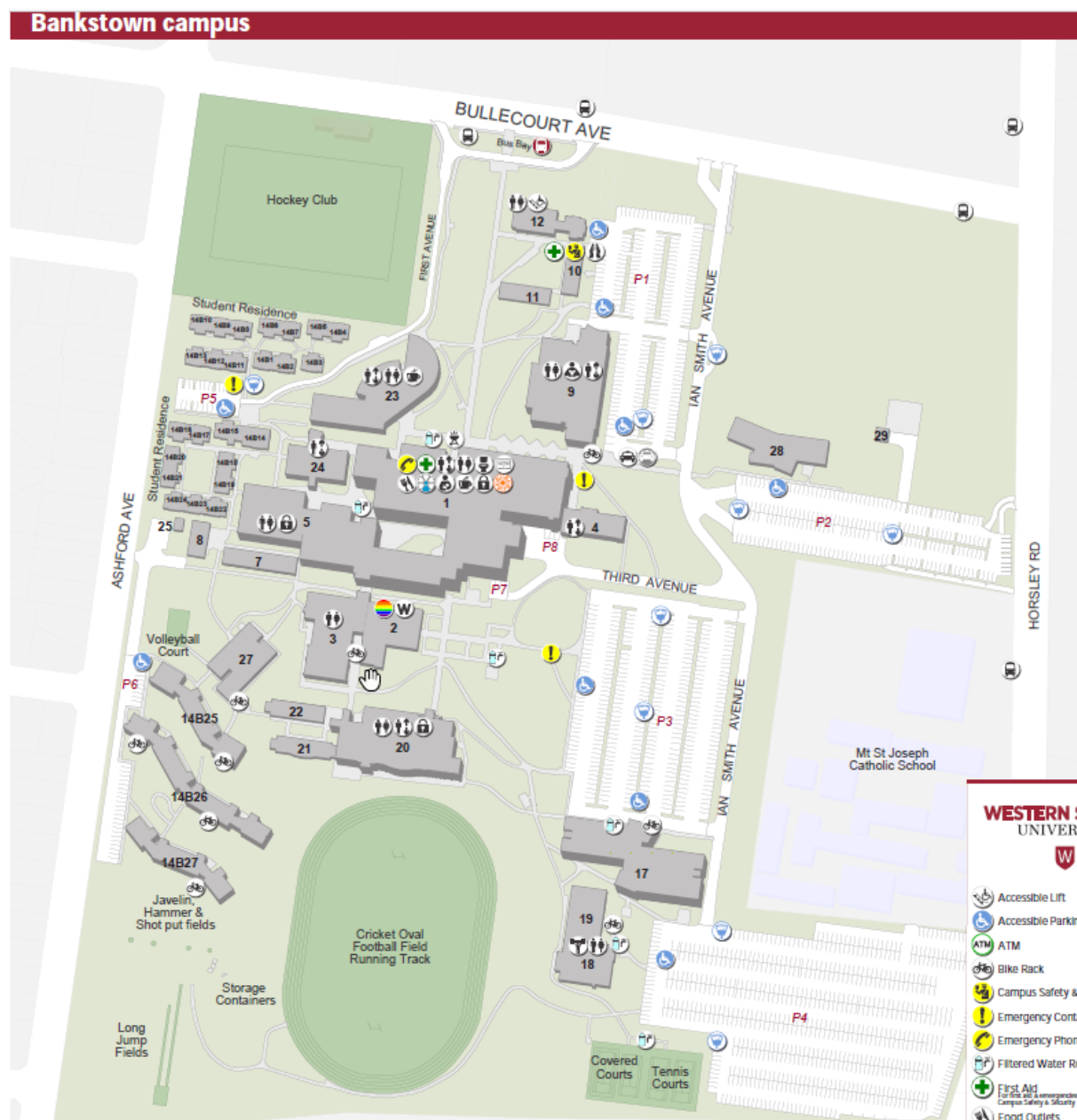


Figure 1 – Current WSU Bankstown Campus map, taken from WSU website.



Figure 2 – Mirvac Masterplan for the WSU Bankstown site, exhibited in November 2019 and showing proposed dwellings

## History

The Western Sydney University Campus at Milperra has had continual educational use since **1918**, when it was the original site of Milperra Public School. In the 1970s, Milperra Public School was moved to a new location to make way for tertiary colleges, the site was provided by the NSW government to the future-WSU for a **nominal sum**. To repeat this important point, WSU was gifted this land by the NSW government for the express **purpose of providing educational opportunities to the people of South Western Sydney**. Today, the NSW government is allowing this land to be turned into residential housing, despite the dire need for educational land and infrastructure in our area and the requirement of Ministerial approval for the change in land use.

## The Current WSU Campus

The existing WSU Milperra campus has everything needed to make an excellent modern public high school. Its beautiful grounds, facilities, buildings and sports grounds could

provide the basis for a flagship school for our region – even a selective or specialist high school.

Among the many features that make this site ideal for a new school:

- **Spacious, landscaped grounds:** The beautiful campus contains space for kids to play, be active and be in nature. Further in this report I have detailed [the importance of outdoor sites](#) for schools, which makes spacious grounds an integral part of site selection for a new school.

