

NAREMBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL - Meeting called by Gladys Berejiklian

Friday 13 Feb, 2009. Banksia Room, Willoughby City Council

Attendance

Gladys Berejiklian (Chair)	Member for Willoughby
Nick Tobin	General Manager – Willoughby City Council (WCC)
Kevin Fitzpatrick	Naremburn Progress Association
David Lendrum	Naremburn Progress Association
Anneliese Appleton	Naremburn Parent
Karen Pearson	Naremburn Parent
Jane Simmons	DET Regional Director, Northern Sydney
Kathryn Brennan	DET School Education Director
Kate Lamb	WCC Councillor – Middle Harbour Ward
Lyn Smith	Community Development Manger (WCC)
Meredith Harrison	Policy and Projects Officer (WCC)

Apologies

Cr Pat Reilly (The)	Mayor of Willoughby
Cr Coppock	WCC Councillor – Naremburn Ward
Margot Shearwood	
Rachel Garrett	

Prior to Ms Berejiklian arriving there was some discussion re. the 2009 “\$14.7 billion boost to the Education Revolution”. Ms Simmons commented that the specifics had not been finalised, the schools have not been determined nor the rules and processes. Replacing demountables is on the list.

Ms Berejiklian opened the meeting at 2.15 p.m. and tabled a letter from the Hon. Verity Firth, Minister for Education. The letter stated that Ms Firth could not attend the meeting. It stated that there has not been a significant population growth in Naremburn since 2001 and indicated that “any future growth in enrolments would best be accommodated through enhancements to existing local public schools.”

Ms Berejiklian commenced addressing the “Points for Discussion” from the previous meeting.

a) Why new schools must achieve certain standards when current schools can use demountables

Question: What standard does a building have to be at to function as a school? The buildings on site previously functioned as a school. Schools that children are currently attending do not meet the standards stipulated.

Answer: Ms Simmons indicated that a primary school at Naremburn would be considered a new school. All new schools must meet specific standards (e.g. size of land, access, parking, safety etc.) Ms Simmons also stated that both DET and Catholic Education have completed separate analyses on the Naremburn site and have arrived at the same outcome (i.e. that the site is not appropriate.)

Question: Does DET expand class sizes to accommodate students? Are there standards for class sizes?

Answer: DET strives for the following indicative class sizes

Maximum of 30 students	
K-2	20 students
Yr 1	22 students
Yr 2	24 students.

Ms Simmons stated that classes of 34-36 students are not acceptable. She acknowledged that people like their children to be in smaller sized classes. The implication of small class sizes is the need for additional classrooms to accommodate extra students. Another option is the use of integrated years/grades to accommodate students, however some schools like to keep their grades entirely separate. Ms Brennan and Ms Simmons also highlighted that the Dept. never knows the exact numbers of children to be accommodated in each school. There is a disparity in the number of children in each area.

Data and Statistics - Ms Simmons commented that it appears Council and DET are working with differing population statistics. She requested access to the data being used by Council so that DET and Council are working from the same information. Council and DET both use Census data. Question: C/r Lamb asked if DET finds a difference in trends between DET statistics and Council statistics?

Answer: Previous trends are less marked than current data as previously the Dept did not have the State Plan to work from. There is a general belief that DET does need to look at the accommodation of students in local schools. There is also a need for the Dept. to stay consistent with its enrolment policy which is that local people get a place at their local school. Public Schools cannot deny access to any student, however the Dept. can never be sure at any one time how many people will require a place. The Dept. needs to be able to position public schools to accommodate projected population growth.

Ms Simmons requested information from Council re. population projections over the next 5, 10 and 15 yrs. Nick Tobin stated that DET needs to get planning information from its fellow State Departments. The NSW State Plan is expecting an additional 8000 dwellings in the Chatswood CBD. With existing schools already crowded and overflowing, how will the children who live in these buildings be accommodated within local schools?

DET Research - Kathryn Brennan indicated that the challenge for the Dept. is determining how it can optimise use of its current sites. The Dept. has been systematically undertaking studies of demographics in relation to the development of assets within the public school system. The aim is to determine how DET can use the existing space more effectively and develop the sites from a capital enhancement perspective. The use of demountable classrooms has been assisting the Dept. accommodate students but does not allow the Dept. to capitalise on their school sites. A better option will be the development of multi-storey permanent buildings.

b) The quoted costs involved per student and how these are determined i.e. are there existing benchmarks for determining costs?

Question: Is the cost of developing a new school preventing the development of new schools?

Answer: No, it is more an issue of the availability of adequately sized, appropriately located pieces of land.

