

**Submission
No 33**

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

Organisation: Cumberland City Council

Date Received: 11 February 2022



CUMBERLAND
CITY COUNCIL

11 February 2022

Our Reference CS-202
Contact Daniel Cavallo

The Director, Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education
Parliament House
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SYDNEY NSW 2000

Sent via email: portfoliocommittee3@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir / Madam

INQUIRY INTO THE PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE IN NSW

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the NSW Parliament's Inquiry into the planning and delivery of school infrastructure in NSW.

The Cumberland Local Government Area (LGA) is located in Western Sydney and covers more than 72 square kilometres stretching from Rookwood Cemetery in the east, along the M4 Motorway and Western Rail Line in the north, and Prospect Creek in the south to Prospect Hill in the west.

Student enrolments in government schools servicing the Cumberland LGA show there has been a continual increase in the number of students over the past 20 years. The education service populations for primary and secondary school aged children is projected to increase by 37 percent and 55 percent respectively between 2020 and 2036. Council supports the view of the community that there has not been adequate delivery of educational facilities to keep pace with the growing population in the Cumberland LGA and surrounding LGAs.

With Cumberland LGA's population set to increase from 240,000 residents now to over 300,000 residents by 2036, Council's position is that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the student capacity of local primary and secondary schools. In particular, the review needs to specifically focus on localities experiencing significant development activity, including Auburn, Lidcombe, Wentworthville, Westmead, and Merrylands. It is noted that Auburn and Westmead are located in the Greater Parramatta to Olympic Peninsula, which is a State government initiated renewal precinct.

It is also critical that the NSW Government develop medium term plans (minimum horizon of 10 years) to deliver new school places based on forecasted demand. Capital works planning with a minimum horizon of 10 years is required to ensure funding is available to deliver infrastructure based on identified need. An audit of all existing schools is also recommended to inform an effective program of maintenance and renewal of existing public schools, which is essential to ensure that schools continue to meet the needs of existing and future students.

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Welcome *Belong* Succeed

Please find attached a detailed Council endorsed submission to the Inquiry for your consideration. Council welcomes the opportunity to present to members of the Inquiry.

Should you require anything further, please do not hesitate to contact Daniel Cavallo, Director, Environment and Planning,

Yours faithfully

Melissa Attia
ACTING GENERAL MANAGER

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NSW PARLIAMENT INQUIRY INTO THE PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE IN NSW – CUMBERLAND CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION

February 2022

Executive Summary

This submission has been prepared by Cumberland City Council (Council) in response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the planning and delivery of school infrastructure in NSW. The Terms of Reference of the Inquiry make specific reference to the planning for schools in Western Sydney.

The submission comprises the following parts:

1. The Cumberland LGA
2. Schools in Cumberland LGA
3. Planning for new schools in Cumberland LGA
4. Investment in new or upgraded school infrastructure
5. Recommendations

Student enrolments in government schools servicing the Cumberland LGA show there has been a continual increase in the number of students over the past 20 years. The education service populations for primary and secondary school aged children is projected to increase by 37 percent and 55 percent respectively between 2020 and 2036. Council supports the view of the community that there has not been adequate delivery of educational facilities to keep pace with the growing population in the Cumberland LGA and surrounding LGAs.

With Cumberland LGA's population set to increase from 240,000 residents now to over 300,000 residents by 2036, Council's position is that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the student capacity of local primary and secondary schools. In particular, the review needs to specifically focus on localities experiencing significant development activity, including Auburn, Lidcombe, Wentworthville, Westmead, and Merrylands. It is noted that Auburn and Westmead are located in the Greater Parramatta to Olympic Peninsula, which is a State government initiated renewal precinct.

It is also critical that SINSW develop medium term plans (minimum horizon of 10 years) to deliver new school places based on forecasted demand. Capital works planning with a minimum horizon of 10 years is required to ensure funding is available to deliver infrastructure based on identified need. An audit of all existing schools is also recommended to inform an effective program of maintenance and renewal of existing public schools, which is essential to ensure that schools continue to meet the needs of existing and future students.

1. Cumberland LGA

The Cumberland Local Government Area (LGA) is located in Western Sydney and covers more than 72 square kilometres stretching from Rookwood Cemetery in the east, along the M4 Motorway and Western Rail Line in the north, and Prospect Creek in the south to Prospect Hill in the west.

Cumberland LGA is strategically located in the Central City District, less than 5 kilometres south of Parramatta CBD and approximately 20 kilometres west of Sydney CBD. The new Western Sydney Airport at Badgery's Creek will be approximately 30 kilometres to the west of Cumberland.

