

Submission
No 124

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

Organisation: Randwick Boys' High School Parents and Citizens Association

Date Received: 12 July 2022



Randwick Boys High School P&C Association

ABN 78 410 828 848

email: info@randwickboyspandc.org.au

**NSW Legislative Council
Portfolio Committee No. 3 - Education**

Inquiry into the planning and delivery of school infrastructure in New South Wales

Wednesday 13th July 2022

Submission for Randwick Boys' High School P&C Association

Table of contents

Glossary of Terms	3
Executive Summary	4
RBHS School Overview and Context	5
RBHS Upgrade Project Overview	6
Impacts of Current Process	10
Summary and desired outcomes	14
Sources	16
Appendices	16

Glossary of Terms

AMU	Asset Management Unit
BCA	Building Code of Australia
CBP	Community Building Partnership (NSW government)
COLA	Covered Outdoor Learning Area
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DoE	Department of Education
FBC	Final Business Case
EFSG	Educational Facilities Standards Guidelines
INSW	Infrastructure NSW
LGA	Local Government Area
MPC	Multi Purpose Centre (Hall)
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy
P&C	Parents & Citizens Association
PMW	Planned Maintenance Works
PCG	Project Control Group
PRG	Project Reference Group
RBHS	Randwick Boys' High School
RGHS	Randwick Girls' High School
RPS	Randwick Public School
RSPS	Rainbow Street Public School
SINSW	School Infrastructure NSW
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SLS	Senior Learning Space
SSCG	Secondary School Community Group
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics

10th July 2022

Dear Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to present the experience of the Randwick Boys' High School community with regard to the delivery of educational facilities and infrastructure. This submission is designed to provide you with as much information as we could source about the upgrade project for Randwick Boys' High School and its impact on the school community as a whole.

Executive Summary

This submission addresses the experiences of the Randwick Boys' High School community in our interactions with School Infrastructure New South Wales since the June 2018 announcement of upgrades to our school and our neighbouring sister school, Randwick Girls' High School. These upgrades have been approached as effectively a single project with two components, one for each campus, so we ask that you consider our submission in tandem with that of the RGHS P&C.

In brief, our experience with SINSW has been characterised by ongoing delays and a lack of transparency in communicating with the school community which have resulted in considerable frustration and negative impacts on the operations of our school, the experience of our students and the activities of our parent community as represented by the RBHS P&C.

We are particularly concerned that input from the school community to the development of a final business case for this project was heavily restricted; that the FBC was endorsed in March 2021 without being communicated to the school community; that promises, recommendations and requests for consultation with the school community were not acted upon; and that the scope of and funding for the works in the FBC appear to have since been severely curtailed without any involvement of or direct communication with the school community.

Far from being a mere cosmetic uplift to our facilities, SINSW itself has recognised that the works detailed in the 2021 FBC are necessary to bring our school *up to minimum standards for safe operation* under relevant legislation including the Building Code of Australia and the Disability Discrimination Act as well as to meet the Department of Education's own standards and guidelines regarding fit for purpose learning spaces. The fact that the RBHS community continues to be knowingly left in unsafe, inequitable, and unfit facilities with no clear commitment to address these issues, especially in light of recent NSW Government announcements of major funding for other schools, is deeply unsatisfactory and cannot be regarded as acceptable.

In making this submission, the RBHS P&C seeks both to outline our own situation and respectfully ask the Committee to make recommendations to ensure that SINSW takes action to institute processes that ensure transparency, accountability, timeliness, and meaningful involvement of all school communities in decision making regarding the provision of school infrastructure in New South Wales.

RBHS School Overview and Context

Randwick Boys' High School is a boys-only comprehensive public secondary school located in the Eastern Suburbs SSCG. RBHS was officially opened on 11 March 1959 at its current location, sharing a site with Randwick Girls High School and Rainbow Street Public School on the block bounded by Rainbow Street, Avoca Street and Barker Street, Randwick. RBHS and RGHS are the only single-sex comprehensive government secondary schools within the Eastern Suburbs SSCG, which includes six government and 20 non-government high schools.

