

straight Talk

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

Issues summary 5 – Written feedback

August 2014

1 Background

The inner Sydney area and its surrounds are experiencing urban renewal through the construction of new infill housing developments, the movement of families back into inner Sydney and increasing numbers of families remaining in the area.

As a consequence, the growth in the number of school-aged children living in inner Sydney will place increasing pressure on public education services in the area.

NSW Department of Education and Communities (the Department) is responsible for planning for and reviewing public education to ensure it meets the needs of students in relation to both educational offerings of schools and the learning environment. Needs and capacity analyses are undertaken on an ongoing basis to assist in strengthening the future provision of public education across the State.

In late 2012 the establishment of the Inner City Schools Working Party was announced to assist the Department with its ongoing review of public primary and secondary education in the inner Sydney area. The initial task of the Working Party was to consider the public education needs for growing numbers of primary-aged school students in the Ultimo/Pymont area. The Working Party recommended that a new school be built in the area.

Membership of the Working Party was reconfigured at the end of 2013 for its new focus on considering demand and possible options for addressing the provision of public secondary education in the inner Sydney area. Membership of the Working Party includes senior Departmental officers with educational, assets and communications expertise and selected secondary school Principals.

Initial needs and capacity analyses identified that in the:

- Short term there are some schools in the area with higher enrolments than others and that there is additional teaching and learning space available within the majority of existing public secondary schools; and
- Longer term there is a shortage of teaching and learning spaces to meet the projected demand.

On 16 May 2014 the Inner City Schools Working Party launched its six week community consultation period to gain community feedback on the provision of public secondary education in the inner Sydney area to assist the Department in its ongoing consideration of public education.

The consultation was designed using a variety of strategies to encourage as wide a range of individuals, stakeholder group members and the general community to explore and provide input on possible educational solutions for addressing the predicted growth in the number of public secondary school-aged children living in inner Sydney including:

- Principals, teachers, 'invited' P&C representatives and primary and secondary school students;
- NSW Teachers Federation, Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), local interest groups; and
- The broader inner Sydney community.

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This is one of a series of issues summaries that presents the outcomes of the community consultation. The focus of this issues summary is the outcomes of the written feedback received during the consultation process including:

- **Feedback from participants in the self-directed Kitchen Table Discussion process.**
- **Comments made in response to the questions on the online discussion forum.**
- **Other written feedback received by the project team during the consultation process.**

The Department will consider the feedback from the community consultation, along with the needs and capacity analyses, to help shape its recommendations on how to strengthen the provision of public secondary education in the inner Sydney area.



2 Approach

Consultation purpose and objectives

The consultation was designed to seek community input on three discussion areas:

1. Options for managing public secondary educational needs in the short term (1-4 years).
2. Options for managing public secondary educational needs in the medium to long term (5-10 years).
3. The best way to create public secondary schools that meet current and future educational demands, in a highly urbanised environment with finite resources.

