

**Submission
No 127**

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

Organisation: Carlingford Community

Date Received: 14 July 2022

Carlingford Community

The Director

Portfolio Committee No. 3 - Education,

Parliament House,

Macquarie Street,

SYDNEY NSW 2000

12 July 2022,

Dear Director,

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

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the planning and delivery of school infrastructure in New South Wales.

We are a Carlingford local community group who want quality school upgrades in our area and throughout NSW of a scale and of type that does not degrade the local area or its residents' existing level of amenity or impair residents' safety and wellbeing.

Yours faithfully,

CARLINGFORD COMMUNITY SUBMISSION:

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Carlingford Community thanks the NSW Parliament for the opportunity to provide comment on the Inquiry into the planning and delivery of school infrastructure in New South Wales.

We have provided comments under the following headings, aligning to relevant Terms of Reference (TOR), within our submission:

1. re TOR (a) the implementation of recommendations of the 2021 Auditor-General's Report entitled 'Delivering School Infrastructure',
2. re TOR(e) the adequacy of demographic planning for anticipated school enrolments,
3. re TOR(h) school design that promotes health and safety, and
4. re TOR (i) any other related matters.

A key element of our submission to the Inquiry is the need for a more transparent, collaborative, and strategic process of education infrastructure planning and delivery, considering matters such as forecast population needs, place-based and district level planning, the role of schools as community infrastructure.

We would welcome any further opportunities to meet with NSW Parliament Portfolio Committee No. 3 - Education to further elaborate and discuss the matters identified in this submission.

1. re TOR (a): the implementation of recommendations of the 2021 Auditor-General's Report entitled 'Delivering School Infrastructure'

In its response SINSW stated that it has improved its planning approach based on examining groups of schools. They stated that “The SASP 2016 identified a new model for planning schools – **cluster planning or planning in School Community Groups**. This model allows planners to more thoroughly consider the impacts on neighbouring schools when making decisions on new projects.” According to SINSW their Exhibit 5 diagram below “demonstrates the importance of planning in community groups and addressing underutilisation.”

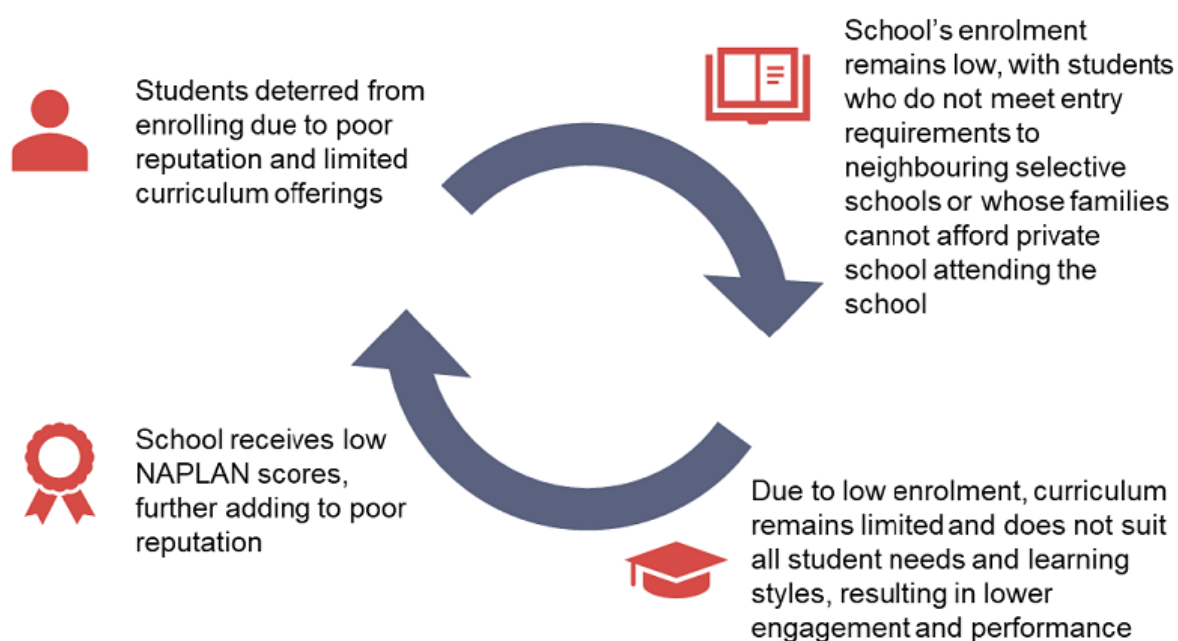


Exhibit 5: Example of an under-utilised high school

“Overview

High School A is located in a community with a growing population. The number of children who live in the school's catchment area is projected to exceed its capacity by 2021. However, only 15 per cent of students in the catchment attend the school, with others attending neighbouring public and non-government schools. While the school is under-capacity, surrounding schools are at, or over, capacity. It is vital for the school to enrol more students from its catchment to break the 'vicious cycle' in which it is trapped (shown below).