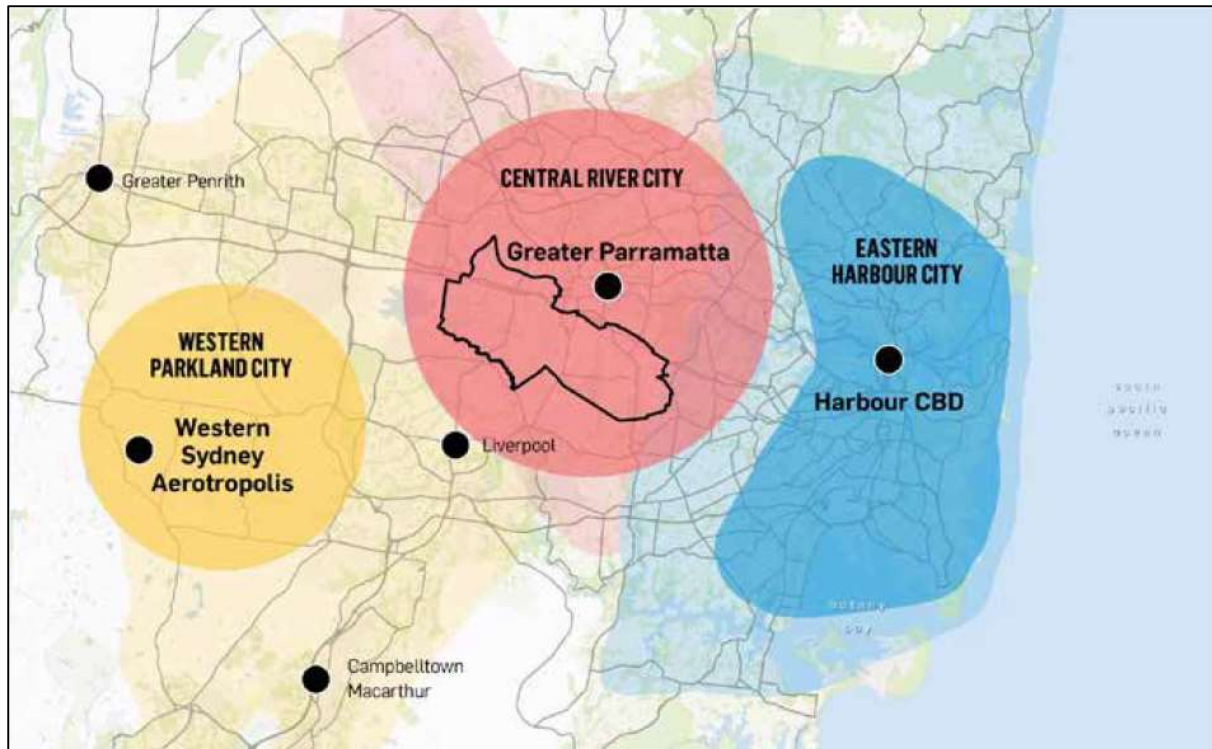


Figure 1: Cumberland LGA in context of Greater Sydney

Education and school infrastructure are a critically important part of the Cumberland LGA, educating future generations, and enabling opportunities for learning, social and cultural connections. Key considerations related to the planning of schools in Cumberland include:

- Quality of and access to education in the area, as outlined in Cumberland's community satisfaction survey
- Collaborate with the Department of Education and private providers to plan for and deliver improved schools and hospitals to meet the needs of the Cumberland area, as outlined in Cumberland 2030: Our Local Strategic Planning Statement and the Cumberland Community Wellbeing Report 2021
- Co-locate education facilities with health, social and community facilities to increase access, as outlined in the Cumberland Community Wellbeing Report 2021
- Collaborate between education facilities and NSW Health to include health and lifestyle programs in education environments, as outlined in the Cumberland Community Wellbeing Report 2021.

2. Schools in Cumberland LGA

There are a number of schools located in the Cumberland LGA. These include:

- 23 government primary schools that service 61% of children aged 5 to 11
- 7 government secondary schools that service 29% of children aged 12 to 17
- 2 government schools for ages 5-18
- 17 Catholic system schools
- 6 independent schools

The location of these primary schools and secondary schools are shown in Figures 2 and 3 respectively, and is based on information as at the year 2020. A list of the identified schools is provided in Table 1.

Since the collation of this data in 2020, a new private secondary girls high school has opened at Granville and a new private primary school has opened at Auburn. A new public primary school is also planned at Westmead.

It is also noted that there are schools located outside the Cumberland LGA that are used by students that reside within the Cumberland area.

