

**Submission  
No 70**

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

**Name:** Cr Linda Downey

**Date Received:** 9 February 2022

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# NSW PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE IN NSW

Dear Committee members

## **Introduction**

The role of governments, at all levels, is to ensure the education of our children, no matter where they are located, or their financial means. It is what the community demands and expects, and proper access to schools has a significant role to play.

The Auditor General Margaret Crawford's report, which was released less than 12 months ago, could not have been clearer in examining the planning and delivery of new, redeveloped and upgraded schools.

Ms Crawford identified the need for an additional 180,000 enrolments in public schools by 2039, and she based this number on the proposed growth targets set by the NSW State Government for metropolitan Sydney.

The Auditor General's report concluded that School Infrastructure NSW was focused on delivering existing projects, election commitments and other Government announcements, rather than focusing on delivering projects that would have met present and future needs.

The headline from the Auditor's report is damning: "*the currently funded infrastructure program **would not** meet forecast classroom requirements for 2023 and beyond*".

## **The City of Canterbury Bankstown**

The NSW Government has imposed housing targets across Local Government Areas (LGAs) to meet the demands of expected population growth. Canterbury Bankstown which has the largest population of any LGA (380,000) is no exception, with a target of 50,000 new dwellings by 2036. The government's planning strategy in our LGA will undoubtedly increase housing densities, leading to population growth and a greater reliance on existing and ageing infrastructure.

And without stating the obvious, the demand on providing educational facilities within the LGA will place a huge strain on what is already a burgeoning and strained system. What is most disappointing for the community is there has been little, to no commitment, from the NSW Government to providing infrastructure upgrades, including public educational facilities to cater for this projected growth.

To put things in perspective, just one local high school has been allocated funding for an additional technology building (\$20 million), yet very little to provide adequate resources for the long term to other high schools in the area.

Furthermore, what has angered our local community, is that the NSW Government has granted approval for the Western Sydney University to divest itself of the university's Milperra/Bankstown campus. Bizarrely, it has deemed there is no need for an educational facility in this area in the foreseeable future (letter from minister). This site is in the process of being rezoned for residential development (minimum 430 dwellings) under the State Government Gateway provisions. Canterbury-Bankstown Council and the local community have been fighting this decision and rejected the Gateway determination, arguing the site should be retained to provide educational facilities both for now and for future generations to come.

By way of background, most of the local public high schools were built in the 1950s and 1960s with only small-scale upgrades over the years. The local community would be better served by keeping the WSU Bankstown (Milperra) campus as an educational institution.

The campus is a purpose-built facility with a modern and large library, lecture theatres and rooms, student service facilities and student accommodation, only recently built. It has significant sporting facilities and grounds able to cater for a wide range of passive and sporting facilities.

All this will be lost to our local community and its children, if the NSW government continues to support the rezoning of this site.

We also note that the adjoining local private girls' high school has been provided with a significant parcel of land (at no cost) as part of the gateway determination process and negotiations with the NSW State government, Mirvac the developer and WSU.

## **Conclusion**

In making this submission, we would like to highlight the inadequacies and inconsistencies in the NSW Government's decision, to allow this public education facility to be bulldozed to the ground, at a time when the community is crying out for more.

It is ludicrous, and not in the community's best interests, when it is clear the need for a modern educational institution (school) will be required, not so long into the future, especially, when many of the local high schools are in a state of disrepair and in need of a major upgrade, or replacement.

We would also like to highlight to the committee that the land this university campus sits on was "gifted" to the WSU when it was created (the campus used to be the Milperra Institute of Higher Education) for educational purposes. It was expected that it would always remain as a public facility with a focus on education, and indeed is currently zoned for that purpose.

This area needs a well-resourced modern high school to cater for increasing student population growth and housing densities that have been proposed and currently being built.



By the Government's own modelling, they estimate by 2036, more than 10,000 extra students will be enrolled in schools in our LGA.

We urge that this parliamentary committee includes this matter in its deliberations into the provision of quality public educational facilities in western Sydney and lend its weight to retaining a significant educational facility for its designed purpose, an educational institution.