David Lendrum suggested that many schools are developed (in the greenfield areas of Sydney) around the concept of having 21 classes across 7 grades (K- 6). On average there would be a maximum number of 7 demountables in any one school. It would take approximately 600 pupils to fill a school. Many local schools currently have more than this number of students enrolled (Artarmon – 686, Cammeray – 705, Willoughby – 805)

Question: Is the development of a school for K – 2 a possibility?

Answer: It is the Dept's position that this type of school would ultimately disadvantage the students (from a cultural and educational perspective). It is not a model that the Dept. would support. In NSW schools are resources according to the total number of school enrolments and does not equate to specific numbers of children in each year. A K-2 school only gives enrolment numbers for 3 grades by which the resources and staffing for the school would be calculated. Students would also miss out on other "cultural learning" opportunities. Educationally the Dept. would like schools to be thinking K-12 rather than K-2, 3-6, 7-12.

Development of a Business Case for the Upgrade of Schools

DET – is positioning itself to present a business case for asset development and capital works in schools. In addition to the demographic summaries (mentioned above) the Dept. is undertaking consultation with school communities (e.g. school councils, P&C) to achieve this and to implement transitional processes. The priority is providing accommodation for students. Within the Northern Sydney area there are 6 networks (of public schools). Many of these have schools inside the Willoughby LGA. DET staff indicated that each school site is being assessed and potential options being determined. Schools mentioned included Cammeray, Artarmon, Neutral Bay, Willoughby Northbridge and Chatswood.

Transition Plans

While the Dept. is working to implement longer term assets management/development plans there are several strategies they can implement during the transition. These include refurbishing existing buildings, re-organising the position of demountables to free up space, rostering how existing spaces are used, modifying catchment areas (only marginally) and working with the Catholic Church to lease rooms or share facilities.

Distribution of DET Planning Information - Clr Lamb and Ms Berejiklian indicated to Ms Simmons and Ms Brennan that it would be helpful to local families/parents/communities to be aware that the Dept is developing a plan, to understand the planning process and to be re-assured that their children will be accommodated in proper classrooms with adequate facilities and play areas. They stated that many parents are not aware that DET is undertaking research and is developing long-term plans for facilities within local schools. Their perception is that the number of classes are increasing, schools are losing their play areas, facilities and amenities are bursting, but there doesn't appear to be a plan for a permanent solution.

Ms Berejiklian stated that she would like to see the following presented to the Working Group;

1. A 5 year plan/overview of options for schools in the local area. Such a plan would help families plan and feel more comfortable about the future for their children.
2. An update on what has / is being done

Ms Berejiklian suggested that the information could be presented in the context of the Lower North Shore area and how DET is addressing the overcrowding issues in local public schools.

Question: How long would the development of this documentation take?

Answer: Jane Simmons would need to consult with the DET Assets managers before she could provide the plan.

Outcome of Process to date:

Ms Berejiklian indicated that it appears a new school at Naremburn is highly unlikely. However she commented that the process of the Naremburn School Working Group appears to have raised the profile of the need for improved education facilities on the North Shore.

Ms Appleton and Ms Pearson indicated that, although disappointed that a school at Naremburn is not possible, they are happy that the Working Group has effectively demonstrated that Cammeray, Northbridge and Willoughby have significant accommodation needs.

Assistance from Council - Ms Simmons also indicated that the research undertaken by DET has positioned the region very well to take advantage of recent Commonwealth Capital Works programs. She indicated that a role for Council could be to be supportive of development applications for multi-storey buildings and/or to fast-track DAs relating to local school sites.

Question: Clr Lamb asked Nick Tobin if Council is the consent authority for developments of Public Education sites.

Answer: Yes, however the State Government can override Council's decision.

Further Information

Mr Lendrum indicated that the Catholic church is in a position to open up education opportunities in the local area. In the near future 3 Catholic parishes in the Naremburn-Northbridge area will be amalgamated. Each of these parishes has a school (2 operational, 1 non-operational). Mr Lendrum indicated that if students could be accommodated in the extended Catholic School, this could take the pressure of other schools in that area.

Question – Is there a possibility of networking these schools?

Answer – Ms Simmons stated that it will be the responsibility of Catholic Education to network their schools.

Outcomes from Meeting:

- 1. DET to deliver an overview of the 5 year options for the development of local schools to the Naremburn School Working Party in mid-May. Katherine Brennan and the DET Assets Manager to attend this meeting.**
- 2. The overview is then to be presented at a Public Meeting on a date TBA (preferably before the close of June '09).**
- 3. Ms Simmons to organise for the provision of maps of “designated local areas” (i.e. school catchment areas)**

Note – As it is clear that a new school at Naremburn is not likely points c, d, and e noted on the Agenda were not specifically discussed.