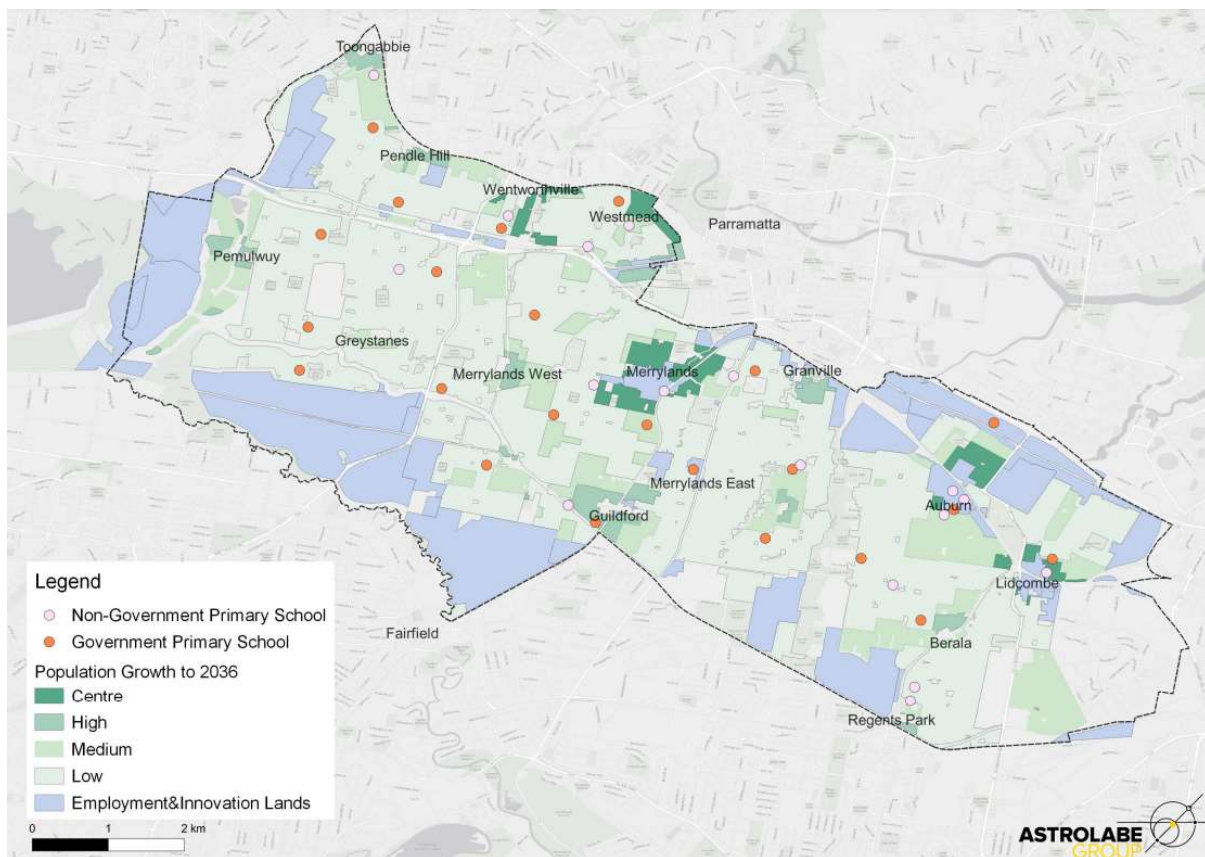


Figure 2: Primary schools in Cumberland LGA

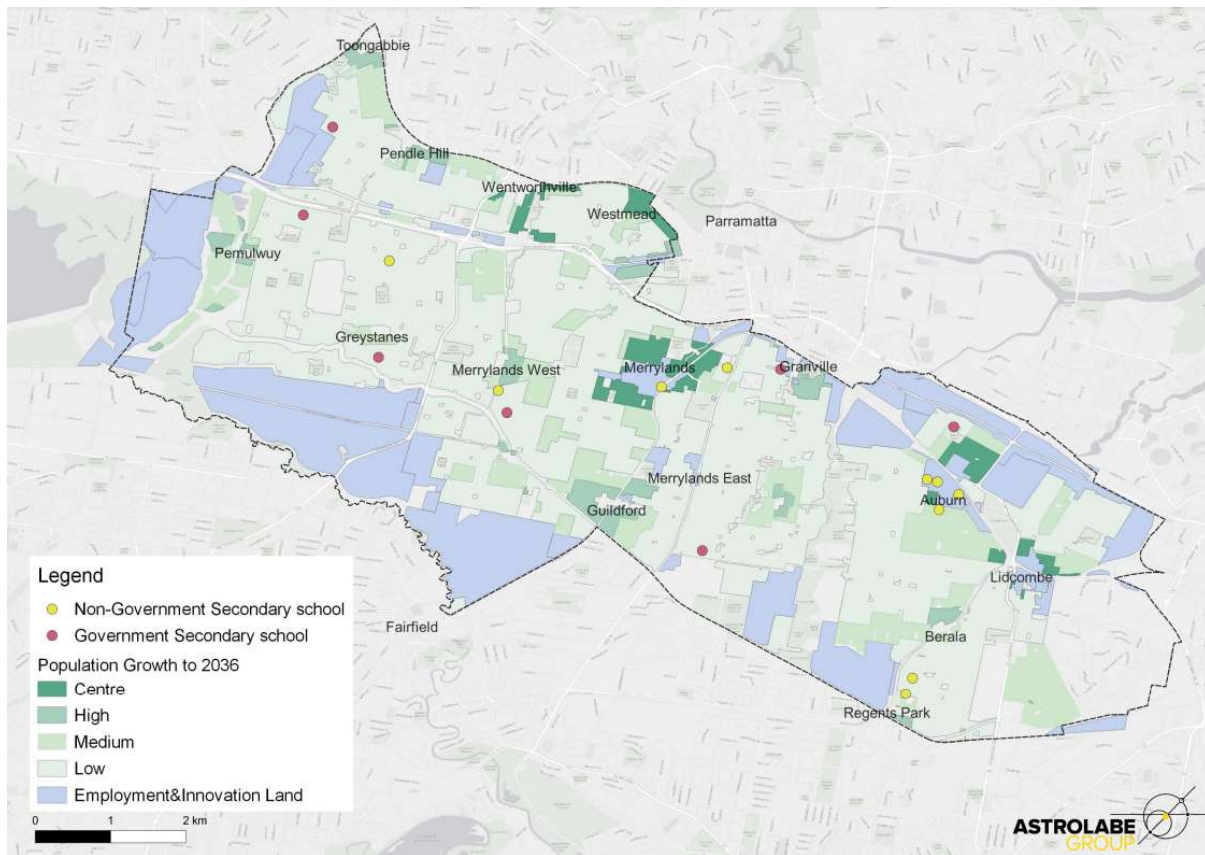


Figure 3: Secondary schools in Cumberland LGA

Schools	Locations
Public primary schools	Auburn Public School, Auburn North Public School, Auburn West Public School, Berala Public School, Beresford Road Public School, Blaxcell Street Public School, Fowler Road School (K-12), Girraween Public School, Granville Public School, Granville East Public School, Greystanes Public School, Guildford Public School, Guildford West Public School, Hilltop Road Public School, Holroyd School (K-12), Lidcombe Public School, Merrylands Public School, Merrylands East Public School, Pendle Hill Public School, Ringrose Public School, Sherwood Grange Public School, Wentworthville Public School, Westmead Public School, Widemere Public School
Public secondary schools	Auburn Girls High School, Girraween High School, Granville Boys High School, Granville South Creative and Performing Arts High School, Greystanes High School, Holroyd High School, Merrylands High School
Catholic system schools	Cerdon College, Delany College, Holy Family Primary School, Holy Trinity Primary School, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Primary School, Our Lady Queen of Peace Primary School, Sacred Heart Primary School, St Anthony's Primary School, St Joachim's Primary School, St John's Primary School, St Joseph The Worker Primary School, St Margaret Mary's Primary School, St Patrick's Primary School, St Paul's Catholic College, St Peter Chanel Primary School, Trinity Catholic College
Private schools	Al-Faisal College, Amity College Auburn Campus, Auburn Adventist Primary School, Chapel School, Muslim Girls High School, Regents Park Christian School, Sydney Adventist School Auburn, Westmead Christian Grammar School