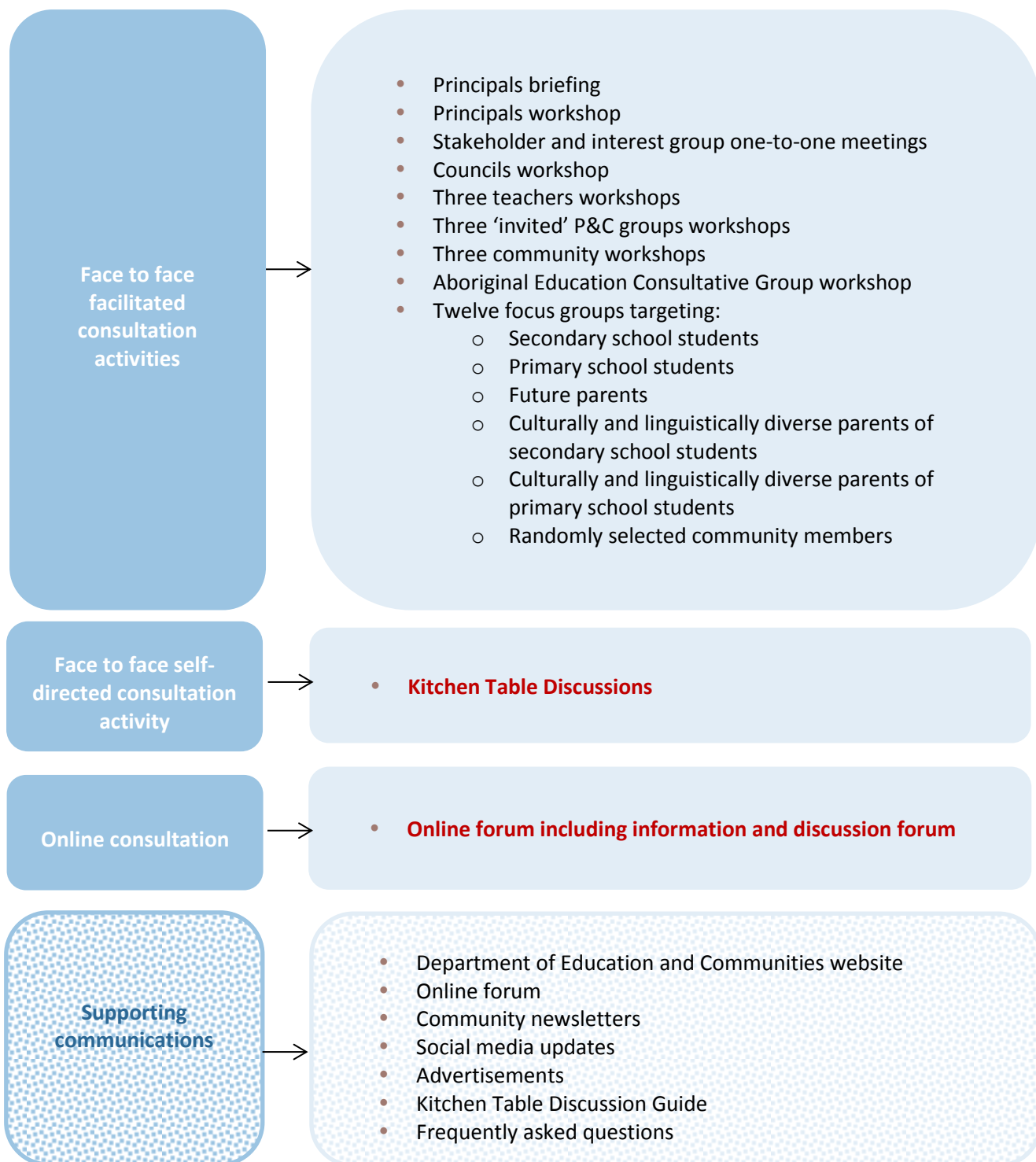
The objectives for consultation for planning for public secondary education in the inner Sydney area were to:

- Introduce the consultation process and invite participation from stakeholder groups and people who had an interest.
- Provide a number of different ways in which stakeholder groups and the community could participate in consultation activities.
- Facilitate feedback and consultation from key stakeholder groups and the community so that the full range of issues, concerns and ideas could be heard and considered.
- Ensure that the conversation about planning for public secondary education in the inner Sydney area was broadly representative of wider community expectations and priorities.
- Identify and acknowledge the breadth of issues, concerns and ideas and demonstrate the challenges for the Department in considering and weighing up each option.
- Provide feedback to participants, stakeholder groups and the wider community on what was raised, how it was considered and how it influenced the final recommendations.



Consultation activities

There was a wide range of opportunities for stakeholders and the wider community to participate.



This issues summary presents the outcomes of the activities highlighted in **red**.



Written feedback details

Kitchen Table Discussions

The wider community was invited to host and or participate in a self-directed Kitchen Table Discussion during the consultation period.

