

## **Media Statement**

### **CHATSWOOD EDUCATION PRECINCT BACKFLIP**

‘The P&C has lost faith in the NSW Government and its ability to deliver a new school that provides modern education facilities for Chatswood Public School students,’ said Chatswood Public School P&C President, Andrea Austin.

For more than six years, the P&C has been calling on the NSW Government to address overcrowding of Chatswood Public School and the need to upgrade facilities. In that time, school enrolments have increased by 54% (from 853 students in 2012 to 1318 students in 2019).

The P&C Executive have negotiated in good faith with the Government for development of an Education Precinct.

‘The P&C put its trust in the Government to deliver a plan for the school to meet the key objectives of providing modern educational facilities for our kids, including improved play spaces and adequate spaces to teach music and PDHPE,’ Ms Austin said.

‘The new plan provided on 16 September 2019 fails to meet the key objectives of the Primary School. In contrast, the plan delivers improved facilities for the High School. There is no ‘education precinct’ now - just winners and losers.’

‘The NSW Government has failed the parents and students of Chatswood Public School’, said Ms Austin

The Government has always stated that they would not build a ‘super school’ - one that caters for more than 1200 students. However, they have failed to provide any alternative schooling to serve the CPS catchment area. The Government has indicated that they are looking for a new site for a new school. However, this does nothing to solve congestion at Chatswood Public for the foreseeable future.

The latest plan has construction of new buildings starting at the existing Public School site in 2021. Construction will take several years to complete. This means that 1300+ students will continue to suffer sub-standard facilities and severe overcrowding for another five years. These conditions will significantly worsen during the years of construction, with building works construction zones likely to take up more than half of the already-congested playground.

“The school has been over capacity now for an entire cohort of Primary School students. The Government’s responsibility to support the welfare and mental health of the students is being compromised by too many students in too little space. Many families are now considering other options to their local Primary School & High School as this issue drags on,” Ms Austin said.

The P&C are very grateful to the teachers and staff of Chatswood Public School who continue to provide a very high standard of education for students despite the very difficult operational conditions at the school.

The P&C calls on the Government to take actions to alleviate congestion and to restore faith in the longer-term planning process.

25 September 2019

For further information see overleaf or contact the P&C President via email on [president@chatswoodpublicpandc.org.au](mailto:president@chatswoodpublicpandc.org.au)

### **Key Objectives for the re-development of Chatswood Public School:**

1. To provide modern educational facilities for all students at Chatswood Public School that enable the full curriculum to be taught (including music, PDHPE, art)
2. To provide 10m<sup>2</sup> playground space for each child at the school
3. To provide capacity to teach the current enrolments

The new plan provided to parents on 16 September does not meet these objectives:

<b>Objective 1:</b>	Insufficient detail	Not enough detail has been provided to determine whether sufficient facilities will be available in the new school to teach music, art, or PDHPE.
<b>Objective 2:</b>	Not met	There is currently 2-2.5m <sup>2</sup> of play space for children at CPS. The new plan improves the play space but falls short of the benchmark of 10m <sup>2</sup> of play space per child.
<b>Objective 3:</b>	Not met	The new school has capacity for 1200 students. Today there are 1318 students enrolled at CPS. (941 students at main campus and 377 at the bush campus).

Further concerns:

- When 1200 students occupy the new school on the Pacific Highway site, there will be even greater pressure on play space than there is now (currently 941 students occupy the main campus).
- The plans do not cater for existing enrolment numbers. Where will the 118 children currently enrolled at CPS (above the 1200 student capacity) go to school?
- The plan does not cater for future growth in enrolments.
  - Willoughby Council has been targeted by the Government to supply additional dwellings - most of these will be high-rise developments along the railway corridor of Chatswood Train Station (within 500m of the school).
  - The current international political environment could see a surge in expat repatriation and increased new enrolments in Chatswood Public School.
- Local families are choosing s not to send their child to their local school.
- Catchment areas are being tightened, but not necessarily for children to go to the most practical school i.e. sending children from Fullers Road end of Chatswood to Mowbray Public School.

### **Short term actions required:**

The P&C calls on the Department to undertake the following actions to alleviate congestion and to restore faith in the longer-term planning process:

1. Fix the surface of the playground that is currently cordoned off because it is unsafe. This must be completed by Day 1, Term 4 2019.
2. Remove the building known as the 'Cottage' which was burned-out in January 2017. Remediate the site for new demountable classrooms that will be required for next year's enrolments. This must be done by Day 1, Term 1 2020 to cater for increased student numbers.
3. Commit to a start date and end date for construction of the new primary school.
4. Develop a realistic plan that shows how the school will accommodate >1200 students in the *likely* event that enrolments remain above the 1200 student capacity of the new school.
5. Improve the transparency of the planning process and increase the level of detail provided to the P&C. This will better enable the P&C to work with the Department to develop the new school.