Table 1: List of schools in Cumberland LGA

3. Planning for new schools in Cumberland LGA

This section responds to the following Inquiry terms of reference:

- (b) the adequacy of NSW government plans to deliver educational facilities for every NSW school student
- (e) the adequacy of demographic planning for anticipated school enrolments
- (g) specific planning for new schools and increased enrolments in Western Sydney, the Canada Bay local government area and on the far north coast

Cumberland: A place of young families

Cumberland is forecast to grow by around 30 percent over the next 20 years, reaching over 300,000 people by 2036. As can be seen in Figure 4 below, couples with children are the dominant household type in Cumberland, making up more than 40 percent of all households. This will continue to be the case to 2036. Couples with children are also more prominent in Cumberland when compared to Greater Sydney as a whole, which suggests a greater demand for infrastructure and services for young families when compared to other LGAs in the wider region. This means that education for children and opportunities for young people will continue to be a high priority for the LGA.

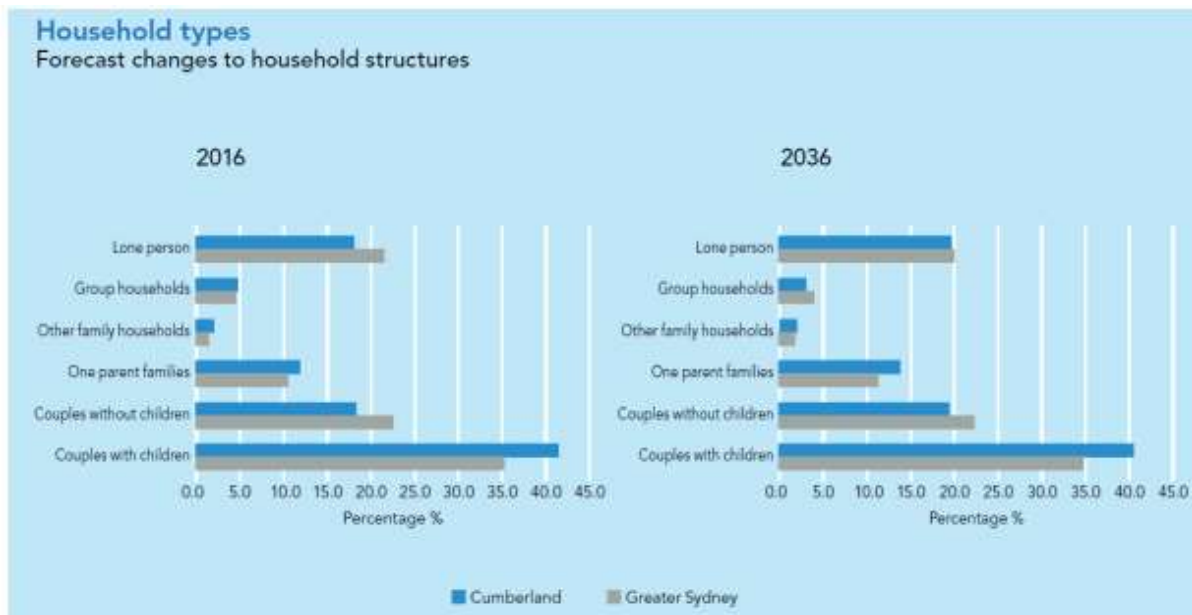


Figure 4: Forecast changes to household structures in Cumberland LGA

Broken down by age, population forecasts can provide insights into the expected demand for schools over the next 20 years (Table 2). For the primary school age group (5 to 11 years old), Cumberland is expecting an additional 4,973 children, representing a 21 percent increase in this age group. For secondary school age group (12 to 17), there will be an additional 5,496 children, which is a 32 percent increase for this age group.