Please watch this video “The Garden Nearby” which highlights the beautiful campus, landscaped grounds and many mature trees: <https://youtu.be/vkItYhyi77Y>

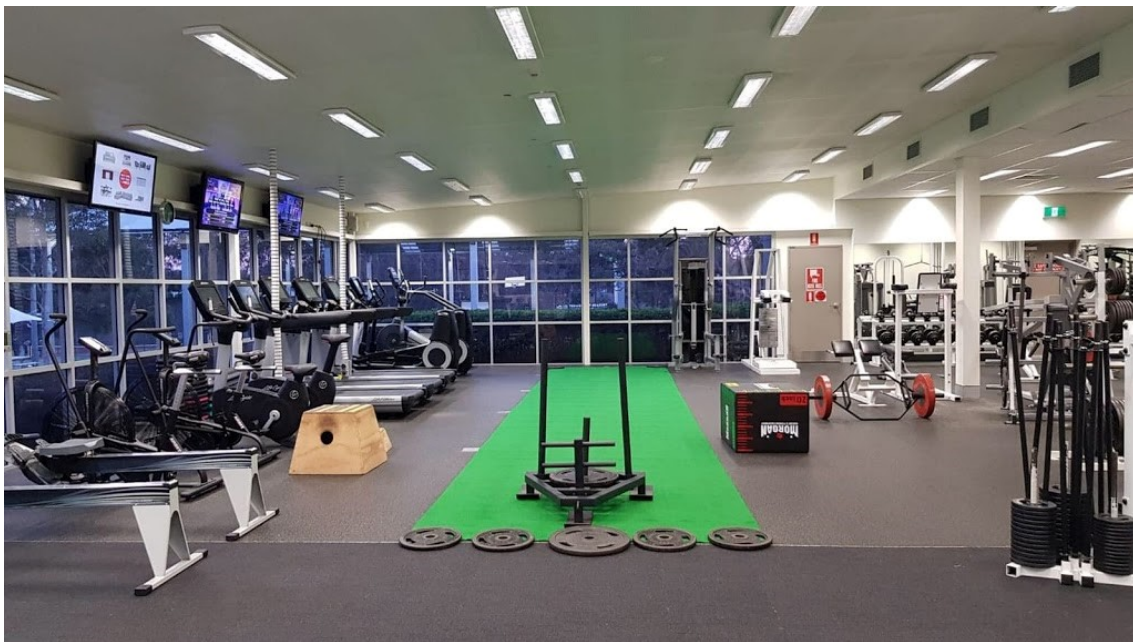


*Figure 3 – Campus photo from WSU website.*



*Figure 4 - view of the Milperra university campus grounds – author’s own photo*

- **Sports facilities including:**
  - Javelin, Hammer and shotput fields
  - Long jump fields
  - Cricket Oval
  - Football Field
  - Running Track
  - Tennis Courts
  - Volleyball Court
  - Gymnasium
  - Hockey club



*Figure 5 – Gymnasium – from university's own website*

The university's many sporting facilities are often used by the wider community, including the gymnasium which is leased to the YMCA and open to the public. This will be lost when the gym is sold off to a private Catholic girl's school (the lesser of two evils as it would otherwise have been bulldozed). It would have been preferable that these facilities could be incorporated into a new public high school, and they could continue to be shared with the public. The Hill's Sports High School in Seven Hills has a gym that is used by both the public (before/after school hours) and the school students (during school hours).



- **Margot Hardy Art Gallery:** Established in April 2000, the Margot Hardy Gallery is a valuable space for hosting art exhibitions, artist talks and other events. The gallery provides an exhibition venue for the University and wider community to view artworks which have been created by WSU students, staff or alumni, primary and secondary students and artists and community groups who reside within the Western Sydney region. The gallery provides 21 metres of hanging space which is both rent-free to artists and free to the public to visit.



*Figure 6 – Margot Hardy gallery from WSU website*

- **Joyce Wylie Library:** A masterfully designed 4000sqm library, architected by Tim Earshaw and Partners in consultation with library design specialist David John Jones (aka The Library Doctor) from the State Library of NSW.

Please take a virtual library tour of this beautiful building:

<https://wsulib360.com/libvr/BAN/embed.html>

Library features include: Spacious smart study zones, Training rooms, Book Collection spaces, Student group study rooms, Service Desk, Reserve collection room, Quiet study areas overlooking tranquil campus, toilets and access rooms for people with a disability



Figure 7 – View of Joyce Wylie library from WSU Twitter account

- **Lecture Theatres, including:**

- Lecture Theatre 4, Building 23, Room G.30 - Lecture theatre plus two breakout rooms ideal for conferences and seminars, seating capacity for up to 300 people.
- Lecture Theatre 6, Building 20, Room 1.07 - Lecture theatre plus six breakout rooms ideal for conferences and seminars, seating capacity for up to 500 people.



Bankstown Campus, Lecture Theatre 4  
Building 23, Room G.30



Bankstown Campus, Lecture Theatre 6  
Building 20, Room 1.07

Figure 8 – Lecture theatres from WSU website

**Many more facilities including:**

- Auditory Laboratories and Computer Labs
- Classrooms and learning spaces
- Student Accommodation

- Cafeteria and shops
- Parking lots

There are many more facilities, too many to list, some of which are shown on the campus diagram below.