The current enrolment in Years 7-12 at RBHS is approximately 680 students, 52% of whom are local (within area) [1]. The school is linguistically and culturally diverse, with 62% LBOTE and 2% Aboriginal students and over 65 languages represented among the student body. The school's mission is to develop the talents of each student through the provision of high quality educational, sporting, cultural and leadership opportunities where it has a strong history of success. Its proactive welfare programs support students in their growth and engage them at all levels, offering learning support as well as a High Potential and Gifted Education program [2]. Many students at RBHS are the first in their family to complete Year 12 and pursue tertiary pathways.

RBHS currently operates at under its maximum capacity of 1080 students but is located in an area with considerable potential for enrolment growth. The two nearest primary schools in the RBHS catchment, Randwick Public School and Rainbow Street Public School, have recently received upgrades to accommodate actual and projected growth in enrolment demand to 1,000 students each [3, 4], more than double the average enrolment at RSPS over the last six years of 426 [5]. The high proportion of non-government enrolments in the Eastern Suburbs SSCG (which at 74% is more than twice the state average [Appendix 1: FBC, p. 27]) indicates the potential for a switch in demand to public education due to downturns in employment or the economy such as those associated with COVID-19 or improved facilities attracting parents from more expensive private school options [FBC, p. 32].

At present, apart from safety and equity concerns, poor physical infrastructure represents a limiting factor on the school's ability to attract new enrolments. RBHS enjoys a growing reputation for academic achievement, with strong and improving NAPLAN and HSC results, including a success rate of over 85% in university applications. However, most of the buildings are now over 50 years old and have received little other than minor maintenance since their construction. Parent surveys reinforce the conclusion that the disproportionately small number of local enrolments in RBHS and RGHS (which at 22% is amongst the lowest in the state [FBC, p. 31]) are linked to the inadequate facilities [Appendix 2].

The school is supported by an active and committed P&C and school community that care deeply about educational outcomes for the students. RBHS is situated in close proximity to the Randwick Campus Redevelopment and UNSW. Investment into RBHS and RGHS has the potential to create an educational precinct with strong connections, pathways and opportunities for our youth.

RBHS Upgrade Project Overview

Project background and case for change

Major upgrades to RBHS and RGHS were first announced by the NSW Government in June 2018, intended to rectify inadequacies on both campuses and incorporate community accessible facilities [6]. A Project Reference Group (PRG) was formed including one representative from each P&C. Both the P&C representatives and the Principals were required to sign confidentiality agreements. The upgrade process was delayed by an investigation in 2019 into reclassifying RBHS as a coeducational facility; despite majority support in the community consultation survey, the NSW Government ultimately decided to reject the reclassification [7]. The key drivers for the upgrade proposal were asset suitability including fit for purpose learning and asset condition, equity, and sustainability [FBC, p. 15]. Although population demand was not identified as a key driver, as mentioned above, both of our nearest feeder primary schools have recently been upgraded to accommodate actual and projected enrolment growth including more than doubling the capacity of the neighbouring RSPS.

The facilities at RBHS overall are dated and in need of upgrades to address issues including inoperable ventilation systems, unflued gas heaters, poor lighting and emergency systems, and concrete cancer. Being over 50 years old, the spaces are poorly arranged for both student and teacher workflows and do not facilitate the teaching of current pedagogies, while certain required facilities are absent from the school altogether [FBC, p. 38]. In particular, the planning process identified works necessary to bring our school *up to minimum standards for safe operation* under relevant legislation and to meet the DoE's own standards and guidelines regarding fit for purpose learning spaces, including:

- Upgrade existing buildings to comply with the Building Code of Australia (BCA);
- Improve access and egress to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), including installing a lift;
- Upgrade fire resistance, building services and equipment, including essential fire safety measures;
- Provide expanded and stable electrical services infrastructure including a new substation;
- Improve comfort, learning engagement and amenity by installing air conditioning;
- Upgrade substandard GLS currently present in all buildings to fit for purpose learning spaces under the EFSG guidelines;
- Refurbish and enhance STEM facilities to meet current student demand and allow delivery of current curriculum and expanded TAS/STEM offerings (including a Botany/Zoology room);
- Refurbish specialist teaching spaces, including those with high levels of obsolescence, such as the food technology kitchens (housed in a demountable classroom for 7 years), science labs and workshops;
- Provide a dedicated Senior Learning Unit (not currently provided);
- Create a Fitness Learning Unit (not currently provided);
- Provide acoustic treatment for performance teaching spaces (currently not provided); and
- Complete asset works identified by the AMU as needing replacement within the next 5 years

