

**Submission  
No 113**

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

**Name:** Mr Todd Sellers  
**Date Received:** 11 February 2022

---

10 February 2022

Todd Sellers

GILLIESTON HEIGHTS  
NSW 2321

Dear Committee,

**RE/ Inquiry into the planning and delivery of school infrastructure in NSW**

Thank you for taking submissions regarding concerns pertaining to the planning and delivery of school infrastructure in NSW. I wish to draw your earliest and immediate attention to GILLIESTON PUBLIC SCHOOL in this regard.

Last November 20 2021 a community meeting regarding the poor state of the school and consequential risk to the students was held and attended by 70+ community members including 4 Maitland Councillors, and 40+ people in person as well as another 30+ community members online.

As you are aware Gillieston Public School was established in 1858 and has a rich history in our community, including a proud intergenerational family heritage with various students attending as their parents had and in some cases as their grandparents have previously. Additionally, a significant proportion of our students are new to the area as a result of the ongoing and significant development of multiple new housing estates within our large suburb of Gillieston Heights.

Presently there are ten (10) demountable buildings, up from eight (8) last year, as the school has now further increased to more than 300 students as I understand (in 2001 it was 64 students in total). This however is not fully representative of the population or the growth within our community as an increasingly large proportion of the new families are choosing to send their children to the other primary schools in the surrounding area, though several kilometres further away and as we understand – out of zone. Based on family's feedback, this is primarily due to the significant difference in infrastructure and facilities and as such, a perceived lesser standard at our school. This is a particularly unfortunate reflection on our school which I don't wish to perpetuate, however now feel that this needs to be highlighted so that it may be addressed!

As such please find below the urgent infrastructure concerns as gathered from parents including from the public community meeting last Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2021 for your earliest and urgent attention:

**Infrastructure Priority Requirements**

- 1) **Toilet facilities:** Student toilets are currently demountables, including a new girls demountable toilet installed over the 2021 Christmas break. These toilets have previously proven to be unnecessarily hot in summer and colder than they need be in winter. They are emptied by a truck every two weeks with the smell being overwhelming/ sickening at times. The smell this week has been overwhelming again according to my children without prompting. During the 2015 floods these rendered a significant portion of the school playground untenable and was sectioned off accordingly.

→ The toilets need to be permanent buildings with direct town sewage for health reasons.

- 2) **Fencing security:** School boundary perimeter fencing is waist high chicken and fencing wire.
  - Needs to urgently be raised to the standard of all other public schools being an 1800-2100mm steel fence to keep our children in, trespassers out and our children safe.
- 3) **Grounds safety:** Currently a substantial proportion of the playground is on a significant slope causing student ankle sprains, general injuries and for some an unwillingness to participate in playtime sports and exercise.
  - Literally - level our playing field so that our students may play sports, exercise and develop as other students at neighbouring NSW Public Schools do.
- 4) The current school hall is a composite of several demountables joined side to side without disabled access or air-conditioning and an inadequate size to fit the full student body in one sitting.
  - Build a permanent school hall for assemblies, presentations and general school activities where the entire student body and parents/ carers may attend with air-conditioning for purpose with disabled access and a suggested capacity of 500 people.
- 5) Presently there are eight (8) demountable with a further two (2) planned for delivery in 2022 due to student growth to 300.
  - Build permanent classrooms and remove the majority of the demountables understanding that this area is one of the top growth suburbs in the state and subsequently that these facilities will be well utilised for many years to come.
- 6) The front office, sick bay and staff room are all demountables and there is inadequate parking.
  - Build a permanent front office, sick bay and staff room with current day facilities/ services.
  - Increase staff parking from 10 to 30+ and visitor parking from ZERO to 30+
- 7) The canteen is currently in a shared demountable without disabled access, air-conditioning, appropriate ventilation or cooking facilities to support the fundraisers or day to day canteen activities, resulting in parents cooking at home to support the required canteen operations.
  - Build a permanent canteen inclusive of disabled access, the required cooking equipment, space and air-conditioning.
- 8) The library is currently a shared space squeezed into half of a classroom in one of the only two (2) permanent buildings impacting on accessibility, usage and thus reading standards.
  - Build a permanent library based on a student base of 500+.

Once the infrastructure priority requirements have been addressed bringing Gillieston Public School to the appropriate standard for NSW Public Schools, I ask that so many of the facilities that our children have never been afforded be remedied including those as listed below.

#### **Facilities/ equipment Priority Requirements**

- There are currently no permanent sporting facilities.
  - Establish a sealed court marked and set up for both Netball and Basketball beyond the present multipurpose and only covered play area.
  - Level the grounds and establish permanent soccer and rugby league ovals and goals.
  - Build a permanent school sporting storage facility for the secure storage and maintenance of e.g. netballs, basketballs, soccer and rugby league balls, cricket and baseball bats/ balls.
- There are no permanent facilities for music or theatre lessons or practice.
  - Build a permanent music theatre for teaching, tutoring and practicing of instruments, choir and theatre – allow our children to reach their potential!
- There are currently no covered walkways between classrooms and the hall/ canteen
  - Install covered walkways between the classrooms and the hall/ canteen

As the parent of six (6) children who have passed through and/ or are presently attending Gillieston Public School I have worked with the P&C, teachers and students during key periods over the past 20+ years, and have seen the challenges that face our school community through to the current circumstances which are bordering upon crisis in my view. I have seen the Gillieston Public School facilities fall further and further behind our neighbouring schools with money poured into Rutherford Technical High School, Rutherford Public and Kurri Public School just to name a couple, while our school which has increased from 64 students to more than 300 during my children's attendance with the associated needs due to such growth being largely been ignored.

I ask that the listed urgent "Infrastructure Priority Requirements" be addressed with expedience, with a focus upon such fundamentals as toilet facilities, fencing security and grounds safety.

Yours sincerely,

Todd Sellers MBA MHRM JP NSW