The school has undersized teaching spaces and there are inadequate library and creative spaces. Core facilities are in poor condition. However, the school is located on a large site with room for upgrades. Options to respond

Catchment boundary changes and interventions to expand already popular schools across the School Community Group are options. Another option is to upgrade the underutilised high school to attract staff and students to the school. Doing so would improve the reputation of the school and break it from the 'vicious cycle'. This would rectify what is currently a poorly utilised government asset and take pressure off the demand for school places across the School Community Group.”

SINSW have not followed their own policy of cluster planning as stated in their audit report response resulting in perpetuating the “vicious “cycle of polarisation of student numbers between overcrowded Carlingford West Primary School (approx. 1,900 students with a cap of 550) and under-utilised (circa only approx. 100 – 300 students) Telopea, Yates Avenue, Oatlands etc other local area primary schools.

On August 11, 2019 the SMH reported that the Department of Education is cracking down on out of area enrolments and school shopping. “The new policy, [initiated by former Education Minister Rob Stokes last year](#), was intended to address the problem of some schools being crowded with demountables, and others down the road having empty classrooms.” This is the case for Carlingford West Public School whilst neighbouring schools of Telopea, Yates Avenue and Oatlands are under-utilised.

Carlingford West Public School has a student cap of 555 students (SMH 4 May 2020) and at that time exceeded that cap by nearly 1000 students. Current enrolments sit near 2000. Nearly 100 concerned residents met with Dr Geoff Lee MP in June 2022, and he stated that at least 50 % of current enrolments are out of area. A new school is being planned for 1610 students, effectively condoning out of area enrolments and ignoring Cluster planning policy.

"The updated enrolment policy sets an enrolment cap for eligible schools and schools with an enrolment at or above this cap are permitted to consider taking ‘out of area’ students only under exceptional circumstances.” (SMH)

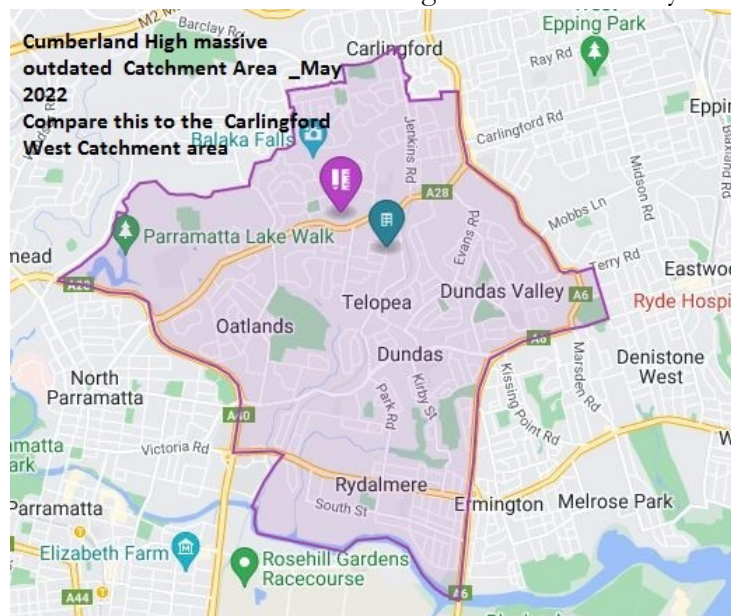
The Daily Telegraph reported on 23/6/22 that CWPS had 93 demountable classrooms. This has been fobbed off as a “temporary” school whilst construction takes place, but similar numbers of demountables existed prior to planned upgrades. A local real estate agent confirms the out of area school shopping in this article.

2. re TOR(e): the adequacy of demographic planning for anticipated school enrolments

The Cumberland High School upgrade proposal seeks to increase enrolment numbers by over 300% from 2020 Annual Report numbers of 656 students to 2,200 students. Carlingford population growth is expected to be 29% up to 2041, not 300%.