Final business case and subsequent changes to project scope and funding

A Final Business Case for the RBHS and RGHS upgrade project was finalised and endorsed in May 2021 [Appendix 1]. This document acknowledged that many facilities fail to meet basic standards under relevant legislation, fall below current EFSG, or were in some cases absent altogether. Preferred options were identified for both schools on the basis that they represent best value for money returning the highest BCR for each school; meet projected student demand for the SCG; address non fit-for-purpose learning spaces, the primary driver of service need, through refurbishment of existing learning spaces to comply with the EFSG; address asset condition through refurbishment and upgrade of building services to better comply with the BCA/DDA and to undertake necessary building repairs; and incorporate opportunities to enhance community accessible facilities. The FBC indicated that “subject to detailed development in consultation with stakeholders in 2021, the project is ready to proceed to delivery” [FBC, p. 21].

We understand that the FBC was presented to Treasury in mid-2021 but have been provided with no information from SINSW or the DoE regarding the ultimate outcome of this process. Far from the approximately \$60 million in funding initially announced, the 2021-22 State budget allocated \$5 million to the project, of which it seems only a small fraction was spent, while the current 2022-23 budget lists only \$3.755 million, an amount clearly insufficient to fund all the critical and immediate maintenance and upgrade required as outlined in the FBC and well below the figures of \$10.06 and \$29.37 million recommended for the equivalent periods in the FBC [FBC, Table 0-3, p. 20]. No explanation for these changes or the implications for the works to be undertaken has been given to the P&C by SINSW or the DoE. The NSW Budget website provides no start or finish dates nor estimated total cost (Figure 1), again in contrast to the planned occupation date of Day 1 Term 1, 2024, given in the FBC [p. 11].