In combination with these forecasts for school age groups, analysis was carried out on behalf of Council. This analysis used publicly available data from NSW Education on Government Schools, current propensities of enrolments in government schools, based on current number of school-aged children demand, and the current number of government schools within the LGA. It is noted that this analysis does not make assumptions around students' attendance at non-government schools, or schools outside of LGA of residence.

Education service populations in Cumberland LGA	2019	2026	2036	Change 2019-36	% change
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	23,718	26,963	28,691	4,973	21%
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	17,196	20,802	22,692	5,496	32%
Total school-aged (5 to 17)	40,914	47,765	51,383	10,496	26%

Table 2. Current and forecast service populations by age in Cumberland LGA

There are currently 23 government primary schools in the Cumberland LGA that service 61 percent of children aged 5 to 11 living in the LGA. This percentage is at the lower end of the range that is assumed to attend a government primary school (approximately 65 percent). As for government secondary schools, there are currently seven schools in the LGA that service 29 percent of children aged 12 to 17.

The following estimates assume that this share of children going to government-run schools holds constant into 2036. Given that the population aged 5 to 11 will grow by 21 percent by 2036 (which would grow by 37 per cent for the education service population), the LGA will require an additional five government primary schools over the period from 2019 to 2036. Similarly, the population aged 12 to 17 is expected to grow by 32 percent by 2036 (which would grow by 55 per cent for the education service population) and will require an additional two to three government secondary schools by 2036.

For primary schools, there is further information from the NSW Education Data Hub that the agency has been actively working to reduce class sizes in primary schools. In 2019, the average class size was 23.9 students. Given the additional 4,973 children aged 5 to 11 between 2019 – 2036, and assuming 61 percent of these children (i.e. 3,025) will attend government schools, this equates to an additional 127 classrooms required for primary schoolers.

Population distribution and access to schools

The analysis provides an understanding of the level of school infrastructure Cumberland's young families will require into the next decade. It is also important to understand how this future population growth will have access to schools. As shown in Figures 5 and 6, areas where the greatest population growth is likely to occur are highlighted in dark green. These areas include Merrylands, Auburn, Lidcombe, Wentworthville, and Westmead, consistent with land use plans to accommodate future population growth in Cumberland City. It is also noted that Auburn and Westmead are located in the Greater Parramatta to Olympic Peninsula, which is a State government initiated renewal precinct.

For access to primary schools, when considering the number of schools within the vicinity of these areas where greater numbers of children are expected, there is a relatively low number of schools within their vicinity, especially given the desired shift towards active transport (walking and cycling) for school travel.

For access to secondary schools, the assumption would be that the growing young population in Merrylands, Wentworthville, Westmead and Lidcombe are expected to travel much further to reach their secondary school. The growing number of secondary school aged children in Cumberland will place significant demand on the transport network. With the desire to reduce car dependency and shift these young commuters to active travel and multi-modal trips, much work is needed to improve access and services within the LGA, as well as allowing these young people to easily commute to schools beyond the LGA.