Yours sincerely

Cr David Walsh

Cr Linda Downey



**The Hon. Dr Geoff Lee MP**  
Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education

Ref: RML21/3076 (IM21/22641)

Clr Khal Asfour  
Mayor  
Canterbury-Bankstown Council  
PO Box 8  
BANKSTOWN NSW 1885

Email: Mayor@cbc.city.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mayor *Khal*

Thank you for your correspondence of 11 August 2021, regarding the proposed sale and redevelopment of the Western Sydney University (WSU) Milperra campus and I acknowledge the concerns held by the council and the community.

Under the *Western Sydney University Act 1997 (NSW)* and other NSW university acts, I have complete discretion in approving the sale/lease of university land acquired from the State for less than market value. In granting approval for the sale/redevelopment of the WSU Milperra campus, I considered a range of concerns raised by local residents and other stakeholders, including Ms Wendy Lindsay, Member for East Hills. Ms Lindsay has opposed this development and I have met with her to discuss concerns raised on behalf of her constituents.

In-principle approval for the sale/redevelopment of the WSU Milperra campus was first granted by my colleague, the previous Minister for Education, the Hon Rob Stokes MP, in November 2018.

I subsequently provided final consent to the university in April 2020. My approval was subject to a number of conditions, including sale of part of the land to Mount Saint Joseph High School and the continuation of Little Athletics on the campus until 2022. These conditions were determined in consultation with Ms Wendy Lindsay MP, Member for East Hills.

While I am required by law to provide approval for the university to sell or enter into long-term leases land that was acquired from the State for nominal or less than market value, this is not part of the planning process administered by local councils and the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. Local council is responsible for planning and development matters, including zoning and I understand the university's proposal is currently before the City of Canterbury-Bankstown Council for its consideration.

Yours sincerely

**The Hon. Dr Geoff Lee MP**  
Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education

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## Notice of Motions & Questions With Notice - 10 December 2019

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### ITEM 10.2            UWS Milperra Site

I, Councillor Steve Tuntevski hereby give notice that at the next Ordinary Meeting of Council I will move the following motion:-

“That Council:

1. Notes the letter to the Education Minister co-signed by Clr Linda Downey and myself, regarding the wonderful opportunity to provide a much needed education facility on the current UWS Milperra campus, noting that the site already houses much of the required school infrastructure, and
2. Call on both State and Federal Education Ministers to support this request and bring it to reality for the local residents of Milperra and the surrounding suburbs.”

### BACKGROUND

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As we all know, UWS will be relocating their Bankstown Campus to the CBD within a few short years. This will leave, as I understand it to be, the Milperra site at 2 Bullecourt Avenue surplus to their needs.

At the same time, we can expect to see Milperra and the surrounding suburbs grow significantly thanks to the Greater Sydney Commission’s South District Plan and its disproportionate growth targets. Most residents would be aware that Canterbury-Bankstown Council, by the year 2036, is required to deliver over 58,000 additional homes or 69% of the total additional 83,500 homes in the South District which also comprises of Georges River and Sutherland Council’s.

Whether we agree or disagree with this growth, it would appear it is coming and so there needs to be the infrastructure to match, including schools.

Today, the site is 23Ha and consists of existing high quality educational and auxiliary infrastructure. Within it is a rare opportunity for suburban Sydney: the opportunity to establish a new state of the art high school without having to acquire residential, open space or commercial land. And what is more, many of the facilities, I am sure, could be either utilised straight away or with only minor modifications.



There is no doubt in my mind that a new secondary school will be required in the not-too-distant future. If the NSW Government does not act now, the alternative is that this site would likely be demolished and developed, only for the Government to have to re-establish an educational facility at a greater cost and disruption to the community.

Clr Downey and I have written to the Minister – see the attached letter – but I am now asking that Council also write to both State and Federal Education Ministers calling them to support this request and make it a reality for our local residents of Milperra and surrounding suburbs.

## **GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENT**

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There are no cost implications arising from the proposed motion, as written.

## **ATTACHMENT**

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- A Letter to Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning