LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the Future of School Infrastructure in the ACT

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ACT Government

ACT GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION

Inquiry into the Future of ACT School Infrastructure

March 2023

FOREWORD

In 2023, we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the creation of the territory's public school system and the creation of an Interim ACT Schools Authority which took over running schools in Canberra from the NSW Government. It is a year where the ACT Government will highlight the rich history of our exceptional public education system and celebrate its successes as well as the outstanding educators, educational leaders and administrators who helped build it.

The Education Directorate asset portfolio increased to 90 schools in 2022 located over more than 100 sites catering for over 51,000 students, with two new high schools currently under construction.

Every ACT public school is a great school. They provide children and young people with excellent education, delivered, and supported by highly skilled and valued professionals.

Under its *Strategic Plan 2022-2025*, the Education Directorate is creating a coherent, equitable and inclusive education system where all children and young people are supported to learn, thrive, have agency, participate, and achieve.

The plan's focus areas are delivered through the four foundations of the *Set Up for Success* and the *Future of Education* strategies. The implementation plans for each of these Strategies outline the specific commitments that will be delivered.

These strategies are the ACT Government's 10-year early childhood and education strategies, capturing our educational reform objectives and actions to provide excellent, inclusive and equitable education that maximises children and young people's wellbeing and learning from birth until they finish school.

In its public schools, the ACT Government strives to build safe communities for learning where everyone is welcome, treated equally and encouraged to thrive. The investments made in education today are investments in a more inclusive and fairer future for children and young people across the ACT.

Public schools are focal points for the local community. They are places where people gather in community at school events – carnivals, assemblies, concerts, fundraisers, and fetes.

Halls, sporting facilities and meeting rooms are hired out by local community groups for social gatherings, engagement, education, and competitions. Many ACT public schools are also hubs where social and support services are accessed.

The ACT public school infrastructure portfolio has grown alongside the Canberra community – our oldest school, Telopea Park School, will be celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, while our newest school, Throsby School, opened its doors in January 2022.

This submission will provide the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion with greater insights into the processes and practices that guide the future planning, building, modernising, and upgrading of infrastructure at ACT public schools.

It will step through the *Education Directorate Infrastructure Specification* (EDIS) and the best practice standards and guidance it sets for the construction and development of ACT Government public school infrastructure projects.

It will detail the education-specific functional and technical requirements that inform the design of new schools and upgraded school infrastructure. It will outline how EDIS is influenced and informed by educational needs, current pedagogy, inclusion, Cultural Integrity, and other cultural considerations and draws on 21st century learning and research.

It will also step through how EDIS details appropriate internal and external inclusive learning and recreation spaces for specific age groups in preschool and primary schools, high schools, and colleges, including technology.

The submission also details the Education Directorate's sustainable design principles that aim to create education environments, comprised of architecture, landscape, transport, linkages to broader networks and infrastructure that are low carbon, water sensitive and resource efficient in both construction and operation.

Long term planning for future public education infrastructure needs, demographic change, optimal school size and synergies with the wider community are also addressed.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The ACT Government welcomes the Committee's *Inquiry into the Future of ACT School Infrastructure*. The Terms of Reference align with the key considerations of the Education Directorate's Infrastructure Specifications.

The Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion resolves to inquire into and report on the future of ACT school infrastructure, with particular reference to:

a) access to safe and healthy schools, including distance (travel to school);

b) age-appropriate learning and recreation spaces;

c) consideration of the external environment, including climate awareness;

d) the learning interactions between teachers, spaces and pedagogy, including scheduling/timetabling of access to spaces;

e) cross-cultural impact;

f) context for students from varying income backgrounds (class analysis);

g) use of technology;

h) optimal school size;

i) synergies with the wider community; and,

j) long-term planning and demographic change.

EDUCATION DIRECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE SPECIFICATIONS (EDIS)

The Education Directorate Infrastructure Specifications (EDIS) is the suite of documents provided to architects and builders to tender for the building of new, and upgrading or modernisation of existing, ACT public schools. It guides projects and forms the basis of building contracts.

EDIS is a living document that is constantly reviewed and updated to address learnings and the needs of ACT public schools. Flexibility is at its very core to ensure that new building spaces and specifications can keep pace with changing needs of our schools and technology and the changing pedagogy, curriculum and teaching and learning that is delivered in them.

EDIS Principles

The EDIS is not a set of typologies for school buildings, or architectural drawings, it is a set of specifications guided by the following principles:

- **Education Principles** translate the Directorate's vision, values, and priorities into general principles to guide the design of all aspects of education—pedagogy, curriculum, professional learning, school organisation, leadership, inclusion, wellbeing, cultural integrity, and engagement with community.
- **Education Facilities Design Principles** capture the implications of the education principles for the design of facilities. Responsive design requires that facilities be able to be reconfigured, without major re-construction and expense, to accommodate changing needs resulting from new learning technologies, curriculum changes and changing demands for use that might occur over the long term. As such this brief requires the minimal use of "load-bearing walls" in the construction to allow for ease of removal if required in the future.
- **School design** must be responsive to the needs of the learners, which may vary from school to school. Consequently, the design and construction of learning facilities must be careful not to impose one way of working.
- **Universal Design Principles** from the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, concern the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent

possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

- **Cultural Integrity** encompasses the culture and inclusion of the connection to the local Ngunnawal Country in the design.
- **Sustainable Design Principles** aim to create sustainable education environments, comprised of architecture, landscape, transport, linkages to broader networks and infrastructure that are low carbon, water sensitive and resource efficient in both construction and operation.
- **Architectural, Urban Planning** and **Master planning Principles**.

ACCESS TO SAFE AND HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Access to Local Schools

The ACT Government is committed to providing an excellent education for all ACT public school students irrespective of where they live, their circumstances, or the school they attend.

Investing in School Infrastructure

Every child in the ACT has access to a safe public school close to home. The ACT Government is investing record amounts in ACT public schools to meet current and future education needs. As Canberra continues to grow, the ACT Government is building new public schools and upgrading education facilities across Canberra. This means people moving to new suburbs and growing regions can access public education close to where they live.

In the 2022-23 financial year more than $600 million was allocated to school infrastructure investment over the four years to 2025-26. In 2022-23, $165 million will be spent on new and expanded schools with more than 60 schools benefitting from upgrades. Improvement will include new shade sails, inclusive upgrades, bike shelters, and improved building facilities – including car park improvements and energy efficiency updates. Under the *Public School Infrastructure Renewal Program* (PSIRP), $100 million will be spent on ACT public school improvements over four years from 2021 to 2025.

Public schools across the ACT are improved every year including upgrades to inclusive facilities so that all students can take full advantage of educational opportunities.

Some of the major projects completed and currently underway include:

- the modernisation of Narrabundah College which commenced in 2022 with initial design works underway;
- a new primary school in Throsby for 450 students and 130 preschool students opened in 2022 ($43.9m);
- the expansion of Franklin School to cater for students from early childhood to Year 6, creating an additional 400 primary school places in 2022 ($29.447m);
- the expansion of Amaroo Senior School, creating an additional 200 places in 2022 ($12.73m).

- the modernisation of Campbell Primary School in 2022 to deliver state-of-the-art learning facilities ($18.819m);
- the redevelopment and expansion of Garran Primary School has commenced and will deliver all new learning areas and increase the school's capacity to up to 975 preschool to year 6 student places ($62.4 million);
- the expansion of Gold Creek Senior School, creating an additional 200 places in 2022 ($6.44m);
- the construction of Evelyn Scott School in Denman Prospect with the Senior School campus opening in 2023 for year 7 to 10 students ($70m);
- a new East Gungahlin high school in the suburb of Kenny for 800 students ($85m). Enrolments will open in 2023 ahead of the new school opening in 2024; and
- design work is underway for Ginninderry's first preschool to year 6 school and early childhood education centre in Strathnairn for 2025.

Priority Enrolment Areas

Priority Enrolment Areas (PEAs) are defined geographical areas which provide the mechanism to prioritise enrolment of ACT residents at their local Kindergarten to Year 12 public school.
All students are guaranteed a K-12 enrolment place at their local school, as required under the Education Act 2004. All Australian states and territories have a version of school zoning or PEAs in place. There are many benefits to PEA's, including:

- providing certainty for our community about enrolment opportunities in their local area and close to home;
- helping to manage school capacity fairly and transparently. This also ensures available capacity is utilised to maximum efficiency before costly investment in new schools or school expansions are needed; and
- ensuring some enrolment flexibility so that once all in-PEA demand has been met, a school may consider enrolment applications from students who live outside of the PEA where there is capacity available to accept them.

Some PEAs include Shared Zones which are an important demand management lever, particularly where there are large school aged catchments or rapid/fluctuating enrolment growth.

In Shared Zones, Principals can work together to balance enrolments across their schools and still ensures the community are guaranteed a place at their local school(s).

The inner north is a great example of a One Way PEA Shared Zone which means families can choose to enrol at one of two schools located close to home. This zone makes use of available capacity at Ainslie School located close to the city centre and supports demand management for North Ainslie and Majura primary schools which have many local enrolments.

Occasionally a family's PEA school may not be their nearest school. This is because PEA design must take into account both geographical (for example main roads, suburb boundaries and green spaces), population and demographic considerations. While this may be inconvenient for those few families, and is avoided wherever possible, in rare cases it is necessary to continue to uphold the ACT Government's responsibility to guarantee a place for all Kindergarten to Year 12 students at their PEA school.

The ACT Government recognises families make choices about where they live and where they expect their children to go to school. PEAs provide the community with stability and assurance about those choices.

Sometimes adjusting PEAs is necessary, only where changing PEAs is the most reasonable response to demand management, enrolment growth or to support establishment of new schools.

PEAs are reviewed annually to take into consideration updated school enrolment and population data, including population projections and to prepare for new schools to open. PEA changes are only made where they are the most reasonable or necessary response, as chopping and changing PEAs would undermine the need to provide stability and certainty for our community. Where possible, changes are notified in advance to provide certainty for families and support smooth transitions between levels of schooling.

In rare cases, or due to individual circumstances related to student wellbeing, a student's best interests may be best served at a school other than their PEA school. These are usually related to circumstances in the student's broader life environment. Enrolment policy settings are sufficiently flexible that enrolment decisions are able to be made in the best interests of the child, which may include offering enrolment at a school that is not their PEA school.

SAFE TRAVEL TO SCHOOL

As noted in the ACT Government's May 2021 submission to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion's *Inquiry into the Management of ACT School Infrastructure*, (p56-59) active travel to and from ACT schools is encouraged, this includes walking, riding and public transport. This submission steps out traffic and parking safety around schools, references the *ACT Parking Action Plan* and the tips provided for families to safely manage the set-down and pick up of their children.

CREATING SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SPACES

In the 2022-23 ACT Budget, $4.1 million was allocated for upgrades across public schools with additional funding for accessibility works included in a range of individual projects.

These infrastructure improvements are underpinned by the principles of universal design which are outlined in the EDIS. This design brief ensures new schools are designed to meet inclusion requirements and comprises initiatives such as flexible classroom spaces with adjacent small group learning areas – allowing small groups to work seamlessly with mainstream classes to maximise the inclusion of students with disability – and quiet rooms. These design aspects are also incorporated into external school designs, such as inclusive playgrounds.

In addition, inclusive infrastructure upgrade programs have funded the creation and improvement of specialist spaces and improved access for existing schools. These works are centred on the needs of individual students via recommendations from the Education Directorate's occupational therapists.

Students across different age groups require different types of spaces to assist them self-regulate their behaviour and this is taken into account in the design aspects. Younger children will typically need space where they can be active outdoors such as soft-fall playgrounds areas, swings, trampolines and sand pits or fenced spaces where they can walk around but remain safe.

Older students might need spaces outside of the classroom that also provide privacy but room to move. This might include basketball hoops or safe spaces to walk.

Individual diversity is embraced in ACT public schools. All students have access to a public education and a universal sense of belonging is fostered, which is a prerequisite to achieve in their learning. Inclusion means embracing diversity in all its forms, as well as specifically ensuring students with disability and their families are included in a way which suits them. The learning environments and approaches to teaching must make this inclusion and sense of belonging seamless.

A review of disability education in the ACT is underway to develop an Inclusive Education Strategy, building on previous consultation already undertaken in the community. This strategy will outline how all ACT Public Schools will be supported to strengthen inclusive practice to ensure students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as their peers.

Case Study 1: Safe, supportive, and inclusive environments that embrace student diversity

Isabella Plains Early Childhood school has made 'inclusive connections' that ensure everyone has a safe pathway to get to where they need to go. The new paths provide all students safe access to move across the school.

A collaborative approach was taken between the school, Occupational Therapists, Project Officers, and contractors to design an inclusive and safe environment for the students. Now, all students can enjoy the benefits of a new covered pathway leading right up to the entrance of the hall. Upgrades also include a new accessible bathroom, a new soft-fall path to access the playground and an additional path that lets everyone access the two new swings above newly installed soft-fall footing.

The Strategy will aim to amplify and expand this work and coordinate and strengthen the many different areas of work needed to ensure as a system we are all working towards a common goal - to achieve the best possible learning and wellbeing outcomes for all students.

Inclusive Toilets and Bathrooms

EDIS also steps out how new schools and those receiving upgrades can make toilets and bathrooms more accessible for students and staff. This includes focuses on having a greater number of smaller tailored bathrooms available across the school campus to

Case Study 2: Accessible and inclusive bathrooms for Gold Creek School

Accessible toilet and bathroom facilities, access ramps, sensory gardens, break out spaces, wheelchair access and handrails have been installed at Gold Creek School to make it a more inclusive and accessible public school.

Tactile walkways have also been installed at Gold Creek School to support vision-impaired students and staff members.

The textured walkways give every student and teacher the independence and confidence to navigate the campus.

These upgrades are part of $4 million allocated in 2021-22 toward inclusive infrastructure upgrades to ensure every child has the same educational opportunities.

Image of tactile walkways as Gold Creek School

provide greater options for students, improved access for students with disability and to make provision for gender diverse students.

EDIS specifies all locations for student toilets must be a co-located combination of Single Gender (separate male and female), All Gender and a separate DDA compliant toilets. This helps to provide more inclusive and safer options for students.

The term 'All Gender' was chosen through a consultation with gender diverse students at Amaroo School as they wanted a term that was inclusive and, in their words, "respectful of the whole school community" and could help them educate their school community on gender diversity.

AGE APPROPRIATE LEARNING AND RECREATION SPACES

Age Appropriate Design Principles

Just as contemporary learning is different from conventional industrial era learning, so too are contemporary learning environments different from the conventional small, enclosed classrooms with all desks and chairs in rows. EDIS steps out in detail the appropriate internal and external learning and recreation spaces for specific age groups in preschool and primary schools, high schools, and colleges.

Contemporary school environments need to support and enable age-appropriate learning, including:

- collaboration between students;
- collaboration between professionals;
- personalised learning, which requires flexible, responsive grouping of students—1 to 1, 1 teacher working small groups, students working without direct teacher involvement, self-directed learning;
- learner self-regulation, self-direction and self-management;
- holistic, authentic learning - purposeful, meaningful, personally significant, experiential, real projects;
- assessment in context - while the learning is happening;
- connectedness - with community, virtually locally and globally, within and across subjects;
- seamless access to rich resources - digital, information, equipment, materials; and
- learning anytime, anywhere, with anyone.

Contemporary school design also needs to promote opportunities for effective collaboration for school staff. Depending on the context, group sizes in a learning setting can range from individual to small, large and very large groups. In contemporary pedagogy the teaching-centric, single classroom models of industrial era schooling have given way to learning-centred models of pedagogy that require ease of flow between a variety of learning and teaching modes and hence a variety of Learning Spaces.

Strong relationships are fundamental for learning. Research demonstrates that relationships formed between students and teachers are a key determinant of the levels of student engagement in schooling and learning. When students experience a sense of belonging at school and supportive relationships with teachers and classmates, they are more motivated to participate actively and positively in their learning. It is also critical that teachers model and effectively teach effective communication and collaborative skills, to enable students to develop positive relationships with their peers. It is important that the learning environment reflects school and teacher commitment to building positive and productive learning communities.

Some students require additional support and a range of scaffolded learning experiences and opportunities to help them learn effectively and develop the capacity for further learning. In every class, students have different abilities, learn at different paces, learn in different ways, backgrounds, prior knowledge, interests, and experiences. The pedagogical strategy to cater for this is called differentiation.

Contemporary learning environments need to support flexible delivery and teachers need to be able to adjust the curriculum to suit individual students to ensure they can succeed. To achieve this, building design needs to enable flexibility within the space; the ability to open and close areas to cater for need, spill out and collaborative spaces, areas for larger groups to work cooperatively, adequate space to promote positive learning and social outcomes and most importantly, all with clear lines of sight for staff to able to constantly monitor all that is going on.

Contemporary learning environments across all three school groupings have fundamentally different design drivers.

Contemporary Learning Environments in Preschool and Primary School

Primary schools are responsible for implementing the Australian Curriculum stages of each of the Learning Areas from Foundation to Year 6. The design of facilities that simultaneously support disciplinary based learning and interdisciplinary project-based learning is important. The functional specifications for primary school facilities are based on requirements of the Australian Curriculum and contemporary learning and teaching. Pedagogy in primary schools is characterised by an emphasis on collaboration, personalisation of learning and active inquiry within a supportive learning environment.

The expectations and demands on students, in terms of self-direction and self-management of learning, increase as they progress from preschool through to Year 6. The use of digital technologies to access online media and resources for communication, learning and knowledge sharing and understanding is an integral aspect of primary school education.

The need for all learning settings to support collaboration and a learning-centred pedagogy has increased significantly. Students access and use ICT in a range of ways to enable and enrich learning, to communicate, research and access information and for creative expression.

Artist impression of Franklin School learning community

Contemporary Learning Environments in High Schools

In Years 7–10 the Australian Curriculum supports the deepening of knowledge, understanding and skills in all eight learning areas. Students also prepare for civic, social, and economic participation and personal health and wellbeing.

High schools are responsible for implementing two broad stages of each of the learning areas of the Australian Curriculum. A challenge faced by all high schools is providing teaching expertise in each of the learning areas of the curriculum while encouraging integration and interdisciplinary approaches. Resource allocation and the need for specialised equipment results in the 'timetabling' of specialist teachers to different groups of learners and different learning spaces.

The design of facilities that simultaneously support disciplinary based learning and interdisciplinary project-based learning is important. The functional specifications for high school facilities are based on requirements of the Australian Curriculum and contemporary learning and teaching.

Students are actively taught how to learn, and the expectations and demands on students, in terms of self-direction and self-management of learning, increase as they progress from Year 7 through to Year 10. The use of digital technologies to access online media and resources for communication, learning and knowledge sharing is an integral aspect of high school education.

Contemporary learning environments – Amaroo School expansion

Colleges

The ACT operates a college system of school-based curriculum and assessment within the policy and procedures of the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS).

Each college develops its own range of courses that integrate the Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum. A course is a program of study in a particular subject area. While there may be variations of emphasis or specialisation from one College to another, generally all ACT Colleges will be implementing courses along a core curriculum offering under the following subject areas:

- English (including English as a Second Language);
- visual and performing arts;

- humanities/ social & behavioural sciences/ history;
- languages;
- mathematics;
- sciences
- technologies including: design, graphics, digital, materials (wood and metal), information and food;
- VET/ Vocational Education; and
- health / PE / outdoor education and sports studies

Colleges offer vocational courses that have an explicit orientation to modern workplaces including courses that foster active partnerships between colleges, employers, and other agencies – catering for students who wish to combine studies from other Institutions, accredited courses or training with their college learning programs and activities. Some colleges may also offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma or the Cambridge International curriculum.

Image of Academy of Future Skills – Lake Ginninderra College

As with high schools, resource allocation and the need for specialised equipment results in the 'timetabling' of specialist teachers to different groups of learners and different learning spaces. The design of facilities that simultaneously support disciplinary based learning and interdisciplinary project-based learning is important.

Contemporary pedagogy in colleges is characterised by an emphasis on collaboration, personalisation of learning and active inquiry within a supportive learning environment.

Students are actively taught how to manage their own learning and the expectations and demands this causes; this is a progression from Year 10. The use of digital technologies to access online

media and resources for communication, learning and knowledge sharing is an integral aspect of college education.

EDIS steps out how new schools need to be designed around the timetabling of classes in all school groupings, but particularly in high school and college environments.

Outdoor Recreation Spaces

Outdoor design specifications are outlined out in EDIS for courtyards and playgrounds, including areas for students to sit, shaded recreation areas, space for open and active play with structures such as climbing equipment or ball hoops and fields for ball games. These spaces are specifically designed age-appropriate environments, and all provide for shaded sun-smart areas.

Preschool and primary school include a range of spaces for students that stimulate play and imagination, provide climbing, running, and sitting spaces as well as visual and tactile stimulation.

Significantly different outdoor spaces are prescribed for high school outdoor areas including formal active sporting spaces, for example basket and netball, football, and handball courts as well as student gathering spaces.

In colleges, greater provision is made for seated or gathering spaces and less for organised sport.

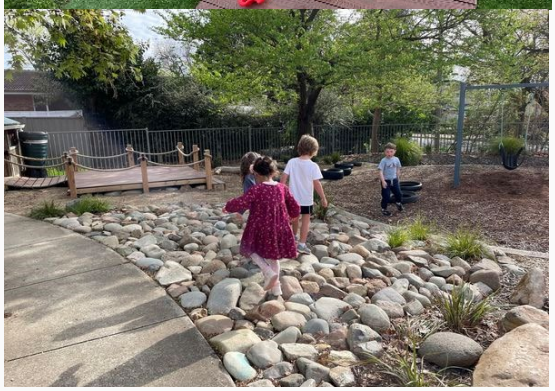
CASE STUDY 3:

Lyneham Preschool outdoor learning upgrade

In 2022, students from Lyneham Preschool Lyneham Preschool's outdoor learning area were upgraded.

The new space creates a sensory experience with a range of natural elements students can explore, including a mound slide, shade structure, deck and swing bridge.

Images of Lyneham Preschool outdoor learning space



CASE STUDY 4:

Kingsford Smith School students co-designing the transformation of the school's courtyards

University of Canberra landscape architecture students are partnering with Kingsford Smith School to co-design and transform one of the school's courtyards. The collaboration is part of the ACT Government's Living Infrastructure Plan.

The project which will continue in 2023 will provide rich data for researchers on the design impacts of schoolyard environments on student wellbeing. Students will share their ideas and input to the re-design of their existing courtyard into a new space that is vibrant, innovative, and fun.

Image of Kingsford Smith School students designing new school courtyards

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Contemporary Technology and Digital Tools

The Education Directorate uses contemporary technology and digital tools to deliver inclusive personalised teaching and learning journeys through ACT public schools and fulfils the commitments outlined in the ACT Government's *Future of Education* Strategy and the *ACT Government Digital* Strategy published in 2020.

The Directorate's vision is to be a digitally progressive organisation delivering the learning and teaching systems essential to support children and young people in an increasingly digital world.

Over the past six years, the Education Directorate has substantially improved its digital services and environments to support children and young people and enhance learning outcomes in ACT public schools. It has invested in planning and partnerships to help provide children and young

people a digitally enhanced learning environment, reflected through our platforms and used in our teaching practice.

In ACT public schools, technology plays an essential role in the way we prepare, deliver, and differentiate learning to our students. We leverage our digital platforms to promote student agency in the way they access and respond to learning within different learning areas. Students develop their digital literacy by explicitly being taught how to effectively research online, and by being offered the opportunity to leverage a variety of digital tools as a mechanism to create and communicate

Students need to be empowered with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to learn safely with digital tools at school, at home, at work and in their communities. Digital technology can transform how students think and offers them greater flexibility over how, where and when they learn.

Digital learning is an integral part of the contemporary learning environment across primary and high schools as well as colleges. The rapidly changing nature of ICT and its pervasiveness in learning, creating, connecting and communicating, demands adaptable design solutions. Fifteen to 20 years ago computer labs became common in schools. Ten years ago, computer labs started to give way to distributed computer pods and desktops gave way to laptops. Currently in high schools and colleges the digital learning landscape is a mixture of mobile devices BYOD (bring your own device) and high-end, school desktops for subjects such as photography or media.

EDIS steps out the required level of technology infrastructure required in schools which include:

- reliable, high speed, high capacity wireless coverage in all administration areas and indoor and external learning environments;
- a number of high-end desktops distributed through the administration areas and general and specialist learning environments (in primary schools this is for years 4-6);
- Interactive Teaching Technology (ITT);
- AV display screens for small group collaboration, presentation and virtual conferencing;
- data projection and a large projection wall for communal gathering areas display capacity and AV; and
- video conferencing capability for communication and collaboration locally and globally.

Digital Access and Equity Program

The ACT Government has delivered against the 2016 election commitment (Technology Enabled Learning [TEL]) to provide every ACT public high school and college student with access to a device since February 2018. $18.8 million was committed to the four-year program in the 2017-18 ACT Budget.

The ACT Government has committed to continue this program, committing a further $21 million during 2021-22 to 2024-25 through the *Future of Education – Digital Access and Equity Program*, which supports equity for our students by ensuring the continued access to personal computing devices to ACT public school students in Years 7 to 12. It also provides Internet access for secondary students requiring support and eSafety support for schools.

This is a voluntary program, with some families electing to Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) or not to participate. Currently the participation rates in high schools are around 95 per cent, and around 82 per cent in colleges.

A refresh of devices that were over three years old (primarily for year 10 students) delivered over 3,000 Chromebooks in April 2022. In 2023, over 3,900 Chromebook devices were provided to Year 7 and new students entering secondary students through the Digital Access and Equity Program. The devices were provided to the new students at the beginning of Term 1, 2023.

