

Submission  
No 114

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 11 February 2022

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Partially  
Confidential

## **NSW PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE**

**11 FEBRUARY 2022**

I am grateful for the opportunity to share my experiences for the purposes of the inquiry into school infrastructure 2022. While I'm happy to share my experiences with the committee, I would like this submission to remain anonymous.

### **ITEM 1 (b) the adequacy of plans by the NSW Government to deliver educational facilities for every NSW public school student**

When my children started high school, they attended a local public high school in Sydney's Inner-west. I chose this school because I believe in the importance of nurturing strong local community connections, and I wanted my children to be at the same school.

One child is still enrolled at this school however the NSW Government was unable to deliver educational facilities for one of my children at this particular school.

One of my children was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Generalised Anxiety Disorder. When this child attended the particular Inner-West Sydney school, they became significantly overwhelmed with the environment, the noise, the people, and lack of places to go to feel calm. Their anxiety became so heightened by triggers at this school, they began experiencing suicidal ideation, auditory hallucinations, and self-harm.

During this child's first year of high school, they were admitted to hospital. While in hospital, my child was assessed as having extremely high sensory profile and needed to learn in an environment with low sensory input. Once out of hospital, together with my child and my child's psychologist, we created a plan for them to safely return to our local high school, the same Inner-West Sydney school where they had started their high school education.

My child's safety plan stipulated that they needed access to a sensory space where they could take breaks and self-regulate their emotions. At our safety meeting with the school, the school indicated that this would not be possible because such space does not exist because the school is too overcrowded. School staff tried to work with my child's safety plan but inevitably there were periods when my child was told to go to the admin area as the best available option. This area was a busy, noisy thoroughfare and led to my child's further health decline.

Sadly, my child could not stay at this school because the educational facilities did not cater for their sensory needs.

### **ITEM 1 (e) the adequacy of demographic planning for anticipated school enrolments**

This local Inner-West Sydney school is overcapacity and overcrowded. This did not happen overnight! There are classes being taught in noisy thoroughfares and poor pathways around the buildings creating even more overcrowding and traffic jams.

When my child was enrolled the school, the school had a significant shortfall of sanitary facilities and was 50% short of outdoor seating. This added to my child's anxiety.

How did this school get to this state? This is definably not an example of planning for student enrolments and this neglect happened over a long period of time.

## **ITEM 1(h) school design that promotes health and safety**

The impact of overcrowding, lessons taught in thoroughfares, lack of satisfactory sanitary facilities, had a very serious impact on my child's health and safety. My child was not safe at our local school.

### **My Reflection:**

Families like mine must be able to access local school options for our children and we must have the confidence that the Department of Education will act within its mandated responsibility as dictated by the 2005 Disability Standards for Education

- *3.3 (a) Education providers must make adjustments to the learning environment to enable students with a disability to access education:*
  - *a measure or action (or a group of measures or actions) taken by an education provider that has the effect of assisting a student with a disability*
- [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(legislation.gov.au\)](http://legislation.gov.au)

and the Department of Education's Disability Strategy's *commitment, vision, and plan:*

- *We are committed to building a more inclusive education system, one where all students feel welcomed and are learning to their fullest capability.*
- *Be supported by facilities that are progressively designed and built to cater better to all students needs*
- <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/disability-learning-and-support/our-disability-strategy/disability-strategy>

### **A positive way forward**

I would like Schools Infrastructure to respond immediately to the serious overcrowding and lack of classroom facilities at all overcrowded and potentially overcrowded schools by creating new spaces for students where they feel safe and supported.

All schools must have the facilities to support students with additional learning needs and teaching staff must be provided with the space and resources to create an environment where all students can meet their educational, recreational, and emotional needs.