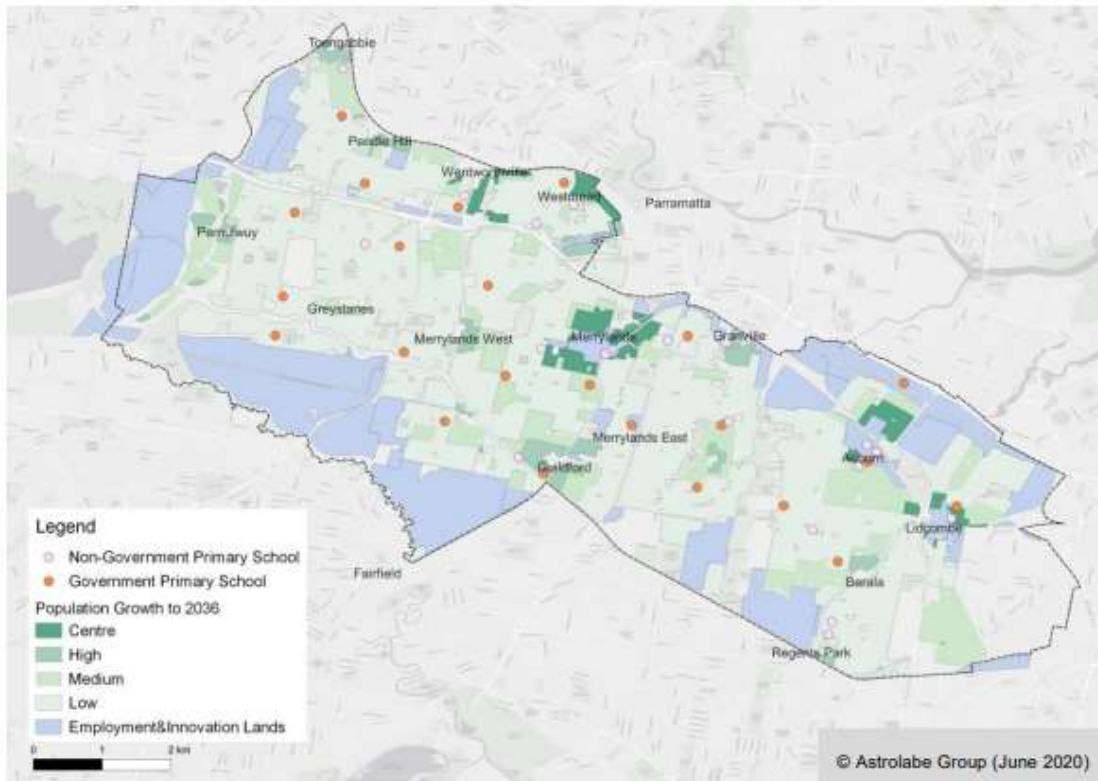


Figure 5: Primary schools in Cumberland LGA, mapped onto the future distribution of Cumberland’s population growth to 2036.

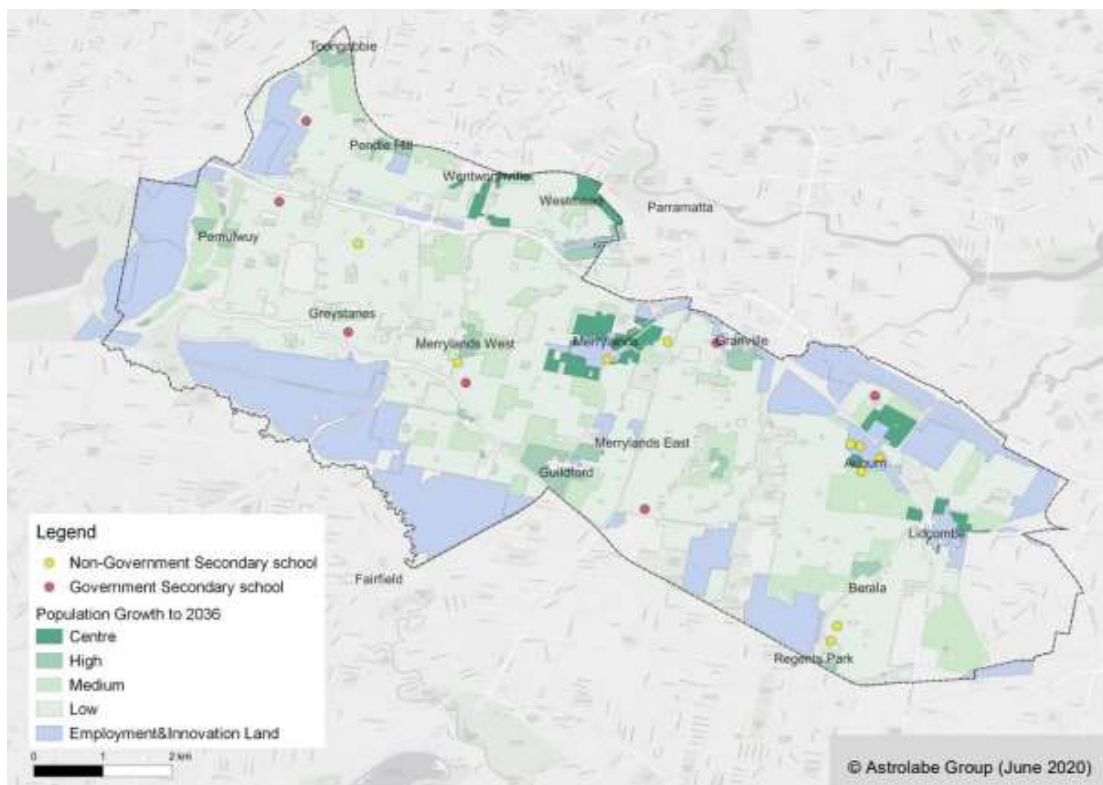
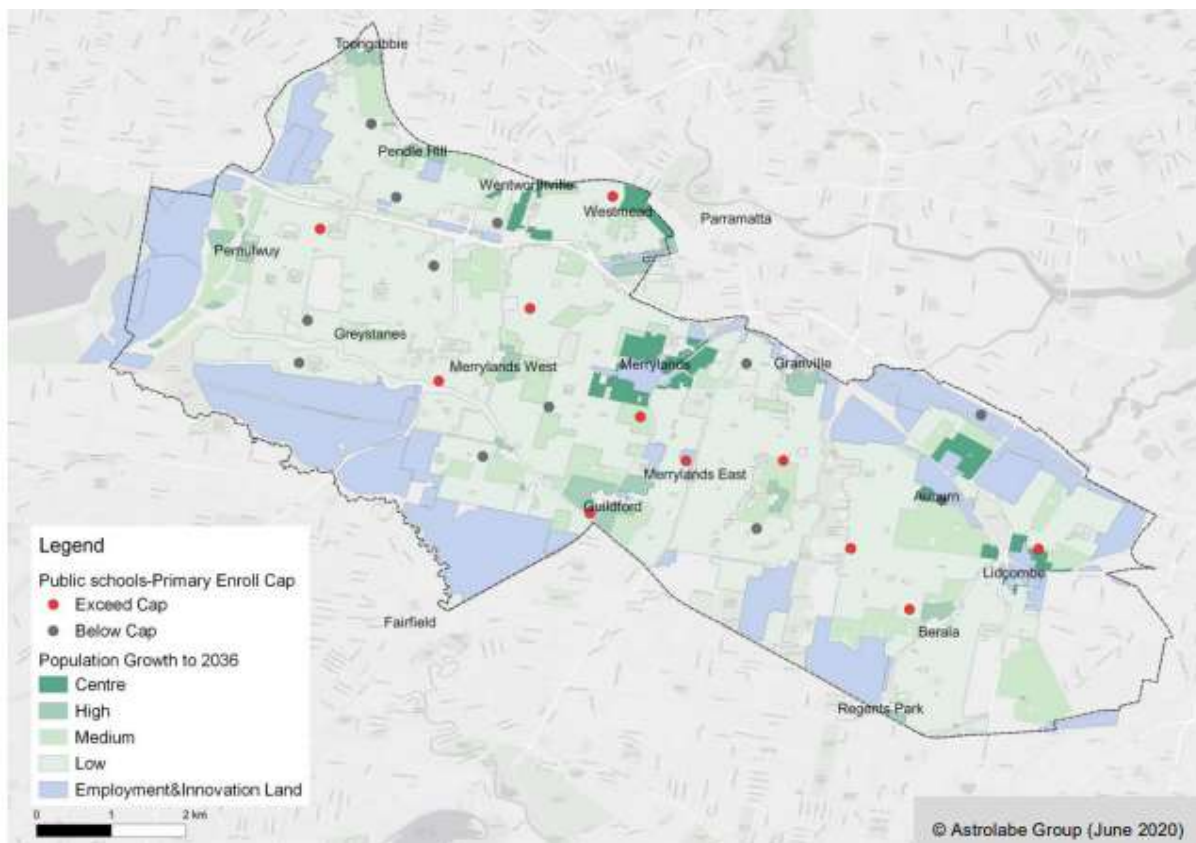


