

**Submission
No 28**

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

Organisation: NSW Department of Education

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The Hon. Mark Latham
Committee Chair
Portfolio Committee No. 3
Education
Parliament House
Sydney NSW 2000

DGL21/649

Dear Committee

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

Thank you for the opportunity to write in response to the Portfolio Committee No 3 – Education’s Inquiry into the Planning and Delivery of School Infrastructure in NSW.

The NSW Department of Education (the Department) is the largest provider of education in Australia, with responsibility for delivering high-quality public education to two-thirds of the NSW student population, or about 820,000 students.

As part of this responsibility we are committed to ensuring that NSW public school infrastructure meets the needs of the growing population across NSW and enables optimal learning and teaching environments.

School Infrastructure NSW (SINSW) within the Department drives the planning, procurement, construction and maintenance of school facilities to meet changes in population growth, accommodate effective ways of teaching and learning, and help foster better educational outcomes for students.

The Department welcomes the opportunity to highlight the work that SINSW is undertaking to plan and deliver the infrastructure needed for NSW public school students now and into the future.

Infrastructure delivery

With the establishment of School Infrastructure NSW (SINSW) in 2017, SINSW has delivered an investment of more than \$7 billion on new and upgraded schools. The additional funds approved in the 2021-2022 Budget grow the pipeline to \$7.9 billion in new and upgraded schools over the next four years, making this a \$15 billion school building program.

Over the next four years, SINSW is delivering 215 new and upgraded schools to meet growing enrolments and ensure every child has access to high quality education facilities at their local school.

Despite the global pandemic, lockdowns, construction pauses, bushfires and floods,

SINSW delivered 21 new and upgraded schools in 2021, and 50 new and upgraded schools in 2020.

SINSW is renewing existing school facilities through the \$240 million Regional and Metro Renewal programs, the \$60 million Roof Replacement program, the \$157.8 million LED Lighting Upgrade program, and the \$500 million Cooler Classrooms program. The Smart Energy Schools Pilot Project and Sustainable Schools Grants program to support energy efficiency and make schools more sustainable are also underway.

SINSW is developing an emerging market in modern methods of construction (MMC) to enable rapid delivery of high quality, efficient and sustainable educational infrastructure to support learning outcomes. Benefits of MMC include shortening of construction timeframes, reduced waste and greater value for money.

The record investment in school infrastructure is assisting with the State's COVID recovery by creating jobs and providing work for local businesses. For example, the Metro and Regional Renewal programs will support an estimated 2,600 construction jobs and boost local economies across NSW.

In addition, SINSW manages the NSW Government's two-year Infrastructure Traineeship. The traineeship is a collaboration between NSW Government infrastructure agencies and industry partners and provides paid training opportunities for Year 12 school leavers. The program was designed in response to the pandemic, with 137 traineeships offered in 2021 and another 118 traineeships offered in 2022.

SINSW has continued to evolve its practices since its inception in 2017 to enable the delivery of an increasing pipeline of infrastructure projects. This work is done in partnership with schools, the community, government agencies and industry.

Auditor General's report

The Department welcomed the Auditor General's Performance Audit on Delivering School Infrastructure released in April 2021.

The audit examined business cases for 12 projects as case studies. As the Auditor General noted, several of these projects were developed before SINSW was established in mid-2017.

Considerable work has been undertaken over the past few years to strengthen the rigour of infrastructure planning and delivery so SINSW can best identify, prioritise and respond to population trends and community need for educational facilities.

Infrastructure investment

The annual capital investment into new and upgraded schools continues to increase year on year, rising from \$1.67 billion in 2018-19 to a record \$3.2 billion in 2021-22.

To support this increasing investment in school infrastructure, SINSW has continued to enhance the rigour in processes to ensure value is delivered.

Community engagement

The Department acknowledges the important role that local communities play in the overall success of infrastructure delivery.

The Department implements a community and stakeholder engagement framework for all SINSW projects, aligned to the DPE Consultation Guidelines. A school community is consulted throughout the planning and delivery of a project through a project reference group.

The consultation and engagement approach is tailored for each project to account for project differences including the size of the capital investment and the development planning pathway (i.e. whether a State Significant Development application, a council-determined Development Application, or other).

Feedback provided to SINSW through a variety of channels is considered during the preparation of the project's planning application.

In 2021, SINSW held over 200 project reference group meetings and 50 community information sessions (face-to-face and online) and published around 300 project updates and 800 works notifications. This supported the lodgement of over 30 State Significant Development applications and modifications and 10 Development Applications.

SINSW also engages with local councils and community groups on shared or joint use agreements, including for the Share Our Space program. This program is run during the school holidays in outdoor school areas to meet the needs of students in the local community.

Future growth

The Department forecasts the need to accommodate an additional 180,000 students in the government school system to 2039. A majority of the enrolment growth is anticipated in metropolitan Sydney.

Enrolment growth needs to be balanced with the need for additional permanent facilities and renewal of existing assets.

The Department is planning to meet both enrolment growth across NSW and shifts in population, forecast to occur in rural and regional areas.

The NSW Government's record investment in public education infrastructure has delivered new and upgraded schools to meet the increased enrolments across the state.

In addition to new and upgraded schools, SINSW is working to improve utilisation of existing schools via various other interventions. These interventions include enforcement of the Department's Enrolment Policy, adjustment of intake area boundaries, reclassification of schools, repurposing of assets and the renewal of school infrastructure through minor capital works.

The Department welcomes the opportunity to engage in this Inquiry including attendance at hearings as required.

Yours sincerely

Georgina Harrison
SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
10 February 2022