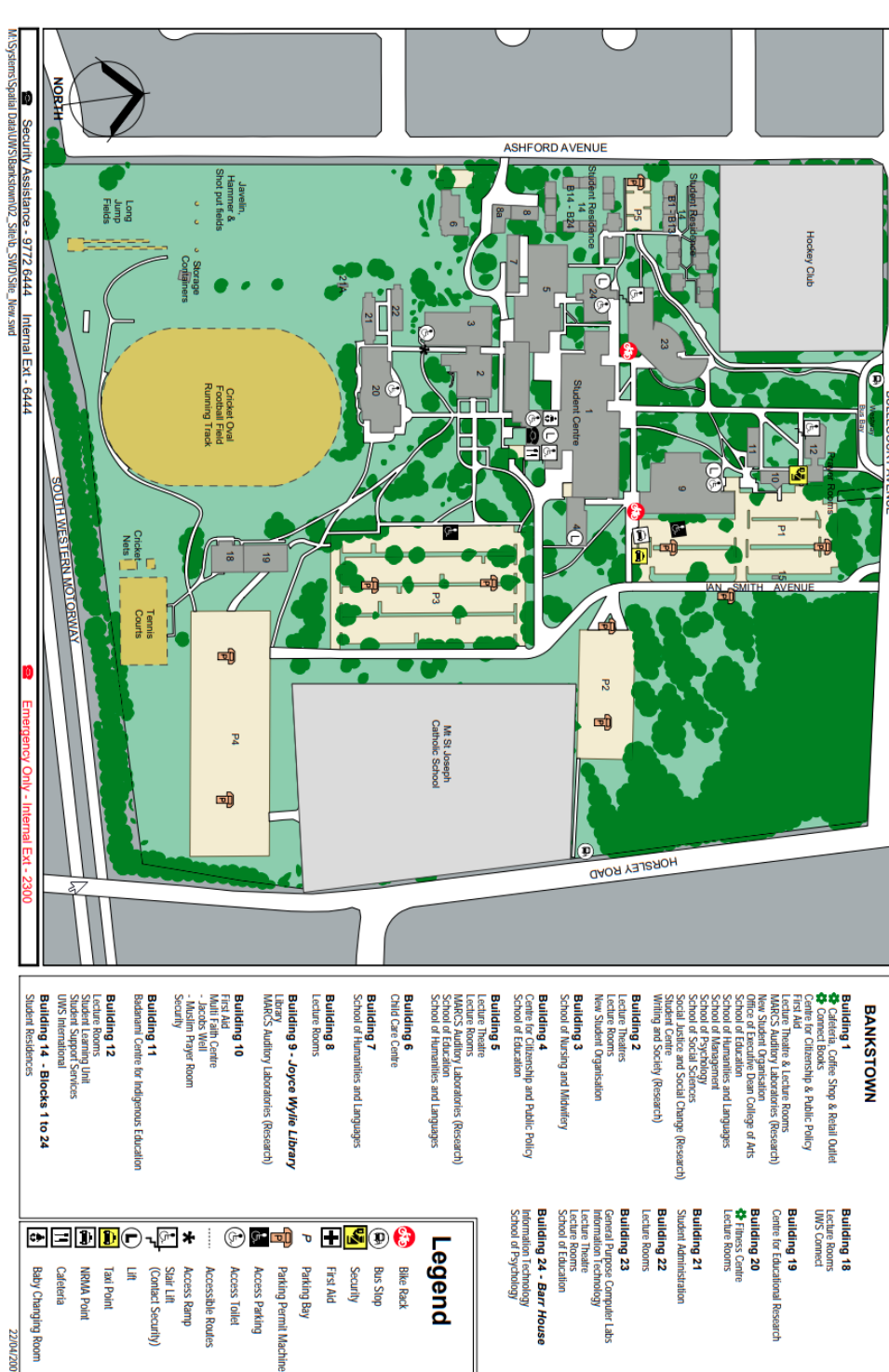


Figure 9 – Campus map from WSU website

## State of educational infrastructure in our local area

### General

In the East Hills district, although there is a great deal of local pride in our kids and our community history, it is well known that our local schools have sub-standard facilities and have been neglected for years. Many kids across our area are learning in hot, unairconditioned demountables. The fact that there were 41 demountables at public schools in the East Hills district alone was a key issue at the last state election and was referenced by Labor challenger Cameron Murphy.<sup>1</sup> We know that schools in other districts have it better – I have seen the spacious learning spaces for myself in one of the Winston Hills primary schools when I lived in the area. A single kindergarten classroom I observed had a ‘wet zone’ for arts or science experiments complete with tiling, sinks, stools and benches; a large computer section and a sunken mini-amphitheatre to gather the kids and tell stories in; and most of all it had about double the amount of space of one of my kids classrooms at Revesby South Public School.

The difficulty is that I, as a parent, can only give you these anecdotal stories – I have no access to concrete statistics such as the square metre comparisons of our classroom, the age of the buildings etc. However, the behaviour of so many families who move away from our area for a better education; or those who scrimp and save to get their kids into private/Catholic schools, in order to avoid our local public schools, underscores my analysis. Further, the poor state of our public schools is why our local community is up in arms about how unthinkable it is to demolish the facilities at the WSU Milperra campus.