Home > My Budget

SHARE | PRINT

My Budget

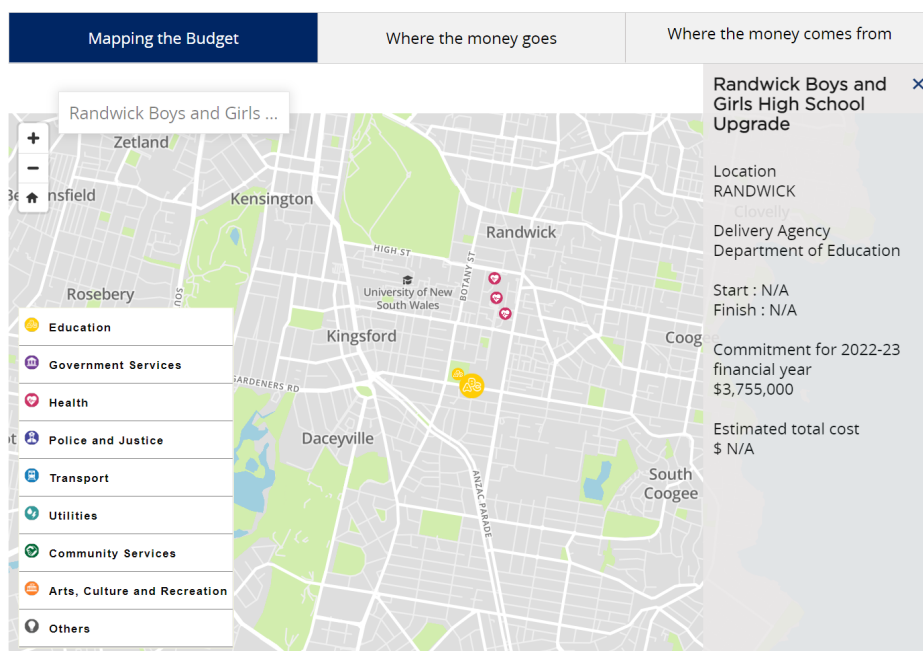
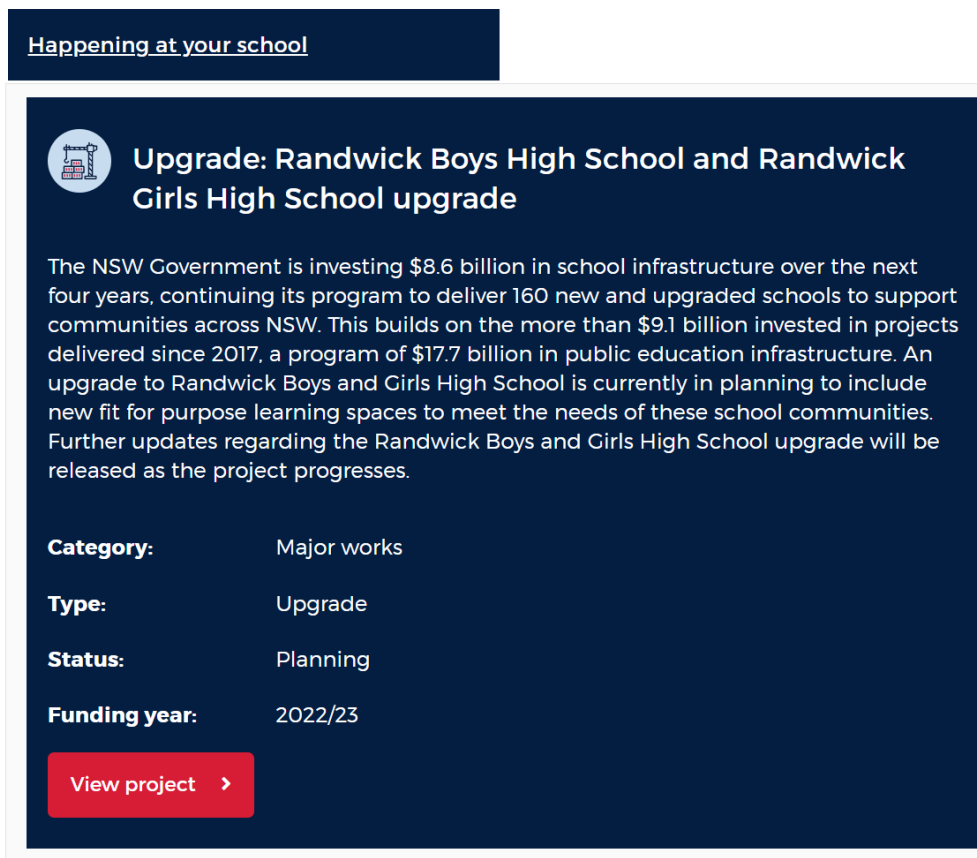



Figure 1: No start or finish dates or estimated total cost for RBHS/RGHS upgrade on NSW Budget 2022-23 website [8], accessed 10/07/2022.

In late 2021, the schools were informed that monies for the project would not be managed through SINSW but rather the AMU, which is responsible for maintenance and minor works. Subsequent meetings that did not include P&C representation have reportedly prioritised some very restricted works that appear to represent what is in fact basic maintenance, such as replacing the floorboards in the RBHS Hall and repairing leaks in the roof of the RGHS MPC. As at July 2022, the project remaining in the “planning” phase on the SINSW website, we have had no stakeholder engagement to facilitate progression to the approvals and delivery phases, amounts indicated in NSW Budget pages fall well short of “major upgrades”, and we face compounding problems and potential costs as necessary maintenance continues to be delayed. In a final recent example of the failure of SINSW to communicate with our school community, we note that their website appears to have recently reinstated “major works” status to our project (Figure 2). Again, no communication regarding this change has been directed to the P&C.



Happening at your school

 **Upgrade: Randwick Boys High School and Randwick Girls High School upgrade**

The NSW Government is investing \$8.6 billion in school infrastructure over the next four years, continuing its program to deliver 160 new and upgraded schools to support communities across NSW. This builds on the more than \$9.1 billion invested in projects delivered since 2017, a program of \$17.7 billion in public education infrastructure. An upgrade to Randwick Boys and Girls High School is currently in planning to include new fit for purpose learning spaces to meet the needs of these school communities. Further updates regarding the Randwick Boys and Girls High School upgrade will be released as the project progresses.