#### **Transitional issues:**

The plans provided to date do not contain sufficient detail to address the P&C's concerns about how the school will be able to operate effectively during the construction.

#### **Bush campus:**

1. How will students access the bush campus from main campus and vice versa during construction of Building R?
2. Will new demountable classrooms be installed at the Bush Campus to address capacity issues whilst the new school is being built?
3. Will Building R be available to Chatswood Public whilst building goes on at Pacific Highway site?

#### **Main campus:**

4. Where will the existing demountables that are located within the construction zone on the main campus be placed during construction of the new buildings?
5. How will future growth be accommodated during the construction period?
6. Where will the children play while 'the Lowers' and the 'Astroturf' are being used for construction? (The Lowers is used at Lunch time, and for class sport, and together with the Astroturf is the only flat part of the playground).
7. How will the contractor access the site to construct the new buildings? Access via Pacific Highway will add to congestion on a major arterial road. James St is likely to be too narrow for large construction equipment to use.

8. How much extra space (other than the building footprints) will the contractor need during construction for a site office, storing materials?
9. How will the contractor minimize noise and dust during construction?
10. How will children access the school from the Pacific Hwy if the current entrance is blocked by the construction site?
11. The construction timelines appear unrealistic given the site constraints and the early stage of the current plans. Does the timeline incorporate the likelihood of approval delays if neighbours object to the new school design and its construction?
12. How will delivery access be achieved from Centennial Ave given the topographical constraints?
13. How will construction of the terraced playground be achieved whilst maintaining outdoor play space for children?

Notes:

14. Space to install new demountable classrooms at the Bush Campus is limited. Extending the decking across the flood plain area may allow classrooms to be installed on the Eddy Rd side of the campus, thus not impede building plans for Building R.
15. The acquisition of the site at 688-692 Pacific Highway may alleviate some of the site constraints during construction. Has the Department considered the acquisition of this site (either permanently, or on a temporary basis) to alleviate constraints on the operation of the school during construction?

### **Current over-crowding issues at Chatswood Public School:**

- There are 1318 children enrolled at the school which has only enough permanent classrooms to accommodate 750 students.
- 50% of classrooms are temporary (i.e. 26 out of 53 classrooms are demountables).
- There are insufficient rooms in which to conduct music tuition. Some lessons are held in adapted store rooms.
- Six demountable classrooms have been added to the school since 2015. Three occupy the teachers' car park. There are three demountable classrooms installed in the playground with further temporary classrooms required in 2020.
- There are insufficient toilet facilities accessible to children in the playground
- Every lunchtime is staggered, impacting teachers' welfare as they are rostered on duty more often. This also impacts the ability for the school to offer 'clubs' (i.e. drama club, art club, chess club, etc) which have been part of the school's traditional offering to students
- The School Hall can only accommodate 25% of students at one time – i.e. Four different assemblies are run each week (Kindergarten, Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3). Five Honour Assemblies are conducted as Stage 3 is now split into two as the enrolment numbers are very high.
- There are no facilities available for before or after school care.
- The school's Uniform Shop operates in the derelict building next door, since the Cottage fire.
- The Art Room (fit-out previously financed by the P&C) was repurposed as a classroom.

## **Years of planning for a school upgrade**

- 2011 Ms Stephanie Croft from Willoughby High raised the demographic and capacity issue
- 2012 Ms Croft established and led an alliance of thirty public school Parents and Citizens Associations in Northern Sydney working with the State Government to have critical capacity issues impacting our local schools addressed.
- 2013 Chatswood Public Masterplan Sub-committee set up and the P&C engaged architects
- 2014 Bush Campus opens
- 2014 In June, Chatswood Public School (CPS) P&C revealed a Masterplan using the Lowers. The P&C met with the Premier Gladys Berejiklian
- 2015 The Dept of Education (DoE) appointed Schreiber Hamilton Architecture
- 2016 P&C plans were passed over in Budget and more demountables were ordered for the carpark
- 2016 In December, DoE advised that catchment boundaries would be altered so overflow could go to newly developed Mowbray Public School
- 2017 In January, Cottage fire destroyed the Uniform Shop, our Music room and Before School Care Facilities
- 2017 Willoughby Council vowed to help CPS
- 2017 CPS delivered a 1440 signed petition and approximately 1000 parents sent letters to the DoE
- 2017 In June, the State budget included funding for CPS & Chatswood High School redevelopment and the Project Reference Group was established
- 2018 Planning began for the Education Precinct to best utilise the Chatswood High School and Public School sites. Initial plans were to move the primary school to the high school to provide better playground facilities, and move Years 10-12 high school to the Pacific Highway site allowing easier access to Chatswood for older students and improving road safety for the younger children.
- 2019 In September, after community consultation on initial plan, PRG have announced that Chatswood Education Precinct is not viable. Plans have changed and now reflect the plan that CPS presented to the government in 2014.
- 2021 Work will not begin on the CPS main campus until 2021.