Firstly, I will provide some specific examples of the poor state of our local schools.

### Revesby South Public School – small classrooms

- **Classrooms too small:** My kids attend Revesby South Public School. When I visited my Year 3 son’s classroom last year I could not believe how small and crowded it was. They had 30 students with rows and rows of kids facing the whiteboard with a tiny space at the front of the classroom for them to sit on the floor. There were no breakout spaces, no room for kids to stretch out and be kids, or even any room to move around the desks apart from the centre aisle. I estimate the classrooms are

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=2199918326765517&id=370510506372984&comment\\_id=2212746015482748](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2199918326765517&id=370510506372984&comment_id=2212746015482748)

decades old, possibly even the original buildings. An upgrade and more spacious classrooms are desperately needed.

- **Health and safety:** Covid in some form will be around for awhile, and we know that crowded indoor spaces are a prime transmission venue. Revesby South's classrooms are tiny and overcrowded, and in major need of an upgrade. With the pandemic there is certainly no way for kids to physically distance in this classroom - and I believe it is also the case for many other Revesby South classrooms in upper primary.
- **Modern design & breakout spaces missing:** In modern classrooms design there is a focus on having spaces for primary school age kids to move as they just can't sit still for such long periods at a desk. I've seen modern classrooms on the DET facebook page (and in person at Winston Hills) with breakout spaces, computer labs, 'wet areas' for messy art, science experiments or cooking, sunken areas to provide a place to gather and read a story. Critically, many modern classrooms even for upper primary had students in small groups at tables with a large space between them and other tables, rather than the elbow-to-elbow rows that the kids in my son's 3 Blue classroom are forced to endure. The school has done the best it can to maximise the space provided, there just isn't enough space for all the kids.
- **Room to play:** The experience during the recent bushfires highlighted that poor air quality can force kids indoors even during playtime. Spacious, modern indoor learning spaces are essential.
- **Old / Original buildings:** Is there any plan for the DET to provide a major upgrade (really, demolition and rebuilding is needed!) of Revesby South's Public School's classrooms? The classroom buildings are basically the same as when my brother-in-law (now himself a primary school teacher) attended and are long overdue for an upgrade.
- **Lack of information:** I am frustrated that I'm not able to offer you information such as the exact age of the building or measurements of the classroom or even a photo of the classroom. The lack of access to official information about my kids current schools or catchment-area schools that they will end up going to, means it is hard for me to advocate for better infrastructure.

## Picnic Point High School – too little too late

- **Upgrades not adequate:** The recent upgrades in progress for Picnic Point High School are too little too late. Much greater investment is needed in the school than the piecemeal approach to fixing up a few areas after years of neglect.
- **Future Growth:** There are intractable problems with the site itself – the area itself is too small to accommodate future growth and future facilities that need to be built. It is hemmed in on all sides by residential housing.
- **Design does not promote health and safety:** During an open day a few year ago I was stunned to discover that the main asphalt quadrangle / concrete playing area for the kids is on a severe slope! This seems dangerous for the sort of sports kids want to play. Furthermore, it makes many ball games (such as handball) next to impossible to play. The design of the school does not promote health and safety.
- **Air-conditioning:** Picnic Point High School was one of over a thousand public schools that only received air conditioning in a program that commenced in 2018 – I still don't know if it has actually been installed. Again, this is too little too late, some public schools are STILL missing air-conditioning. How are our kids supposed to learn cramped in sweat-boxes in the Australian summer heat? Why is the government so late to identify this as a need? Kids don't learn when they are experiencing extreme discomfort and heat.
- **Demountables:** I have observed a huge amount of demountables at Picnic Point High. I don't know how long they are there for, but even if they are there temporarily, it is unacceptable to have kids learning in these during the Australian summer!



*Figure 10 – Demountables at Picnic Point High School (author’s own photo)*

- **Poorly equipped compared to nearby private schools (including Catholic):**
  - **De la salle Revesby:** This nearby Catholic school recently built a \$7.6 million 1400sqm state of the art facility comprising of a Gymnasium, Fitness Centre, Stage, Classrooms, Served and Amenities.<sup>2</sup>
  - **Mount Saint Joseph Milperra:** Sydney Catholic Schools have purchased some of the WSU facilities for the use of Mount Saint Joseph Milperra, showing how private/Catholic schools are able to plan for the future better than our own government.
  
- **Lack of information:** Again, the lack of access to official information about Picnic Point High (my kid’s future high school), means it is hard for me to advocate for better infrastructure. I wasn’t even able to go to an open day last year due to the pandemic. Many public schools provide little information about their facilities on social media and their website, making it difficult to advocate for improvements.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cowynbuilding.com.au/de-la-salle>.

## Additional Schools needed

Our area is already showing signs of additional schools being required. Local School Menai High School is 17% over capacity even with strict enforcement of school catchment areas. As there are intractable problems with the Picnic Point High School site, it will be unable to cope with increased growth. If we look 15, 30 or 50 years into the future – as the NSW Education Department should be doing – it is obvious that significant areas of land need to be kept aside for new schools. Furthermore, there is a need for specialist and selective schools in our area.