Category: Major works

Type: Upgrade

Status: Planning

Funding year: 2022/23

[View project >](#)

Figure 2: RBHS and RGHS recently reinstated as “major works” on SINSW website, a change not communicated to the P&C [9], accessed 10/07/2022.

Impacts of Current Process

Frustration due to lack of transparency

As a school community, our interactions with SINSW and DoE regarding the proposed upgrades to RBHS have been characterised by growing frustration due to a lack of transparency which has resulted in an inability to participate in the planning process in a meaningful way or understand the progress or current status of our project. Initial opportunities to provide input were not well-advertised or explained, involving an information gathering meeting resulting in a two-page outline from the P&C. The project team established a Project Reference Group which included a single representative from each P&C. However, both these representatives and the Principals were required to sign confidentiality agreements meaning no specific information could be shared with the broader membership. This prevented the P&C from being in a position to understand and comment on the process in an informed way or ensure that our representative was able to receive suitable direction from us regarding the concerns or preferences of the school community.

A SINSW ‘walk-through’ in mid-2019 was attended by one P&C representative from each school but no prior invitation was extended and the attendance followed only after a direct request to be allowed to attend. Further updates on the project regarding the extent or timing of the works were never provided despite a promise via email from the SINSW Community Liaison person to provide ongoing information and consultation [Appendix 3]. An invitation extended for a SINSW representative to attend a subsequent P&C meeting was not accepted and repeated attempts to obtain further details from SINSW and the relevant Minister were unsuccessful [Appendices 4 and 5] with the P&C simply referred back to the SINSW website which continues to list the project as in the “planning phase”.

Following the conclusion of the PRG meetings prior to the delivery of the FBC, the P&C has had no formal communication from SINSW or opportunity to provide further input. Indeed, a direct request from the Principals that a planning update be provided and project details be discussed with the P&C prior to the endorsement of the FBC was dismissed by SINSW as “not feasible” prior to its approval by Treasury [FBC, p. 73]. Rather than being involved in a process of ongoing communication as promised, the P&C have been left to waste considerable time and effort - extremely valuable resources to a volunteer organisation - in unsuccessfully pursuing any kind of direct update whilst having to rely on the State Member of Parliament for any information [information on MO’s questions and provision of documents requested under freedom of information provisions]. As at July 2022, the SINSW website continues to identify the RBHS and RGHS project as being in the “planning” phase, with the most recent update currently available dated October 2020 (Figure 3).

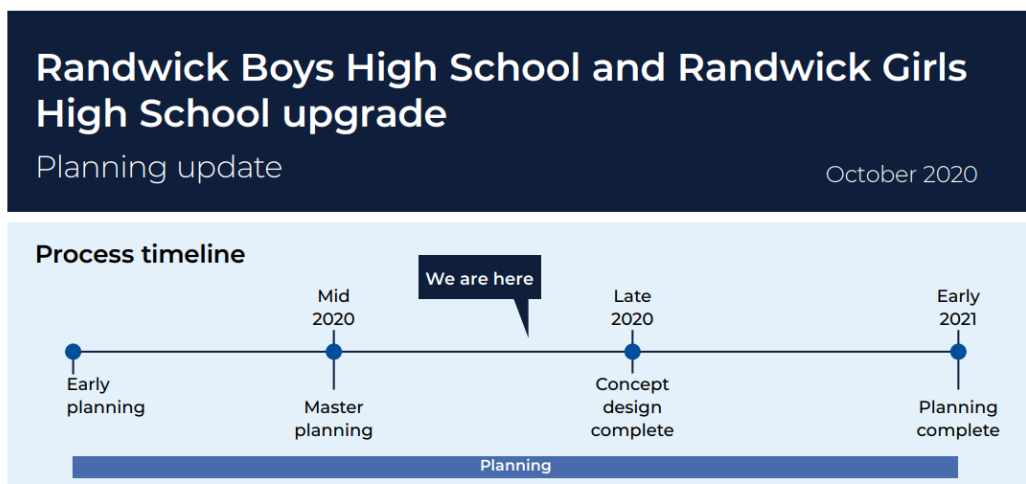


Figure 3: Extract from SINSW *Randwick HS Planning Update 2020*, the most recent update available on the SINSW website as at 11 July 2022 [10, 11].