Kitchen Table Discussions are a structured way of participating in a constructive discussion about a particular issue, in this case the future provision of public secondary education in inner Sydney. This process provided an additional opportunity for colleagues, family and friends to have a structured discussion about solutions and ideas to inform the Working Party's recommendations.

A Kitchen Table Discussion Guide was prepared to support the process. This included:

- Information on what the Kitchen Table Discussion involved.
- Background information on the current and forecast provision of public secondary education in inner Sydney.
- Information for the discussion hosts to help them organise the discussion.
- Information and guidelines to guide the discussion agenda.
- A feedback sheet for completion during the discussion.

Each guide also contained a 'feedback form' insert to provide a quick and easy opportunity for participants to provide their feedback and not the level of consensus.

During the discussion participants were asked to discuss the three consultation questions:

1. Options for managing public secondary educational needs in the short term (1-4 years).
2. Options for managing public secondary educational needs in the medium to long term (5-10 years).
3. The best way to create public secondary schools that meet current and future educational demands, in a highly urbanised environment with finite resources.

The Kitchen Table Discussion process was promoted in a number of ways:

- Information was distributed through Principals.
- Information and an electronic copy of the guide were posted on to the Department of Education and Communities and the NSW Public Schools websites.
- Copies of the guide were distributed at all face to face activities during the consultation period.
- Advertisements were placed in the Sydney Morning Herald and local newspapers.
- Social media updates on Twitter.

Over 680 guides were viewed online during the consultation period; 420 hard copy guides were distributed at face to face activities and 261 electronic guides were viewed on the online forum.

Over 150 people participated in the process. The project team received 14 completed Kitchen Table Discussion feedback forms during the consultation. The number of participants in discussions ranged from 3 to 66. Ten groups disclosed how many people participated – the total number of participants in these groups was 158.



Feedback was received from the following organisations that hosted a Kitchen Table Discussion:

- The Hon Alex Greenwich, MP (Member for Sydney) with parents of Darlinghurst Public School, Crown Street Public School, Glenmore Road Public School, Woollahra Public School, Sydney Secondary College and several childcare centres.
- Annandale Public School parents.
- Newtown Public School parents.
- Erskineville Public School parents.
- Stanmore Public School parents.
- Sydney Chinese School in Haymarket staff.

Feedback was also received from a groups identifying as 'parents from Rozelle' and 'parents from the inner west'.

Online forum discussion

The wider community was invited to view and download consultation information and join the discussion on the online forum.

The online forum was designed to allow participants to comment on a series of discussion questions. It provided the functionality for participants to respond to other comments, as well as indicate their level of agreement with other comments by clicking the 'agree' and 'disagree' buttons under comments.

Four questions were posted on the online forum. Three of these were similar to the broader consultation questions and the other was designed specifically to drill down into the short term issue of uneven enrolments across schools. These questions are included over the page.



1. What do you think can be done in the short term to meet demand and strengthen the provision of public secondary education in inner Sydney over the next 1 – 4 years?

What do you think needs to be done now and in the short term to improve the provision of public secondary education in the inner Sydney area?

Some options could be:

- revise the existing school catchment boundaries;
- manage student enrolments to better accord with school catchment boundaries;
- convert underutilised building space to create additional classrooms;
- construct demountable classrooms;
- enhance educational offerings to attract more students to those schools with fewer pupils.

What do you think?

2. How should uneven high school enrolments be managed?

At the moment some schools are operating near capacity while others are under-utilised, and enrolments at some schools are steady while others are experiencing growth.

How would you deal with this challenge?

3. What do you think are the best options for addressing the projected longer term demand for additional teaching and learning spaces/classrooms for public secondary education in inner Sydney (5 - 10 year period)?

In the longer term, projections show that between 25 and 40 teaching and learning spaces/classrooms will be required to meet enrolment demand sometime in the period 2018 to 2026. It is likely that the final solution will involve multiple strategies.

Some options could be:

- review educational offerings in public secondary schools;
- redevelop an existing school to expand its capacity, improve its facilities and extend its curriculum; or
- construct a new school to provide additional permanent teaching and learning spaces (classrooms).