- **Need for additional co-educational secondary school:** Our area is in desperate need of another secondary school and will need it even more so if the proposed Riverlands development goes in and if the Padstow and Revesby village centres are to increase in population, as outlined in the City of Canterbury-Bankstown Council's strategy document. It is the local community public schools that will have to absorb the new families. Demographics projections for our area – not only East Hills District but the wider area, show a huge increase in population is anticipated.
- **Need for Selective High School**
  - **There is a complete lack of academic selective schools in our area:** A map (below) showing selective high schools in Sydney highlights this fact. There appears to be only one partially selective school in our LGA – Sefton High School. This is inequitable, we are one of (if not the) largest councils by population. The lack of selective high schools means that many ambitious parents will move closer to areas with perceived “good” schools, and our area misses out on these kids.
  - The map of selective school locations does NOT correspond to population density. The Bankstown area has high population density and yet we lack schools to support our most gifted students. This contributes to a “brain drain” in our area – families of gifted students move to the Northern or North Western suburbs to co-locate themselves with schools that will be best for their kids. The HSC results of our area compare dismally to the HSC results of other areas a similar distance from the CBD, there is a desperate need for investment in the educational facilities of our area.



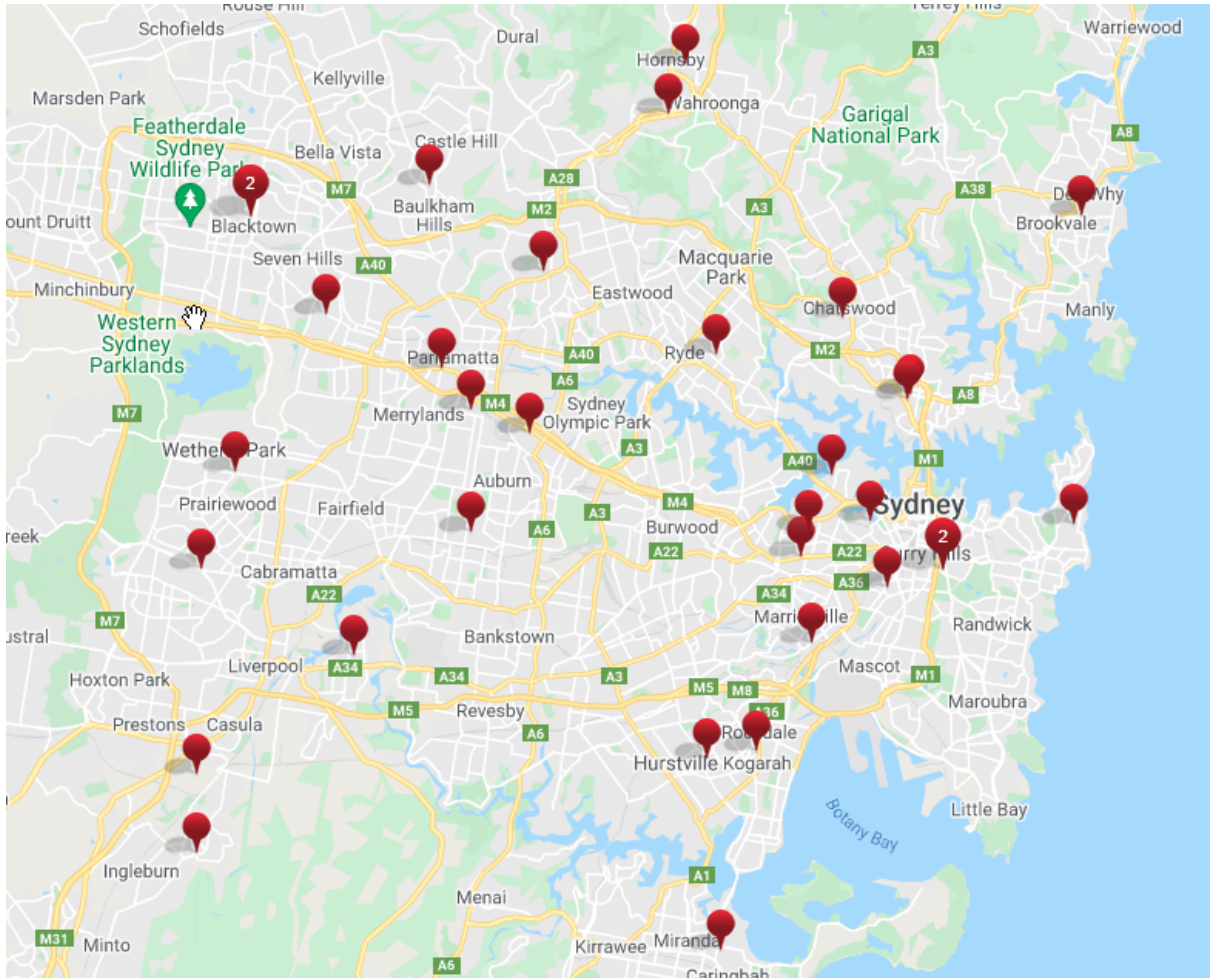


Figure 11 – Map of selective Schools in Sydney showing none in Bankstown: <http://www.maptive.com/ver3/Selective>

- **No selective sports or performing arts high schools in our area:**  
Furthermore, we do not have any nearby selective sports or performing arts high schools. The excellent sports facilities available at WSU make it a perfect candidate for a sports high school.
- I have seen the transformation that can occur for a school and suburb when the government invests in good educational facilities. Grantham High in Seven Hills had a poor reputation but was transformed into “The Hills Sports High”, an academically selective sporting high school with some of the best sporting facilities in the Southern Hemisphere. The difference this has made for the surrounding community is phenomenal; and resulted in an uplift of academic prospects at the school, not only sporting achievements. Why not draw on our talented East Hills sports heroes (Mark and Steve Waugh, Ian Thorpe) to help launch a school that invests in both sports and academic achievement in our district?