Ongoing impedance of P&C activities to improve the school

The uncertainty surrounding the nature and timing of the upgrades has significantly hampered the ability of the P&C to contribute to improvements in the school, to the detriment of the school, staff and students. In addition to stalled applications for grants to improve outdoor facilities, a prime example of this is the failure of a Community Building Partnership grant prepared in 2018 by the P&C with assistance from Solar My School for a 99kW solar energy system. This would not only have reduced the pressure on the school's inadequate electricity sub-station (which currently prevents the school from installing adequate air-conditioning in the majority of classrooms) and contributed to the school's sustainability by reducing carbon dioxide emissions, it would also have offered an estimated saving of *over \$17,500* in energy costs per year. The P&C were informed that the AMU refusal to support the application was based on the possibility that any panels installed may need to be temporarily removed and later reinstalled as part of the upgrade works. Four years later, this project is still pending and we have no further information as to when we may be able to proceed.

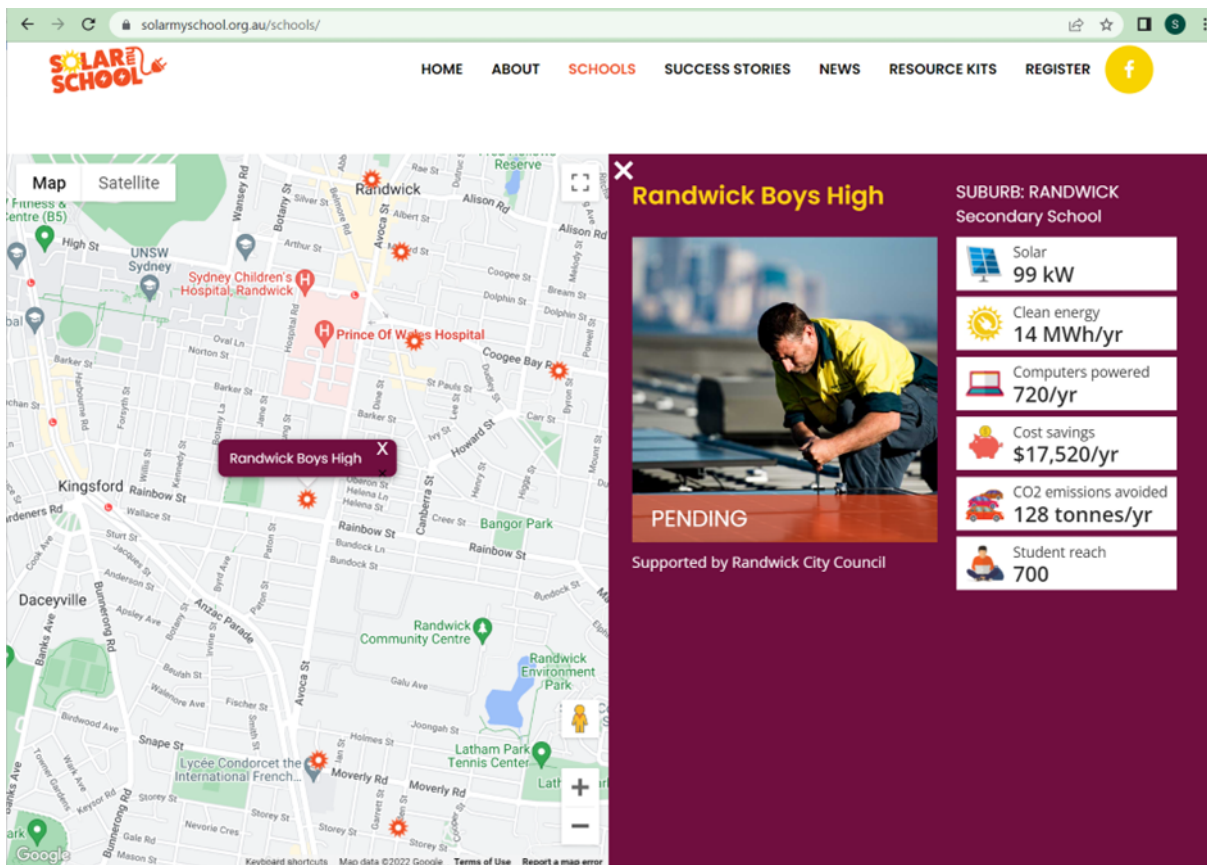


Figure 4: Information on RBHS project from the Solar My School website [12], accessed 07/07/2022.