4. What ideas do you have for helping to create public secondary schools that are ‘future proofed’, and ready to prepare students for their lives ahead?

Schools aren’t just classrooms and catchment areas. What else needs to be looked at? What could be done to make inner Sydney public secondary schools better in the future and to make sure that public secondary education is preparing students for the challenges they will face when they leave school?

The online forum was promoted in a number of ways:

- Information was distributed through Principals.
- Via the Department of Education and Communities and the NSW Public Schools websites.
- At all face to face activities during the consultation period.
- Advertisements were placed in the Sydney Morning Herald and local newspapers.
- Social media updates on Twitter.

During the six week consultation over 4,000 community members visited the online forum. In total there were 586 comments on the forum by 98 unique participants in the online discussion forum.

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The vast majority of unique users, 78 (80%) commented on the forum five times or less. Of the 20 participants (20%) that commented more than five times the highest number 10 (10%) commented more than 15 times.

There were 539 unique visitors to the document library during the consultation period. Some of these visitors viewed more than one document. The frequency of views for each document is below:



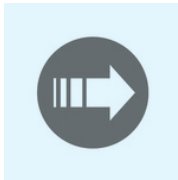
- Kitchen Table Discussion Guide – 261 unique views.
- Background information – 204 unique views.
- Community Consultation Strategy Summary – 182 unique views.
- Frequently Asked Questions document – 178 unique views.



3 Issues analysis

Feedback has been collated, analysed and coded to enable an understanding of the key issues, opportunities and solutions raised in the written feedback. A summary of the key issues is included in the 'At a glance' section, with 'More detail' provided from page 11 onwards.

At a glance

<p>Short term</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform or abolish the selective school system and utilise those facilities for local students • Enforce boundaries against out of area students • Build a new school or move an existing school in the inner east and use the vacated site • Improve educational options and teaching at underutilised schools • Improve the buildings and grounds of underutilised schools
<p>Medium to long term</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a new school in the inner city, that is accessible to students from the inner east as well as the city centre • Build up existing schools that are full or expected to reach capacity soon • Abolish selective schools or move one or more of them to underutilised sites to allow local students to use existing selective school sites
<p>Future demands</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus first on making public, local, co-educational comprehensive education options available • Create more secondary colleges • Improve funding for teaching and facilities on a needs basis

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In more detail

Kitchen Table Discussion feedback

Question 1: What should be done in the short term (1-4 year period)?

Administrative and policy changes

A number of responses to this question focussed on administrative and policy changes. The most popular option within this theme was to reduce selective school and stream intakes and make these places available to local students. Also suggested was enforcing local catchment boundaries, offering a two-shift day to allow school facilities to be better utilised and allowing for smaller class sizes in schools with lower enrolments to attract more students (as they will have smaller class sizes).

Representative comments:

- 'All schools become comprehensive.'
- 'Remove selective classes in partially selective schools which would create 300 local area places for Year 7 every year.'
- 'Enforce local area boundaries.'

Enhance and expand educational offerings

Enhancing and expanding the educational offerings of schools was another common theme for suggestions. Chiefly these involved improving the educational standard at under-enrolled schools, specifically applying more funding and resources to raise teaching quality. Also suggested was improving the school specialisations on offer, possibly with a stronger link to TAFE, and considering the secondary college model for areas with under-enrolments.

Representative comments:

- 'Enhance educational offerings to attract more students to underutilised schools.'
- 'Put energy into teacher quality.'
- 'Consider the college model for some areas.'

Capital works

Investment in school infrastructure was another common theme. Participants suggested doing building and ground maintenance to attract more students to under-utilised schools, acquiring the tramshed site adjacent to Sydney Secondary College, Leichhardt Campus for it to expand, assessing NSW government properties for a site for a new school and swapping the junior and senior campuses at Alexandria Park Community School.