## The importance of outdoor sites

The NSW Education Department, in failing to consider the WSU campus as a future school site, is failing in its duty to meet Terms of Reference (h) “school design that promotes health and safety” and e) “inadequate demographic planning”. Large natural spaces available for new school development are a rarity – if sites such as the WSU’s spacious grounds are not preserved within the public education system, new or growing schools will inevitably be forced into ‘vertical’ campuses or old industrial sites – neither of which are good for the health and safety of students.

The Department of Education’s increasing trend of building ‘vertical’ high schools, such as Arthur Phillip High in Parramatta, has become necessary only due to inadequate demographic planning and failure to preserve appropriate sites for new schools. It is not ideal for student’s health and welfare.

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the importance of open, outdoor spaces in schools, because transmission of the virus outdoors is decreased. Indoor ‘vertical’ high schools not only increase virus transmission but impede access to nature and sunlight, time in nature is shown to have physical health benefits including immune system benefits.<sup>3</sup> Further, indoor campuses risk not providing adequate space to exercise and play ball sports and produce a reliance on lifts to get between classes rather than walking, all of which is detrimental to student health. Finally, many studies have shown the mental health benefits of being outdoors and in nature – and students of outdoors campuses will gain these benefits of reduced stress, less anxiety and mood improvements. We underestimate at our peril the harm done to young people whose schooling deprives them of the breeze and sun; the chance to observe trees, plants and seasons; the ability to incorporate nature into their play; and gives them only concrete and synthetics instead of real grass, dirt and exposure to the accompanying microbes.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://e360.yale.edu/features/ecopsychology-how-immersion-in-nature-benefits-your-health#:~:text=These%20studies%20have%20shown%20that,reduce%20anxiety%2C%20and%20improve%20mood.>

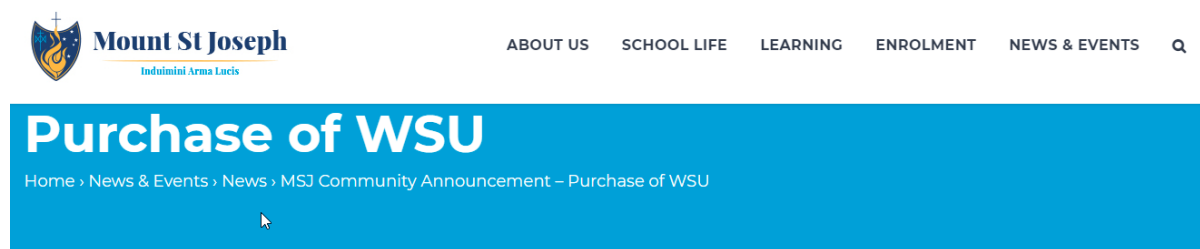
## A stark comparison: Sydney Catholic Schools vs NSW Government

### Sydney Catholic Schools

Sydney Catholic Schools displayed the vision and planning that our own government, it's ministers and the NSW Education Department has not. Sydney Catholic Schools recognised the unique once-in-a -century opportunity afforded by the relocation of the WSU campus and secured some of the Western Sydney University facilities for the future use of their schools. This was not in response to any particular increase in their school numbers – if anything, there have been reports of falling enrolments at Mount Saint Joseph Milperra, it was rather a pro-active measure that will likely attract new enrolments to their school system.

A press release from Mount Saint Joseph excitedly shared the news that they had secured the “newest Western Sydney University building” which “contains flexible learning spaces as well as two lecture theatres, state of the art technology and several open study areas. The school will also take ownership of the nearby fully equipped gymnasium and tennis courts as well as the accompanying car park.”

**NOTE: It is important to note that despite the heading below “Purchase of WSU”, the school has not purchased all or even most of the WSU site.**



The screenshot shows the website for Mount St Joseph. At the top left is the school's logo with the motto 'Induimini Arma Lucis'. To the right is a navigation menu with links for 'ABOUT US', 'SCHOOL LIFE', 'LEARNING', 'ENROLMENT', and 'NEWS & EVENTS'. Below the navigation is a large blue banner with the title 'Purchase of WSU' in white. Underneath the banner, the breadcrumb trail reads 'Home > News & Events > News > MSJ Community Announcement – Purchase of WSU'.

We are so excited to share the news that Sydney Catholic Schools has purchased the newest Western Sydney University building which is adjacent to the school for our future use.

The building contains flexible learning spaces as well as two lecture theatres, state of the art technology and several open study areas. The school will also take ownership of the nearby fully equipped gymnasium and tennis courts as well as the accompanying car park.