Challenges in attracting enrolments due to poor physical infrastructure

We believe that our school represents a prime example of need, noted in the Auditor General's recent report into delivering school infrastructure, for "resolving local issues to make under-utilised schools more desirable" [13, p. 8]. The current poor state of the physical infrastructure of RBHS continues to impact negatively on the school's ability to attract enrolments. A survey distributed to prospective parents attending the RBHS Open Night in March 2022 showed that whilst they repeatedly expressed their admiration for the commitment and enthusiasm of the school's teachers and students, the state of the physical infrastructure of the school was a cause for concern [Appendix 2].

Such experiences are increasingly common and frustrating for our entire school community. A whole school audit conducted by the DoE in 2021 demonstrated outstanding performance across RBHS, however the efforts of our School Executive and staff to enhance the standing of our school in the local community by improving levels of academic achievement and processes are being undermined by the decrepit state of the infrastructure and the lack of adequate facilities such as future-focused science labs or a fit-for-purpose kitchen to cater for one of the fastest growing subjects in the school. Growth projections have been taken into consideration for the upgrades of our two nearest feeder primary schools (RPS and our immediate neighbours RSPS), demonstrating a need to also future-proof the secondary schools in the area.

Inadequate facilities to support student wellbeing, learning and engagement

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, the delays and uncertainty in this process continue to impact the conditions experienced by current students and staff as all but the most basic maintenance has been held off in anticipation of the upgrades. For example, due to the school's inadequate substation, the majority of spaces are not air-conditioned and contain dangerous unflued heaters, leading to uncomfortable classrooms that work against learning engagement. The school's fastest growing subject, Food Technology, has been taught for the last seven years in a single demountable classroom with dated and deficient facilities, including poor ventilation and power supply, presenting a risk to the safety of students and staff. Antiquated STEM facilities mean that students are unable to fully experience the current curriculum and are missing out on opportunities in areas of staff expertise which offer the potential for collaboration with programs at UNSW, such as in the increasingly popular Marine Science. Senior students are without a Senior Learning Space, impeding their ability to take full advantage of study periods to maximise their learning and achievement.

Outside the classroom, students and staff continue to suffer unattractive and inadequately resourced grounds. In early 2019, a dangerous tree outside the Administrative Block was removed with the site left unimproved in anticipation of the construction of a COLA, resulting in an unattractive patch of weeds since. Proposed works to upgrade the canteen area have been deferred, resulting in a continuing lack of suitable outdoor seating and insufficient covered areas to accommodate students for breaks during hot or inclement weather. Most of the buildings in the school, including the Hall, Library and teaching blocks, are not connected by covered walkways, meaning students and staff are exposed in all weathers as they move about the campus. The delays have also led to a loss of opportunity to work with RGHS and nearby UNSW on facilities that would have been available to both schools, the university, and the broader community.

Both the DoE and SINSW profess to recognise the importance of safe and engaging future-focused learning environments for students' current achievement and future success, with flow-on benefits for the entire community [e.g., FBC p. 57]. As a parent body, we see constant evidence of the dedication and self-sacrifice of our committed and hard-working teachers and School Executive as they go above and beyond in their efforts to provide our students with opportunities both within and outside the classroom. We work hard as a P&C to support them in these endeavours and build a strong and resilient school community around our students. At present, it is difficult to view the DoE and SINSW as partners working with us to achieve these goals as they continue to ignore our school's identified needs with regard to even basic safety and equity according to relevant legislation and their own standards.

