

Frequently Asked Questions

Strengthening the future provision of public secondary education in the inner Sydney area.

Q1. What data sources does the Department use to predict enrolments?

The Department prepares projections every year for student enrolment data for individual schools for the next five years. The Government also looks at other sources of information to create a more comprehensive picture of demand over the next 10 to 15 years. This includes studying information and population projections for school-aged children in local Government areas from the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure population projections and Australian Bureau of Statistics census data on demographic trends such as Government/non-Government school affiliations. It also includes an analysis of Government plans for major urban redevelopment and housing precincts and infrastructure projects. This information gives the Government a good indication of what population growth demands will be in coming years, as well as where further capacity or adjustments might be needed.

Q2. Has the decision to establish an additional public secondary school in inner Sydney already been made?

At this stage no decisions have been made about whether or not to establish an additional public secondary school. The review process will ensure that the Department has a strategic view of educational needs and capacity, as well as community ideas and suggestions, prior to making recommendations to the Government about whether an additional public secondary school will strengthen the provision of public secondary education in the inner Sydney area.

Q3. Why not be more sustainable and redevelop an existing school? This could start now.

Doing more with what we have is important but the impact and disruption to school communities needs to be carefully considered. Any redevelopment would have to increase public secondary capacity and deliver significantly improved teaching and learning facilities.

Q4. Why not just build a new school?

The construction of a new school is just one of the long term options for strengthening secondary provision in inner Sydney. If a new school is considered to be one of the best long term solutions then the Department will put forward that recommendation to the Government.

It would take at least four years for an additional school to be operational. Prior to detailed design and construction of an additional school, a suitable site would need to be selected, approved and acquired. Additionally, any new school would have to be funded in line with budget priorities.

Q5. Are there any sites already being considered for an additional public secondary school in inner Sydney?

The Department has already received multiple suggestions about where a new or redeveloped public secondary school in the inner Sydney area could be located. These suggestions, along with any gathered through this consultation process will be considered as recommendations are formulated.

Q6. What is the Department's policy on the enrolment of students and school boundaries?

The Department's policy is explained in the Enrolment of Students in NSW Government Schools: A Summary and Consolidation of Policy that can be found at: https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/student_admin/enrolment/enrolpol/PD20020006.shtml?level=

Parents may apply to enrol their child at a school outside their designated catchment area. Non-local applications may be considered by the school's enrolment panel, according to the Department's policy and subject to selection criteria such as availability of appropriate staff and classroom accommodation. Each school maintains its own out-of-area selection criteria, which can be found by visiting its website.

Q7. Could you just put demountables on all the existing schools and not build a new school at all?

Demountable classrooms play a critical role in managing emergent and forecast enrolment growth. While the quality of demountable classrooms has improved significantly over the last 5 - 10 years, they tend to be a short to medium term solution to a projected need for additional teaching and learning space. The overall size of existing school sites is also an important consideration in determining capacity for future growth.

Q8. Why are you using external consultants?

The Department has appointed external consultants because:

- they have a wealth of experience and knowledge in developing consultation processes that increase participation and transparency of the process;
- their independence ensures issues can be discussed and reported on objectively; and
- they have greater capacity to run the consultation – the robust consultation process would be resource intensive for the Department to run.

Q9. What influence will the consultation have?

The outcomes of the community consultation will be considered by the Department when developing its recommendations on how to strengthen the future provision of public secondary education in inner Sydney.

Q10. On what criteria will the Department make its recommendations?

The Department has developed a standard set of criteria against which options are assessed. These are:

- Effectiveness in meeting the projected demand in the short and long term
- School facilities best meet school facility standards and enable flexible 21st century learning
- Solutions provide value for money (capital cost per student and whole of life costs and equity across competing needs)
- Even distribution of the utilisation of schools to ensure students can be accommodated, school assets are used effectively according to capacity and sufficient teaching and learning space is provided
- Location and access to transport
- Added benefits provided to the community
- Disruption to schools and students is minimised.

Q11. Who is making the final decision?

The Department will make recommendations to the Government about the best possible solutions to strengthen the future provision of public secondary education in inner Sydney.

Q12. Will you make public what people have told you?

The Department has appointed independent community engagement specialists, Straight Talk, to design, facilitate and report on the community consultation process. Straight Talk will prepare a series of summary reports outlining the issues raised during consultation. These issues summaries will be made available to view on the consultation online forum which can be accessed via <http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/sydneyhsconsultation> from Friday, 16 May, 2014.

Q13. How do I know you will listen to what I say?

The consultation process has been developed in accordance with the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) core values. This includes 'the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision'.

The Department will consider all community feedback prior to making its recommendations.

Q14. Why use the 'Kitchen Table Discussion' method?

Kitchen Table Discussions are one of the many tools being used during the consultation process to gather and understand community ideas and suggestions. The Department has developed the consultation strategy to provide a wide range of community options for participation.

Hosting a Kitchen Table Discussion is a great way to participate in the consultation without needing to attend one of the community workshops or joining the online discussion forum.

The Kitchen Table Discussion guide helps the community plan, host and record the outcomes of their discussion at their convenience, in an environment they feel comfortable in and with people they know.