Representative comments:

- 'Make underutilised schools more appealing by doing building and ground maintenance.'
- 'Acquire the tramshed site adjacent to Leichhardt campus to create classrooms and resources for Sydney Secondary College.'
- 'Assess NSW government sites and properties for their potential to be utilised by the Department.'

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Influencing parent choice

There were three responses on the theme of influencing parent choice for this question:

- 'Increase community involvement to entice and increase students from local areas.'
- 'Genuine engagement with and marketing to local parents.'
- 'If you want parents to send their children to a local underutilised high school we need to be clear on what it's strategy is.'

Transport

There were two responses on the theme of transport for this question:

- 'Stop free transport for out of area students.'
- 'Transport issues [need to be] addressed.'

Other

There were two other comments in response to this question:

- 'Better understanding of current and projected demographics required.'
- 'Give the underutilised high school a new name.'

Question 2: What are the best options for addressing the longer term situation (5-10 year period)?

Administrative and policy changes

The most popular theme for answers to this question was making administrative and policy changes to provide a solution. Once again there were calls to reduce selective intake in favour of local students, and change all schools to local comprehensives. There were calls for the Department to be upfront about targets for enrolments, class sizes and curriculums at different schools and then to proactively work to achieve those targets. Other suggestions included expanding the secondary college model to more schools, re-drawing and enforcing catchment boundaries, creating single-sex classes within co-educational schools and using shifts to make better use of school facilities.

Representative comments:

- 'Maintain all schools except the Conservatorium High School as comprehensive schools.'
- 'Rejuvenate and revive schools in the Marrickville area using a 7-10 and 11-12 Years college model like Sydney Secondary College.'
- 'Shifts for schools to better utilise facilities.'

Capital works

Investment in school infrastructure was another common theme. Participants mostly suggested building a new school.

The following sites were suggested:

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- Broadway.
- Green Square.
- Alexandria Technology Park.
- TAFE sites.
- Cleveland Street Intensive English High School.

Also suggested was building up Alexandria Park Community School and expanding Marrickville High School.

Representative comments:

- ‘Construct a new high school near Green Square and make it part of a college model like Sydney Secondary College.’
- ‘Take back TAFE sites for high schools, redevelop Cleveland Street Intensive English High School.’
- ‘Build up at Alexandria Park Community School.’

Influencing parent choice

There were three responses on the theme of influencing parent choice for this question:

- ‘High school presentations to partner schools.’
- ‘Reputation management to reach target student enrolments.’
- ‘Genuine transition between primary and high schools for easier pathways.’

Planning

There was one comment on changing planning processes in response to this question:

- ‘Have State government, Department of Planning and local councils all impose SEPP 94¹ on all medium and high density future developments to obtain financial contributions to the future schooling of people they profit from.’

Enhance and expand educational offerings

There was one comment on improving educational offerings in response to this question:

- ‘Enhance educational offerings through enhanced staffing to allow underutilised schools to broaden their curriculum.’

Other

Other comments included:

- ‘Reassess the collegiate in the area.’
- ‘Consider gender makeup of inner city schools.’

Question 3: What ideas do you have for helping to create public secondary schools that meet the demands of a modern education system and prepare students for their lives ahead?

¹ Section 94 of the Environmental Planning Assessment Act 1979 permits councils to include as a condition of development consent, the reasonable dedication of land or the payment of monies, or both, for development that is likely to require the provision of, or increase the demand for public services, such as schools, in the area.

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Funding

Funding was the most popular theme for responses to this question. There were multiple calls for equity and needs based funding, and the continuation of the Gonski funding arrangements. There were calls for developer levies to fund education and private public funding models. There was a suggestion that the cost of a masters of education should be shared.

Representative comments:

- 'Provide needs based funding.'
- 'Introduce developer levies.'
- 'Creative funding, for example, Doonside Technology High School.'

Administrative and policy changes

Administrative and policy changes were another popular theme for answers to this question. There were suggestions to abolish selective schools, enforce local enrolments and introduce more specialist schools.