Summary and desired outcomes

The RBHS P&C noted with disappointment that the recent announcement by the NSW Government of \$1.6 billion of funding for public schools did not include RBHS and RGHS despite the recognition of the need for our upgrades as evidenced by the Final Business Case endorsed in March 2021 [14]. We are still uncertain as to whether we are to receive major upgrades in the order of \$60 million between our schools, or only the \$3.755 million as per the current NSW budget line, noting that this amount is unlikely to be sufficient to address even the immediate backlog of required maintenance. Despite repeated requests, we have had no meaningful communication from the DoE or SINSW, and have been left with out-of-date and conflicting information on various government websites. Confidentiality requirements on our Principal and P&C representative have forced us to rely on requests for information through our local member, Dr Marjorie O'Neill, and other members via Budget Estimates - Questions and the Portfolio Committee No. 3 - Education.

In these circumstances, our expectation is that our project of identified need is progressed to delivery prior to new projects being tabled. We seek urgent clarification of the status of our project and a clear explanation as to why the recommendations in the March 2021 FBC regarding the cost, scope and timing of the works have not been followed. Given the compelling rationale provided for the proposed upgrades, we would like our project to move to the approvals and delivery stages as soon as possible to ensure that our staff, students and school community are provided with the safe, fit for purpose, future-focused learning environment required in a NSW public school.

In addition to the specific issues of the RBHS and RGHS case, we would also propose the following as desired outcomes for the future operation of SINSW across all projects:

- Availability of a dedicated community liaison officer at SINSW throughout the project both empowered and required to provide regular and meaningful information on project progress from initial planning to completion.
- Clearly communicated timeframes throughout the project including a rationale for any changes.
- Increased P&C involvement through a transparent process in the lead-up to the preparation of a draft business case.
- Opportunity for P&C feedback on any draft business case prior to preparation of a final business case.
- Opportunity for P&C feedback on a final business case prior to submission to Treasury.
- Provision of up-to-date and timely information on funding to the school community in a clearly comprehensible format including both total project costs and any annual allocations.
- P&C involvement in all decisions regarding any changes to an agreed scope of works or funding.
- Removal of generic confidentiality requirements on any P&C representative(s) and Principals, with a shift to the assumption that information should be available to the school community unless confidentiality is demonstrated to be necessary concerning a specific element of a project.
- Meaningful information provided in a timely fashion on the SINSW website, including accurate milestones, timelines and Treasury approval and budget information.
- Procedures to ensure accountability of SINSW in meeting consultation and timeline milestones.

The RBHS P&C extends our thanks to the Committee for the opportunity to present this submission, and would be more than willing to provide further information or liaise with the School Executive regarding a site visit if that would be of use. We are very committed to providing a safe, healthy and fit-for-purpose learning environment for our local community.

Sources

- [1] <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/la/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=90615>
- [2] <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/41154>
- [3] <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/projects/r/randwick-public-school.html>
- [4] <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/projects/r/rainbow-street-public-school.html>
- [5] <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/41046>
- [6] <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/6b-for-nsw-schools-to-deliver-170-new-and-upgraded-schools-20180613-p4zl9g.htm>
- [7] <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/going-to-a-public-school/high-school/randwick-boys-high-school>
- [8] <https://www.budget.nsw.gov.au/my-budget>
- [9] <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/schools/8/8220.html>
- [10] https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/infrastructure/projects/r/randwick-boys-high-school-and-randwick-girls-high-school-upgrade/Randwick_HS_planning_update_October_2020_Digital2.pdf
- [11] <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/projects/r/Randwick-Boys-High-School-and-Randwick-Girls-High-School-upgrade.html#category-project-updates>
- [12] <https://solarmyschool.org.au/schools>
- [13] https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/FINAL%20REPORT%20-%20Delivering%20school%20infrastructure_0.pdf
- [14] <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/news/2022/06/-1-6-billion-to-build-and-upgrade-nsw-public-schools.html>

Appendices

- [1] SINSW, *Final Business Case Randwick Boys High School and Randwick Girls High School – Upgrade projects*, 10 March 2021, Version 1.6. Further references given as “FBC” for brevity.
- [2] Sample comments from RBHS Open Night Survey conducted on Tuesday 22 March 2022.
- [3] Correspondence 2019-09-18 RBHS P&C and SINSW
- [4] Correspondence 2020-03-27 Response to Leanne Bergan from SINSW
- [5] Correspondence 2022-05-04 Response to Sarah Brill from SINSW