We will be transitioning into the space throughout next year and expect to be on-site by the beginning of 2022. It will be an exciting journey together as we plan our learning and landscaped spaces. During this time we will be exploring ways of sharing the facilities with our nearby Catholic schools and the wider community to allow greater collaboration as we go forward.



Figure 12 – Mount Saint Joseph press release: <https://www.msj.catholic.edu.au/news/msj-community-announcement-purchase-of-wsu#:~:text=We%20are%20so%20excited%20to,and%20several%20open%20study%20areas.>

Mount Saint Joseph already enjoys state of the art existing facilities (see: <https://www.msj.catholic.edu.au/facilities>), and the purchase of the WSU facilities will complement an educational offering that already towers above that offered by our local public schools.

## NSW Government & Departments

In comparison to Sydney Catholic Schools shrewd and forward planning, the NSW Department of Education has allowed our public school system to miss out on any benefits that could have been gained by the relocation of WSU Milperra. Through the work of community group [Future of Milperra UWS Campus](#)<sup>4</sup>, it was discovered that in April 2020, Geoff Lee, then Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education provided consent to the WSU development without any attempt at public community consultation. A reply to the group's enquiries from the office of Minister Geoff Lee, then Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, was that he had: "considered a range of factors including advice from the Department of Education which found the Department **did not need to reserve the Milperra campus** land for future government school development."

This startling statement that this land was not required for future school development stands in stark contrast to both future population projections and the NSW Government's own plans for population growth in our area. There is no indication what sort of investigation was done by the NSW Department of Education or whether the Minister for Education and Early Learning was involved. How thorough was this investigation? Where does the Department of Education plan to put future schools in our area? Over what time frame were the needs considered? This sort of land parcel with its ideal qualities for education use, is available so rarely, and I would suggest that the Department should be considering the needs over the next 50 years, if not the next century.

The NSW Government, in rejecting the need for this site or even investigating it with any thoroughness, has failed to show the vision that the Sydney Catholic Schools were capable of. This site is a key infrastructure asset vital to South Western Sydney's educational future.

The approval by Minister Lee occurred behind closed doors, without **any public community consultation**. The site, you will be reminded, has had continual educational use since 1918 and is the former site of Milperra Public School. It belongs in the public hands.

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<sup>4</sup> Disclosure: My sister Renae Carter runs the above group

To add insult to injury, the site and buildings the Catholic schools so wisely purchased were **partially funded by the Australian taxpayer** – through government grants, government funding of the Higher Education system, and importantly through the original gift of the site to the university. It is disgraceful that these excellent educational facilities were not secured for public school students.

Below is the response from Minister Geoff Lee, response received via the Department of Education:

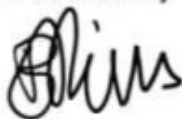
I write in response to your further email of 4 July 2021, to the Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, regarding the redevelopment of the Western Sydney University Milperra Campus. Minister Mitchell referred your correspondence to the Hon Dr Geoff Lee MP, Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education as the matters raised fall within his portfolio responsibilities. The Minister has asked me to respond on his behalf.

I acknowledge your concerns about the redevelopment of the Milperra Campus and the potential impact of additional housing in the area. Minister Lee provided his consent under the *Western Sydney University Act 1997 (NSW)* for the redevelopment of the Milperra campus in April 2020. He considered a range of factors including advice from the Department of Education which found the Department did not need to reserve the Milperra campus land for future government school development.

I understand Minister Lee also determined a number of conditions on the sale of the land, including selling part of the land to Mount Saint Joseph High School and the continuation of Little Athletics until 2022. These conditions were determined in consultation with Ms Wendy Lindsay MP, Member for East Hills.

I also understand a planning proposal for the site has been lodged with Canterbury Bankstown Council and the proposed development is subject to the normal Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) process which gives local residents an opportunity to have their say. The suitability of the site and infrastructure requirements will also be examined as part of this process. I encourage you to engage with both the Council and DPIE processes to ensure that your concerns are heard.

Yours sincerely



**Bronwyn Rivers**  
**Director, Higher Education**

22 July 2021

NSW Department of Education  
105 Phillip Street Parramatta NSW 2150

GPO Box 33 Sydney NSW 2001

1300 679 332

education.nsw.gov.au

Figure 13 – Reply from NSW Department of Education, responding on behalf of Minister Lee’s office.

The following page shows correspondence between Western Sydney University and the Mayor of Canterbury-Bankstown Council, in which the university admits that “Part of Milperra Campus was acquired from the State for nominal value and the Minister’s consent was therefore required under section 24(2A).”

The letter further details how various Ministers for Education - first Rob Stokes MP in 2018, and later Geoff Lee MP in 2019, have both already given in principle / conditional approval for the redevelopment of the site. This is prior to any public consultation occurring, and one of the conditions stipulated was that the sale of parts of the land and facilities to Sydney Catholic Schools must occur.

This raises the question, why was the NSW Minister for Education looking out for the interests of a private Catholic school, and not the interests of NSW public school students? None of our local public schools have the facilities handed over to Sydney Catholic Schools as part of this deal – including a gym, dual lecture theatres and tennis courts. And again, this land was originally the site of Milperra Public School and given to the University for a nominal sum.