Figure 6. Secondary schools in Cumberland LGA, mapped onto the future distribution of Cumberland’s population growth to 2036.

Exceedances of enrolment caps

News stories have been published over recent years that many of Sydney's schools have exceeded their enrolment cap (acknowledging that the enrolment cap calculates the capacity of a school's permanent buildings). Analysis undertaken on behalf of Council indicates that of the 23 government primary schools in Cumberland, 11 have exceeded their enrolment caps. These 11 schools are servicing students beyond what their permanent buildings can cater for. For example, Westmead Public School has an enrolment cap of 901 students, and in 2020 had a full-time equivalent enrolment of 1,638 students, pushing 737 students above the enrolment cap.

As shown in Figure 7, with the expected population growth in Cumberland, this stress on school infrastructure due to the growing number of children living in Cumberland will pose significant challenges for Council and our residents. Considering how the schools are spread across the LGA, areas with high population growth that are at greater risk include Auburn, Wentworthville, and Merrylands.



Note: data set does not include all government schools, and Cumberland secondary schools have been excluded from this figure as none have exceeded enrolment caps

Figure 7: Government primary schools below or exceeding enrolment caps in Cumberland LGA and estimated population densities for 2036

Considerations for non-government schools

There are currently 17 Catholic system schools and 6 independent schools in Cumberland. In 2019, enrolments in these non-government schools comprised 37 percent of Cumberland's student population.

Using analysis undertaken on behalf of Council, applying the same growth propensity of students (26 percent) to current non-government school infrastructure, an additional 6 non-government schools will be required. If the current split of students attending Cumberland's Catholic system schools (17 schools) and independent schools (6 schools) is assumed, there is anticipated demand for an additional 4 to 5 Catholic system schools and an additional 1 to 2 independent schools.

As Cumberland's centres undergo anticipated growth and renewal, there will likely be an increase in community expectations for wider choice in school preferences. Cumberland's independent schools currently service less of a proportion of the student population than the Australian average, shown in Table 3. As Cumberland's community undergoes anticipated neighbourhood renewal and attracts growth, the demand will likely be greater than the additional independent schools estimated in the analysis.