Representative comments:

- 'Turn off selectives.'
- 'Get rid of academic selective schools. They create school environments that the local community have no interest in or commitment to. My child should be able to attend the nearest local high (Newtown Performing Arts High School or Fort Street High School) but is specifically excluded.'
- 'Specialist campuses.'

Structure

There were some suggestions around changing the way schools are structured and run. There were suggestions to keep talented teachers in their schools with pay incentives rather than allowing them to cluster in good schools, rewarding teachers with cross-curriculum courses rather than pay, developing multi-campus schools and linking the senior years with TAFE and universities.

Representative comments:

- 'Offer teachers incentives in own schools, don't let them cluster in good schools.'
- 'Find cross-curriculum projects rather than extra pay for talented teachers.'
- 'Link senior years with TAFE and universities.'

Technique

There were four responses on classroom activities and the curriculum. One response was a detailed and extensive description of a potential high-technology contemporary school, which could include extensive use of technology in teaching as well as sustainable architectural features. The other three comments are provided below:

- 'Aim for high school graduates who are creative problem solvers not rote learning specialists.'
- 'Better use of technology - connected and virtual classrooms.'
- 'More interface with businesses/workforce.'

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- ‘The delivery of education through information technology. We need to rethink how we access education at both school and home.’

Public relations and marketing

There were two suggestions on public relations and marketing of schools:

- ‘To educate all politicians to understand and fully appreciate the enormous saving over a person's lifetime of educating all children to the highest level possible.’
- ‘To restore respect and status to the teaching profession.’



Online discussion forum feedback

Due to the nature of the online forum, many commenters began responding to each other, rather than directly answering the questions posed, and some comments were off-topic and/or irrelevant to the discussion. As a result not all comments were incorporated into this analysis, which classified answers or suggestions that were pertinent to the questions posed into themes and sub-themes.

Question 1: What should be done in the short term (1-4 year period)?

Administrative and policy changes

There were 152 comments on this question by 45 unique commenters.

The online discussion focussed mainly on the lack of a local school in the inner city and how this might be solved. A lot of comment and debate was around the notion of moving an existing school with no local intake from the inner city to another location and then using the vacated site for a comprehensive secondary school. There was vigorous debate around the three most nominated schools for transfer – Cleveland Street Intensive English High School and Sydney Girls and Boys High Schools. The nomination of the selective high schools in particular sparked a lively debate about the selective school system. The majority of commenters felt that the selective school system needs to be removed or completely reformed to allow for local intake, whilst a minority felt that the selective school system should be retained and is not the root cause of the current shortage of inner city school options.

Looking at the most popular comment themes by vote, it is clear there was overwhelming support for removing or changing the selective school system.

Most popular comment sub-themes:

Theme	Sub-Theme	Comments	Total 'Approve'
Administration and policy changes	Remove selective schooling	14	102
Administration and policy changes	Change selective to local selective	7	85
Capital works	Build a new school	17	66
Administration and policy changes	Reform the selective school system	12	58
Capital works	Move an existing school and use site	16	54



Question 2: What are the best options for addressing the longer term situation (5-10 year period)?

There were 269 comments on this question by 60 unique commenters. The overwhelming response to this question was that a site should be found for a new school, as soon as possible (in many cases people answered this question by saying a new school should be set up immediately, not in 5 years time). There was discussion around where a new school could go and how the transition could be arranged. Once again, there was discussion about moving an existing school, and using the site for a local-intake secondary school. There was a debate about whether Alexandria Park Community School was safely accessible from Redfern Station. Suggested sites included:

- Barangaroo.
- Paddington Barracks.
- Woolloomooloo.
- National Art School, Darlinghurst.
- Cleveland Street Intensive English High School .
- Somewhere in eastern Sydney.
- Callan Park.
- Central station.
- Old Births, Deaths and Marriages Office at Queen Square.
- Bondi Junction bus depot.
- Australia Post headquarters on Cleveland Street.
- Wentworth Park Greyhounds site.
- Pink towers next to Central on Elizabeth Street.
- Fast-deployed school of demountables at Moore Park.
- Area between Driver Ave, Moore Park and Anzac Parade.
- Adjacent to existing universities such as University of Technology Sydney, University of Sydney and University of NSW.
- Robertson Playing Fields, adjacent to Centennial Park.
- Kippax Area, bound by Moore Park Road, Driver Avenue and Anzac Parade.
- Moore Park Golf could relinquish a small corner of land.
- Ausgrid land bound by Ann, Riley and Albion Streets in Surry Hills.
- Ultimo Public School site.