**WESTERN SYDNEY  
UNIVERSITY**



16 August 2021

Councillor Khal Asfour  
Mayor  
Canterbury-Bankstown Council

**By email: [mayor@cbc.city.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mayor@cbc.city.nsw.gov.au)**

Copy to

Mr Matthew Stewart  
General Manager  
Canterbury-Bankstown Council

**By email: [matthew.STEWART@cbc.city.nsw.gov.au](mailto:matthew.STEWART@cbc.city.nsw.gov.au)**

Dear Mayor Asfour,

**Ministerial approval – redevelopment of Western Sydney University’s Milperra Campus (your reference CREQ-26-16295)**

I refer to your letter dated 4 August 2021 and to Mr Matthew Stewart’s email dated 28 July 2021 requesting further information relevant to the University’s planning proposal for its Milperra Campus.

The University is of the view that the planning proposal as submitted is comprehensive and contains all relevant information. The University understands that as part of the planning process, Council has requested further information to allow it to assess the planning proposal in accordance with the requirements of the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979*.

Council has requested the University provides information about discussions with NSW Government Ministers, and local, State and Federal Members of Parliament relevant to the planning proposal.

The University has engaged in correspondence with NSW Government Ministers and the local Member of Parliament, which may be relevant. That correspondence relates to the University’s statutory obligations, in particular, under the *Western Sydney University Act 1997 (WSU Act)*.

Under section 24(2A) of the WSU Act, the Board of Trustees of the University must not, except with the consent of the Minister administering the WSU Act, ‘alienate, mortgage, charge or demise any lands’ acquired by the University for nominal value from the State.

Figure 14 – Letter from WSU to Canterbury-Bankstown City Council Mayor (Page 1)

**WESTERN SYDNEY  
UNIVERSITY**



Part of Milperra Campus was acquired from the State for nominal value and the Minister's consent was therefore required under section 24(2A).

The University first sought consent to redevelop and/or divest the Milperra Campus land in June 2018 from the then Minister for Education, the Hon. Rob Stokes MP. Mr Stokes responded in November 2018 that he gave in principle approval to redevelopment and subsequent divestment (subject to the Mount St Joseph high school being given first option on the purchase of the land it has identified for its needs). He indicated that he would consider granting approval in substance once details of how redevelopment might proceed were more settled.

On 20 November 2019, the University wrote to the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, the Hon Geoff Lee MLC, providing further details of the proposed redevelopment and divestment and seeking approval in accordance with section 24(2A) of the WSU Act.

Dr Geoff Lee responded that he gave conditional approval 'subject to the relevant planning process' including (relevantly) that:

- the precinct design includes premium freestanding housing only (with frontages in excess of 10 metres) built along Ashford Avenue, 3 story terrace development only at the site adjacent to the industrial area; off-street resident parking with a minimum of 2 car spaces for each freestanding dwelling, traffic management solutions in and around the precinct; and
- that the University consults with the local Member of Parliament (the Member for East Hills) to ensure the appropriate transition of housing density ensuring overall minimum yield.

In order to satisfy the condition directly above, the University met with the local Member of Parliament, the Hon Wendy Lindsay MP, to discuss the University's plans and concerns raised by the local community in order that those concerns might be addressed or minimized in the University's planning proposal. Ms Lindsay was not asked to endorse the planning proposal. Ultimately, the University appreciates that the planning proposal will need to be considered in accordance with the provisions of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, which includes consultation in accordance with the Canterbury-Bankstown's Community Participation Plan 2019.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Parasiris

**Chief Estate and Commercial Officer**  
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Figure 15 – Letter from WSU to Canterbury-Bankstown City Council Mayor (Page 2)



## Conclusion

My hope is that this committee will make a recommendation to the NSW Department of Education that they review their decision about the WSU Bankstown Campus (in Milperra) not being needed for future public school use. Furthermore, all information pertinent to the decision that has already been made must be made public. How thorough was the analysis done to arrive at this decision? Why did the Minister make his approval conditional upon the nearby Catholic school getting sold the facilities it “needed” (the two lecture theatres, gymnasium, tennis courts, learning spaces and other state of the art facilities) but the Minister simultaneously thought all these facilities were surplus to the needs of NSW public school students? Does the Minister believe that private school students need or deserve better facilities than our public school students?

Secondly, I would like a recommendation that classroom upgrades occur for Revesby South Public School. The upper primary classrooms require nothing short of complete demolition and rebuilding into a modern spacious classrooms with breakout spaces and room to move and learn comfortably. The poor state of the classrooms and infrastructure in my local school shows what happens when government departments fail to plan infrastructure and building upgrades 5, 10 or 15 years into the future.

For planning of new schools, the planning needs to start even earlier. It is not good enough to start trying to identify sites for future schools when the need for the school has already arrived. These sites may need to be purchased in advance of the actual need arising. In the case of WSU Milperra, the need for a co-educational academically selective school is already here.

So far, all pleas and activism by local community members, council and groups to preserve the WSU Milperra site have been ignored. Like many community members I have previously written to the relevant Ministers and my local MP Wendy Lindsay, so far there has been no positive outcome to report but we have not given up hope. I strongly appeal to your committee to provide recommendations in favour of this cause, to benefit the kids of the East Hills district and greater South Western Sydney. My hope is that your recommendations result in the NSW Department of Education and the relevant Ministers using their power to save this important site for public education.