Enrolments by sector, 2019	No. Schools	No. FTE students August 2019	% of enrolments Cumberland	Australia student enrolment
Government	32	19,721	63.2%	65.7%
Catholic systemic	17	7,818	25.1%	19.5%
Independent	6	3,644	11.7%	14.8%
Total	55	31,183	N/A	N/A

Table 3: Student enrolment by education sector, for schools in Cumberland and Australia

Concurrently, Department of Education projections suggest that independent school enrolments will surpass Catholic systemic schools by 2022. Of particular note, enrolments in Islamic schools have more than tripled in the 5 years to 2019. As an example, news reports indicate that Al-Faisal College's Auburn and Campbelltown campuses already have a waiting list of 900 students.

Demographic planning

The NSW Auditor General's Report Delivering school infrastructure – Performance Audit identified that there is a significant shortfall of classrooms based on the current funded program in metropolitan Sydney. An additional 180,000 students will need to be accommodated in the NSW school system in the years to 2039. It projects that classroom requirements will not be met by 2023 and beyond.

The majority of the increased forecast enrolments are expected in already established areas of metropolitan Sydney, rather than new land release areas or in regional and rural NSW.

The Auditor General's Report identified that SINSW uses common planning assumptions from the NSW Government to project the number of students in school catchments, local government areas and regions. The population forecasts prepared by the NSW Government for Cumberland LGA are generally consistent with the Forecast.id Community population forecasts used by Council.

Whilst forecast population growth is known, the demographic data does not appear to be complemented by a medium-term plan to deliver new public school places for the Cumberland LGA. Planning for local school places needs to be investigated and tested against demographic forecasts, both at the LGA level and the individual suburb level, as forecast population growth is expected to vary across different suburbs within the Cumberland LGA.

4. Investment in new or upgraded school infrastructure

This section responds to the following Inquiry terms of reference:

- c) the adequacy of investment in new or upgraded infrastructure at existing NSW public schools and in new school projects, including
 - i. planning
 - ii. design
 - iii. maintenance, and
 - iv. budgeting and expenditure of new projects

Planning

Council supports the NSW Auditor General's recommendation of detailing priorities with a ten-year timeframe, with ten-year capital planning to create more certainty in the ability of public schools to meet demands arising from forecast population growth. This would ensure funding can be prioritised to projects that best meet demand and encourage longer term planning to align with anticipated student enrolments.

Council values collaboration with adjoining councils and State government agencies to ensure that existing infrastructure is used efficiently and to ensure that the timing and delivery of new infrastructure is aligned with population growth.

The identification of regional and local infrastructure needs during the planning process can enable the identification of opportunities and maximise the value to government in the delivery of infrastructure and facilities. However, this planning work needs to be supported by a funding and delivery commitment to the delivery of school infrastructure. There are two current examples in Cumberland – at Westmead and Lidcombe South – where gaps have emerged as part of the process.

At Westmead, the NSW Government has announced funding for a new public primary school to support population growth in the area. However, there is no public information on the scope, location and timing of this investment. This information is critical as Council and the NSW Government progresses land use planning to align population growth with improvements to infrastructure.

At Lidcombe South, a potential new primary school site has been identified on government land that is undergoing a planning process for redevelopment. However, the NSW Government has been unable to make a commitment to the funding and delivery of the school at this time. This is adversely impacting on Council's confidence in growth infrastructure aligning with population growth in the area.

Design

In supporting communities, SINSW aims to make schools the centre of local communities through initiatives designed to bring people together and create opportunities for learning, work and play. This includes programs to share space with the community and to integrate shared facilities.

Transparency and engagement during planning and development of new school infrastructure as well as upgrading existing infrastructure with Council could assist and support SINSW's objective of school infrastructure supporting local communities.

Council is particularly supportive of new schools being able to accommodate ancillary supporting infrastructure, such as out of school hours care, childcare and shared open

space. The demand for these facilities is generated by primary school communities, and should be a mandatory consideration when new schools are planned and designed.

Maintenance

Council echoes the community's sentiment in relation to the importance of school infrastructure being maintained and where necessary, upgraded, in line with projected population growth. Overcrowding puts pressure on infrastructure and maintenance.

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided by Cumberland City Council for consideration by the Inquiry into the planning and delivery of school infrastructure in NSW.

Recommendation 1

That SINSW consider and note the significant population growth in Cumberland LGA, with the largest current and forecast household type to be couples with children.

Recommendation 2

That SINSW review the student capacity of local primary schools with the most need in areas where strong population growth is forecast in Cumberland, including Auburn, Lidcombe, Merrylands, Westmead and Wentworthville.

Recommendation 3

That SINSW develop medium term plans (minimum horizon of 10 years) to deliver new school places based on forecast demand, integrated with existing school facilities and potential new school facilities, and involved close and ongoing collaboration with Council and local communities.

Recommendation 4

That SINSW undertake an audit of the maintenance, upgrade and renewal needs for existing public schools and prepare a long-term, public facing master plan for schools that will experience an increase in student places.

Recommendation 5

That SINSW ensure school facilities and infrastructure are seen as assets and are considered as part of the planning and redevelopment of a precinct.

Recommendation 6

That SINSW plan for renewal of school facilities, particularly when associated with increasing student places should focus on efficient use of space commensurate with any increases in future student population.

Recommendation 7

That SINSW ensure that supporting and related infrastructure, such as the need for out of school hours care and shared open space is considered as part of the design and planning for all new and upgraded schools.