

**Submission
No 24**

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

Organisation: Tweed Shire Council

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Council Reference: ECM7170245
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Dear Sir / Madam,

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

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the subject Inquiry. As a high growth regional council, school infrastructure in Tweed Shire is being placed under increasing demands. Currently we have several significant school redevelopments in the planning and approval phases. Our experience through these applications has raised some significant concerns that would be of relevance to the Committee.

The following submission is made on behalf of Tweed Shire Council, and may be published in full, including names.

Planning for School Infrastructure

Tweed has been formally recognised as a Regional City and a major provider for urban population growth on the North Coast of NSW, supported by various planning strategies over the last 20 years. However it has been our experience that the State Government has not equated this planning for population growth with planning for new and expanded school sites. Despite significant increases in population during this time, and major residential land releases imminent, no new sites appear to have been secured for public school infrastructure within Tweed.

We are now in the position where investment is being directed at expanding existing schools, within their current sites. Examples include Tweed Heads South Public School, Tweed River High School, Kingscliff High School, Kingscliff Primary School, and the proposed Murwillumbah Education Campus on the site of Murwillumbah High School, which will also accommodate Wollumbin High, Murwillumbah Primary and Murwillumbah East Primary Schools.

These sites are generally located within or adjacent to established residential areas, with limited ability to expand or upgrade infrastructure such as roads, parking or bus zones. Many are serviced by a single road access to and from the school. These developments therefore impact directly on the surrounding community, who already experience disruption during peak morning and afternoon periods. These impacts are exacerbated by current government policies, such as those that limit the provision of

on-site parking for staff and students, and exemptions from paying developer contributions, which are the measures Council normally apply to other types of impacting development.

This lack of forward planning and unsuitability of existing sites to be able to cater for growth places Council in a difficult situation of opposing aspects of school infrastructure upgrades, which we also acknowledge provide major community benefits and are in urgent need.

Infrastructure and Utilities

In Tweed Shire, Council is responsible for delivering and maintaining the majority of the road network, and is also the authority responsible for water and waste water services and infrastructure.

School upgrades and expansions are large generators of demand for this infrastructure. Traffic congestion, parking and road safety are frequent concerns raised around existing schools. We have seen little to no acknowledgement of this in the planning for current school upgrades proposed in Tweed, which will exacerbate these problems. Where Council has suggested remedies through amendment to the site layout or conditions for the provision of external infrastructure, such as road widening or footpath connections, these are frequently opposed by the Department. Where this occurs, it is Council's intent to refer all associated complaints back to the schools and the Department of Education for resolution. However it is also our experience that this approach rarely leads to quick outcomes or customer satisfaction with the process, and the issues ultimately come back to Council, including direct representations to Councillors, to try and resolve.

Meetings held with School Infrastructure representatives are often unproductive as officers are advised that compliance with Council's Development Control Plans are less relevant than Education policies, an example being those applicable to parking provision on school grounds. Private school operators need to provide all their required traffic facilities on site, including bus parking. The common practice of providing facilities on road reserve by public schools shifts the responsibility for maintenance and safety concerns on to Council as the asset owner.

It is recognised that the State Government currently does support its school upgrade program with access to grant funding for school zone infrastructure, especially footpath connections and improvements. However the planning, design, contracts, supervision, project management and administration of these grant funded facilities all fall back onto Council officers to absorb.

Further, school infrastructure is excluded from requirements for Council approvals under s68 of the Local Government Act for water supply, sewerage and stormwater drainage work. This limits Council's ability to ensure fit for purpose infrastructure is in place, to the standards and specifications required to properly service the school sites, as well as the surrounding community. By way of example, Council should review the ability of the public water supply system to meet the firefighting requirements (flow and pressure) for the new/upgraded school, and determine what if any upgrade works are required. Further, Council officers are required to undertake assessment of this infrastructure without the usual information being provided or fees paid for service. For example, Council is asked to comment on proposed traffic and transport changes affecting the local road network without being supplied with a

Traffic Impact Assessment, which is required of other developers prior to officer review. Such practice consumes disproportionate amounts of officer time which is costly for the community and other clients.

Council objects to the ongoing exemption of school infrastructure from developer contributions under Section 7.11 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and Section 64 of the Local Government Act. While we acknowledge that this is an established policy of the government, and applies to all Crown developments, it unfairly burdens Council as the infrastructure provider with the costs of necessary upgrades. This user pays system is otherwise well established across the NSW planning system. It also raises inequity in our assessment of applications from non-government schools, who do not enjoy such exemptions from developer contributions, but are part of the government's strategy to meet student demand for school facilities.

If you would like to discuss the content of this submission, or require further information, please contact Manager Roads and Stormwater, Danny Rose on

Yours sincerely

Troy Green PSM
General Manager