Why 300% ? - because not changing the existing outdated huge CHS high school enrolment catchment area (see map below) which includes the massive population increase of the Telopea High Rise Precinct Redevelopment Plans - which currently has no Infrastructure provision for a new high school - therefore Carlingford is taking the burden of poor planning.

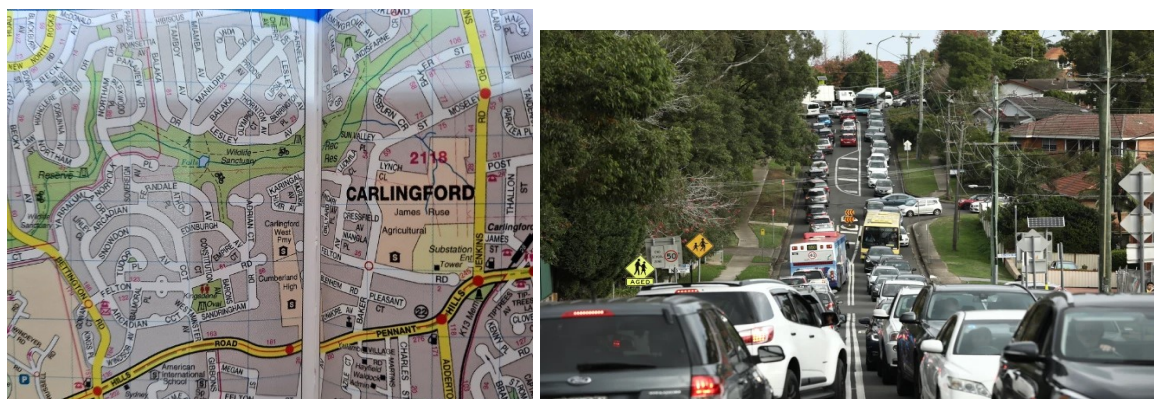
The result is a case of not building schools where they are required.



3. re TOR(h) school design that promotes health and safety

The educational precinct of the 3 close proximity (within 1 kilometre radius) Carlingford West Primary school (currently 1900 students cap of 550 – the most overcrowded school in NSW) Cumberland High School (approx. 700 students) and James Ruse Agricultural High (selective school) are all located within the most constricted limited vehicle volume environment with a complex labyrinth of quiet cul de sacs and circular only local streets and only 2 polarised exits to main roads – see map and photo below . Residents of these streets are locked into and out of their homes during start and end of school times. Proposed solutions to major traffic issues will not address the current grid lock traffic especially when the CHS proposal is to increase enrolment numbers to 2,200 or 300% increase. Significant safety issues arise when local streets cannot be accessed by emergency vehicles, as noted by Parramatta City Council in their submission to the now withdrawn plan for upgrade of CWPS in 2021.

Only recently (June, 2022) , a school child was hit by a car in Baker Street in the afternoon school traffic mayhem of an already over congested area - police and ambulance attended.



4. re TOR (i): any other related matters.

4.1 School Infrastructure planning policies that actively discriminates against local communities with resultant unnecessarily waste of \$MMM's of taxpayers' money

The overwhelming feeling amongst the local residents here in Carlingford is that they have no effective democratic voice in a SINSW process that actively discriminates against local communities such as ours. Demonstrating that fact is that we have made repeated pleas to SINSW and the Education Minister for involvement at the all-important **Concept Planning Stages**, all of which have been denied, despite allowing school representatives on the Project Reference Group (PRG). As we have repeatedly emphasised, P&C representatives who live out of the immediate school local area (and are sworn to secrecy as part of the PRG process) are not local community representatives !”

It is completely discriminatory, it denies the very basics of “grassroots” democracy and flies in the face of open and transparent government.

This is not reflective of community expectations, in fact it is the antithesis of Australian democratic values and has broader community implications across NSW.

Furthermore this leads to an adversarial climate and the waste of \$millions of taxpayer funds - not to mention a highly dissatisfied and disgruntled local community with outrageous detrimental and sub-optimal proposals.

Last year (2021) our community challenged poorly developed and seriously flawed SINSW plans for the state’s most overcrowded school – Carlingford West Public School.

SINSW withdrew those proposed upgrade plans which had been developed over some years with architectural, environmental and numerous other external consultancy fees costing millions of taxpayer dollars - all being simply wasted !