Most popular comment sub themes:

Theme	Sub-Theme	Comments	Total 'Approve'
Capital works	Build a new school	88	403
Capital works	Move an existing school and use site	12	49
Administration and policy changes	Remove selective schooling	6	44
Capital works	Expand existing schools	8	16
Transport	Alexandria Park school is not safely accessible from Redfern Station	5	14

Question 3: What ideas do you have for helping to create public secondary schools that meet the demands of a modern education system and prepare students for their lives ahead?

There were 65 comments on this question by 42 unique commenters.

Responses to this question were diverse, although the most popular response was that a new school should be built. There was a back and forth discussion on the merits of co-educational schools. There was also support for local schools, and the secondary college structure of delivering secondary education as well as support for improving and updating teaching facilities and methods.

Most popular comment sub themes:

Theme	Sub-Theme	Comments	Total 'Approve'
Capital works	Build a new school	12	83
Structure	More public co-educational schooling	5	20
Structure	Local comprehensive schooling	2	19
Structure	More 'secondary college' schools	6	15
Technique	Improve teaching and facilities	2	12



Question 4: How should uneven high school enrolments be managed?

There were 69 comments by 39 unique commenters.

Responses to this question were very diverse. Once again the most popular response was to build a new school. Making under-enrolled schools more accessible by public transport, and taking into account transport links when drawing up enrolment boundaries were also popular. Other suggestions included removing or reforming the selective school system, and engaging with parents and the community to find out the specific problems that under-enrolled schools have, and fixing them.

Most popular comment sub themes:

Theme	Sub-Theme	Comments	Total 'Approve'
Capital works	Build a new school	6	42
Transport	Make schools more accessible via public transport	5	34
Administration and policy changes	Remove selective schooling	2	20
Administration and policy changes	Reform the selective school system	2	19
Influence Parental Choice	Engage community and parents to research problems and solve them	5	16



Written contributions

Ten other written pieces of feedback were received during the consultation period. These included.

- A Letter from one community member requesting ‘no interference with the selective high school system, however much local parents of children who haven’t passed the selective test, would like to somehow have a place for them, dressed up as local quota’. The email suggested children from the inner east should take up the available spaces at Alexandria Park Community School in the short term and in the longer term a new school should be built. The email also noted that the Intensive English High School site should not be considered as it is already serving a purpose.
- Four letters from multiple students of Cleveland Street Intensive English High School were in favour of the continued operation and location of Cleveland Street Intensive English High School. One of these participants noted ‘It has a long history in the area; most migrants are familiar with this place because it is very convenient for new migrants spot. If it is moved it will cause lots of transport problems for new migrants.’
- Three email submissions requesting the inclusion of the inner east in the review and requesting a new school be built in the east
- An email suggesting the use of White Bay Power Station for a new high school due to its proximity to transport and the available space. ‘There is land around it which could be used for playing fields and it is a large enough building to host various tiers of education and childcare facilities at the same time.’
- An email suggesting that in the longer term (five to 100 years ahead) the Department build specialty schools at each corner of the Centennial Parklands and surrounds:

‘High School North East – Waverley Bus depot - Music/Film/Media

High School South East – Randwick TAFE and environs - Technology

High School South West – Near ES Marks Athletics or the Supa Centre site - Sports

High School North West – Fox Studios/SFS/Moore Park - Science or Languages

The promise – World leading education in a world leading city’

The result – a city people yearn to live in to raise their children secure in the knowledge that their education needs will be met and perhaps even exceeded.’

