

NSW Secondary Principals' Council



POSITION PAPER New Builds Reference Group Position Paper

Introduction and current school context

The NSW Department of Education, “Our Plan for NSW Public Education” 2023- outlines the commitment to ‘excellence and equity’, a position supported by the NSW SPC.

One of the enablers for the department is the role of School’s Infrastructure that commits to using “data driven and informed decisions” to “meet the needs of a growing population and support student outcomes”. “Across NSW, we are delivering new and upgraded facilities to ensure every student has access to high quality, inclusive, sustainable learning environments at their local public school.” (<https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/plan-for-nsw-public-education>)

The role of School Infrastructure (SINSW) is therefore vital and (essential) in enabling the vision and values of the Department of Education Plan.

The department’s “Our Plan for NSW Public Education” also has a key focus area to “strengthen trust and respect for the teaching profession.” Outlined in the plan are key areas of which one of these is to “increase the proportion of teachers and school staff who feel valued, trusted and respected in their profession.”

The SPC New Build Reference Group (NBRG) believes principals are an essential stakeholders in achieving excellence and equity and support this in respect of new builds and upgrades. This group must also have a voice to inform the strategy and processes developed and delivered by SINSW. Principals and teams best know the context and infrastructure needs of their school. This will exponentially increase trust with schools. As such the NBRG plays an integral role in advising and collaborating with SINSW.

The NBRG considers that consultation in related to new builds or major upgrades refers to seeking advice, guidance, or opinions from individuals who are highly knowledgeable and experienced in a particular field or subject. This typically involves engaging with experts in order to gain specialised insight, solve complex problems, or make informed decisions.

Background, including current context and future projections:

(<https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/>)

SINSW currently use the following data sources to project current school enrolments and projections.

- Medicare data



- NSW Public School enrolment data
- NSW Commonwealth Planning Assumptions
- NSW govt Population Projections
- Australian Census data

The website reports that this data is used to upgrade existing schools and build new schools and the current timeline is 1-3 years from sign-off.

They also indicate the necessity for accommodating short term enrolment peaks which are accommodated by demountable buildings.

In their 2023 report there are many development issues. One case in point that demonstrates this is the list of schools that have more than 30 demountable buildings on-site as of 30.04.24

- Narrabeen Lakes PS – 30
- Matthew Pearce PS- 31
- St Ives HS- 32
- Northbourne PS-33
- Bonnyrigg PS -35
- Girraween PS – 44
- The Ponds HS – 48
- Castle Hill HS – 51
- Riverbank PS- 54

It is noted that building programs and upgrades are allocated on a “relative need basis across the state.”

According to the teachers Federation estimates by 2036 there will be 966 000 students in NSW Public Education schools:

- 594 000 in Primary
- 373 000 in Secondary

School Mergers and De-Mergers

Whilst there are some instances of ‘greenfield’ schools, there is a growing number of mergers that accompany a new build or major re-development.

Rationale

To effectively manage school growth and new-builds, context is imperative. While we recognise the financial imperative of Design for Manufacturing and Assembly model (DFMA) - ‘one size fit all’ this needs to come with consultation with the people who best know the site i.e. the Principal, the community, and then the Director Educational Leadership. The New Builds Reference Group insists that the consultation process must include the Principal.

This group, consisting of principals who are experienced in new builds, major upgrades, school mergers and de-mergers is committed to support principals setting up a new school or navigating a new build.

Commitment The New Builds Reference Group has a shared commitment as outlined below and ratified by the group on 16th May 2024.

- That all students in department secondary schools have equal access to quality facilities
- Strengthening the partnership with SINSW to ensure improved stakeholder voice as the educational experts
- That the New Builds Reference Group plays a role in providing advice to the current revision of the Educational Facilities Standards Guidelines
- Advocating that the principal plays a key role in providing advice in the development of new builds and major upgrades as the educational expert and source with the most contextual knowledge
- Advocating SINSW to support design variations in the DFMA on the advice of the principal to meet the needs of the local context.
- Advocating that the department adheres to their own policy merge, demerge and closure.
- Providing advice to principals and to the department regarding mergers and de-mergers
- Work with the PL RG to provide professional learning as required for principals involved in a new build and/or merger.

Recommendations:

- That principals are considered as educational experts and stakeholders in all levels of the consultation, design process and decision. Processes are developed by SINSW that ensures advice is sought from principals in all matters affecting the delivery of educational provision that meets the need school and wider community.
- Principals are appointed 24 months in advance from a new build.
- That the New Builds reference group be consulted and have voice in all revisions to the Educational Facilities Standard and Guidelines.
- That in instances where variations to the design are considered the principal's advice as an advocate for the school community is considered a key factor alongside any subject specialists who are consulted more widely in the decision made by SINSW.
- Design variations can be made on the advice of the principal to meet the needs of the local context and that serving the needs of the current school community overrides the contingency for generic planning.
- That SINSW survey the scope of post occupancy defects and faults with the view to ensure schools are supported with post occupancy issues for an appropriate period so that resolution is not reliant on student equity funds.
- That SINSW and SPC NBRG collaborate to develop professional learning including wellbeing support for principals who are leading new builds or major upgrades.
- That all students in department secondary schools have equal access to quality facilities
- That the department adheres to their own policy merge, demerge and closure.
- That a 'Principal in Residence' position be established to support secondary principals across the State who are leading new schools with new builds and major upgrades. The Principal in Residence position should be filled by a principal who has experience in leading a new build. The Principal in Residence should be a member of the NBRG.
- In the case of new builds or major rebuilds an additional Deputy Principal of 1.0 is funded as an additional entitlement for the duration of the build as a part of the business case.
- New schools should be staffed as a base line with an initial executive entitlement based on projected enrolment for the first three years

Ratified at the SPC Term 2 State Assembly on 31 May 2024