They have now advised that CHS significantly upgraded courts costing at \$1M are now to be demolished !

4.2 SINSW peremptory change after months of advising local residents that the proposed upgrade is an end to end State Significant Development with local community opportunity of an independent review process via DPIE to simply change key elements and unilaterally designate them as Exempt or complying development and proceed with construction is tantamount to fraud on the local community This is exactly what has happened in the case of the combined Cumberland High and CWPS upgrade.

4.3 Transport for NSW policies which limit the provision of on-site school car spaces needs to be reviewed and differentiate between city centre schools such as Arthur Philip High School in Parramatta easily accessible by public transport and those in Western Sydney non city centre locations such as here in Carlingford.

This leads to congestion and often illegal parking in surrounding suburban streets. It also creates a resistance for attracting teaching staff to such schools and creates a safety risk factor as teachers are then forced to walk in streets in dark winter months often with heavy loads of teaching artefacts etc.

This aspect should also be reviewed in light of SINSW needing be far more innovative in the design of car parks using underground solutions with open play areas on top. Currently CWPS had less square metre play space than many jails provide for prisoners.

4.4 Stronger enrolment policies are needed to ensure that out of catchment enrolments are not allowed where enrolment cap is already exceeded

Carlingford West Public School has a student cap of 555 students (SMH 4 May 2020) and at that time exceeded that cap by nearly 1000 students. Current enrolments sit near 2000. Nearly 100 concerned residents met with Dr Geoff Lee (State MP for Parramatta) in June 2022, and he stated that at least 50 % of current enrolments are out of area. A new school is being planned for 1610 students, effectively condoning out of area enrolments and ignoring Cluster planning policy and burdening Carlingford Local residents.

To cater for true local community catchment enrolments only and planned population growth a school of approx. 1200 would be realistic.

Local residents have known for years of fictitious and / or temporary rentals in Carlingford simply to have children enrolled in Carlingford West Public School - refer attached Daily Telegraph article 23/6/2022 below

Parents' fibs put squeeze on school

Demountables grow

EXCLUSIVE
CHRISTOPHER HARRIS
EDUCATION WRITER

SCHOOLS across Sydney have added dozens more demountables in the space of just two years to deal with a surge in students, as parents go to extreme measures to cheat enrolment rules at already overcrowded schools.

A bid by the Department of Education to curb ballooning student numbers at popular public schools by shrinking catchment areas has failed to work, with parents prepared to commit enrolment fraud.

Real estate agents say some parents are forging lease agreements to pretend they are local. Others rent property in the enrolment zone but do not actually live there.

It comes after The Daily Telegraph last week revealed some public school students had less space to play than NSW prisoners.

Now it can be revealed Carlingford West Public School has seen demountables surge from 51 in 2020 to 93 this year.

At Riverbank Public School in The Ponds, an extra 13 have been added to the playground over the same period, while an additional 12 have been erected at Castle Hill High.

Epping West and Chatswood and Glenwood high schools have also seen a dramatic increase in the number of demountables.



A demountable at Carlingford West Public School.

Carlingford West has become so popular with parents because of its outstanding NAPLAN results that the school is now demanding parents of prospective kindergarten students prove they have been renting in the catchment area for more than a year.

Margot Brattoli from Showcase Realty Carlingford said "parents will go to any lengths" to get their kids into the school.

"I have had people forge a lease," she said.

"There are some who will make an offer (on a rental property) and say look, we're not going to live in it ... but we will give you \$400 a week."

A Department of Education spokeswoman said many of the additional demountables were being used while extra classrooms were being built.

NSW Labor education spokeswoman Prue Car said the government had failed to manage enrolment growth.

"It's a planning nightmare," she said.

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4.5 Careful consideration, local community consultation and restraints need to be part of Policies seeking to have out of hours and weekend activities in determining the role of schools as community infrastructure

In recent years a State school marching band was allowed to use the Cumberland High oval on weekends with loud band noise detrimentally affecting thousands of residents. After years of complaints to the school and finally raising the issue with EPA as noise pollution, the school stopped the activity.

Other residents in Carlingford are complaining about James Ruse school currently allowing community activities throughout the week up until 10 pm with intrusive vehicle noise in the surrounding quiet, small streets

The policy should clearly differentiate between schools such as Arthur Philip in Parramatta CBD and those whose local resident neighbours will be impacted. It should be mandatory for the local residents to approve any such planned activities as an important checks and balances provision within any such policy.