

**Submission  
No 31**

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

**Organisation:** Canterbury Bankstown Council

**Date Received:** 11 February 2022

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11 February 2022

The Hon. Mark Latham, MLC  
Chairperson  
Portfolio Committee No. 3–Education  
6 Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Latham,

### **Parliamentary Inquiry into planning and delivery of school infrastructure in New South Wales**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the Parliamentary Inquiry into planning and delivery of school infrastructure in NSW. The following content has been prepared as an officer submission and has not be formally resolved by Canterbury Bankstown Council.

School Infrastructure NSW has identified the need to accommodate an additional 180,000 enrolments in public schools by 2039. Much of this growth is expected in metropolitan Sydney. It has also identified that around 34,000 teaching spaces will need to be upgraded simply to meet current standards. In the South District of Sydney alone (of which Canterbury Bankstown is planned to accommodate 70 percent of new residents to 2036) an additional 15,400 new students are expected to be enrolled over the existing school population.

This additional demand will affect the types and distribution of education services and infrastructure required across the region. Added to an existing stock of ageing education infrastructure in established areas and diminishing public land assets to accommodate new schools, councils, community and agencies themselves have repeatedly called on the government for a tailored strategy to be delivered to meet current and future demands.

This long held view was validated by the NSW Audit Office into Delivering School Infrastructure released in April 2021 which identified that while School Infrastructure NSW has developed a long-term strategic plan to advise government of ongoing funding requirements, it had not delivered a list of priorities to meet these needs.



Further, the Audit Office provided that *in early 2020, School Infrastructure NSW advised the NSW Government that the currently funded infrastructure program would not meet forecast classroom requirements for 2023 and beyond. The School Asset Strategic Plan 2020 estimates the annual level of investment needed over the next 20 years to meet growth, update and upgrade facilities to meet compliance obligations. However, SINSW's ten-year Capital Investment Plans for 2018–19, 2019–20 and 2020–21 only identified priorities over a two-year horizon.* [[www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/delivering-school-infrastructure](http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/delivering-school-infrastructure) accessed 5 February at 7:11PM]

The primary theme of this submission is seeking the State Government to better align investment in education infrastructure and local growth demands and a commitment to improve engagement with local government to support the efficient provision of school infrastructure, that it is prioritised and aligned to reflect forecast demands.

### **(1) Protect local infrastructure funding**

Council is supportive of greater funding for schools. However, this should not be at the expense of funding for local infrastructure under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

The recent NSW contributions reforms relating to Regional Infrastructure Contributions, Section 7.11 and Section 7.12 levies proposes developer contributions be redirected towards regional infrastructure such as schools. Although funding for school infrastructure is supported in principle, if these reforms are implemented as drafted, development contributions that would otherwise be expended on local infrastructure associated with incoming community demands could be redirected to anywhere in metropolitan Sydney with no input from Council.

Development contributions should remain restricted to fund growth infrastructure to meet local community demands and bound by detailed contributions plans as prepared by Councils and subject to community consultation.

### **(2) Use of consistent demographics and projected growth data**

Council seeks to work collaboratively with School Infrastructure NSW to plan for growth areas within Canterbury Bankstown. However, there has been instances where the agency has not considered Council adopted growth projections that are outlined in our Local Strategic Planning Statement and Housing Strategy.

To address this, School Infrastructure NSW should align its projected growth data with Council's projections that have been endorsed by the Greater Sydney Commission, and the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.



Council's endorsed projections have been based on forecasts set by the NSW Government and have then been subject to more detailed local analyses to best inform likely growth at the local area level. These projections should form the basis of a longer-term pipeline of priorities so that funding can best meet areas of greatest need.

The community continues to raise its concerns with Council on the lack of aligned planning and investment in school infrastructure to respond to growing demands across the City. This concern is well founded in that enrolments in government and non-government schools in NSW are expected to increase by about 25 per cent over the next 20 years, with more than 80 per cent of the growth occurring in Sydney. In response to this growth in demand, the NSW State Infrastructure Strategy 2018-2038 itself identifies that current funding allocated through the Department of Education's School Assets Strategic Plan (SASP) will only deliver about one quarter of the learning spaces needed.

### **(3) Central database of student enrolments in government and non-government schools**

School Infrastructure NSW should make available a central database of existing student enrolment data for the government and non-government schools.

This information will allow Council to address the cumulative impacts of schools on the local traffic and pedestrian networks and lead to better decisions when planning for investment into active transport infrastructure and improving access to public transport.

### **(4) Improved access to government school facilities**

School Infrastructure NSW must allow access to school facilities and sporting fields to Council and local community groups through a consistent access policy across NSW.

Across the Sydney Metropolitan Area, open spaces and community facilities particularly in established areas are limited and most times are required to work harder to meet the needs of growing community demands. This was evident during the COVID lockdowns where local open space infrastructure was in extreme demand whilst open spaces on school sites remained locked away. Council has continued to advocate for many years for school facilities to be used by local community groups outside of school hours and although a positive intent has been expressed, this has not resulted in any positive on the ground outcomes.



Local government is not alone here, the Greater Sydney Commission has also recommended that school infrastructure be made available for the joint and shared use of school assets to be made available to the community outside school hours. Consistent with this principle, the NSW Department of Education School Assets Strategic Plan states that *as part of the changing mindset in building the schools of the future, will be greater joint or shared use of school and community facilities. Joint use involves a school sharing and funding facilities with a community partner, such as managing a sports ground with a local council. Shared use is where a school controls a facility on its grounds but allows related community use during out-of-school hours.* [NSW Department of Education School Assets Strategic Plan Summary, Page 7]

Where possible, Council provides access to sporting fields and aquatic centres for school use and events. Likewise, School Infrastructure NSW must provide local community groups with the opportunity to hire and access school facilities in a consistent manner. These are publicly funded assets and should be made available for broader use.

#### **(5) Improved coordination of school and Council infrastructure**

School Infrastructure NSW should seek opportunities to partner with Council to provide infrastructure that will benefit the overall community.

Council has sought to enter into partnerships with School Infrastructure NSW that would provide benefits to both parties such as build thoroughfares to improve pedestrian movement on school land. However, Council has been unsuccessful in progressing these projects with School Infrastructure NSW.

Council has continued to advocate to Government for improved community outcomes including numerous requests to retain public land in public ownership and to protect existing land assets to accommodate education and other infrastructure needs. This included formal representations to the State and Commonwealth Government however unfortunately efforts to date have been of no utility.

Meeting growth in demand is challenging exercise. It is widely acknowledged that it is no longer affordable or cost effective to simply acquire land in established areas for new schools. Better and ongoing engagement in the land use planning process between local and State Government is critical to ensure sites for schools are secured including the repurposing of surplus government sites. There are currently a number of potential missed opportunities in the Canterbury Bankstown area where surplus lands should be secured for longer term infrastructure needs and Council remains open to working with the State Government in this regard.



Council supports investment in new school infrastructure across the City however during the detailed design phase, Council continues to challenge the Department of Education to ensure that new school infrastructure is planned and designed to be considerate of local environmental conditions and recognises the implications school infrastructure can have on everyday lives of surrounding residents. Positive outcomes for schools and surrounding communities should not be mutually exclusive and site-specific planning for school infrastructure must be considerate of its context particularly in heavily established areas where capacity to accommodate significant increases in school populations can be limited.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission. If you have any questions, please contact Kyou Won Rhee, Strategic Planner on

Yours sincerely

Mitchell Noble  
**Manager Spatial Planning**