Over 40,500 Chromebooks have been distributed to ACT public secondary school students since the start of the program.

The ACT Government provides primary schools with shared Chromebooks at a ratio of one device per three students. In June 2022, the Education Directorate commenced distributing over 2,250 Chromebooks to refresh primary school devices and maintain the ratio.

LEARNING INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHERS, SPACES AND PEDAGOGY

Curriculum, Pedagogy and Learning Spaces

Each ACT public school delivers teaching and learning under guiding curriculum and pedagogical frameworks. The Australian Curriculum outlines what children and young people should learn as they progress through their school life. The pedagogical framework outlines the expectations for teaching and learning within a school. It promotes consistency of practice and supports teachers to know what the teaching and learning looks like within a school.

The curriculum and pedagogy delivered across ACT public schools are infrastructure agnostic, that is, they are successfully delivered within the unique and adaptable physical infrastructure of each school.

The Education Directorate recognises that teaching is a complex process and every day teachers adapt and adjust their pedagogical practices to suit their students' needs and learning intentions. A walk through any ACT school during term time will see teachers using a variety of pedagogical approaches ranging from whole class instruction or facilitated presentations, to small group facilitation, one-on-one instruction, or individual guided learning. As such, flexibility in learning space design is key.

A flexible learning environment can be defined as having adaptable spaces, resources and technologies that can evolve and change to support different types of student-centred learning (Mahat, Grocott and Imms, 2017)[1]. Flexibility in general learning spaces can be as simple as being able to adjust classroom furniture to facilitate different pedagogical practices or to facilitate team teaching. Movable walls or classrooms with a range of different spaces supports individualised learning and ensures that classrooms can be used to effectively facilitate a range of different subjects and are adaptable to curriculum changes and changing school populations. Flexible general learning spaces in conjunction with well-designed specialist learning areas for subjects

[1] Mahat, M, Grocott, L, Imms, W – Teachers Perceptions of ILEs, published 12 December 2017

such as STEM, art, drama, dance, and technologies supports a productive and future focussed education.

Key to our students' success is the facilitation of quality learning that encourages understanding and supports students to interact critically with subject content and relate previous knowledge and experience to generate new learning (Imms, Mahat, Byers and Murphy, 2017)[2]. Well-designed and flexible learning environments can support this aim. Imms et al. (2022) reported that the more flexible the learning spaces, the higher the level of high-impact teaching practices used by teachers, and levels of student deep learning.

Flexible learning spaces also improve safety in the learning environment. While all spatial types are considered to be safe for students and teachers, a high degree of visibility throughout the space has been linked to a decrease in student bullying behaviour. Increased visibility across learning spaces helps teachers monitor students before, during and after class, ensures teachers are able to monitor student behaviour across classes in their learning area and school executives to engage with teachers and classes and connect with learning without having to formally enter classrooms to see how lessons are progressing.

Best practice classroom design for the ACT context is informed by research outlined above and the 2014 research by K.Dovey and K. Fisher. Dovey and Fisher (2014)[3] conducted an international review of more than fifty award winning school designs summarising their findings into five learning space design genres they labelled 'typologies'. These typologies are differentiated by their relative degree of openness, from traditional classrooms (Type A – enclosed) to permanently open-plan spaces (Type E – open).

[2] Imms, Wesley, Mahat, Marian, Byers, Terry and Murphy, Dan - Type and Use of Innovative Learning Environments in Australasian Schools, 2017

[3] Dovey, K and Fisher, K – Plans and Pegagogies: School Design as Socio-Spatial Assemblage, 2016

Table 1. Learning environment (school facility) spatial typologies identified by Dovey and Fisher (2014).

Spatial type	Description of the physical learning environment
A (enclosed)	A cluster of traditional classrooms connected by a corridor.
B	Similar to Type A, except that the corridor connecting the traditional classrooms is widened to create a breakout space, identified as 'street-space' or 'learning commons'.
C	Walls between adjoining classrooms (but not the breakout space) are made flexible, enabling these classrooms to be opened-up, creating a new space identified as 'commons'.
D	Walls between adjoining classrooms and the breakout space are flexible, allowing for the entire learning environment to become one larger space, whilst also retaining the ability to close it down into traditional classrooms.
E (open)	The learning environment is open plan and cannot be converted into traditional classrooms without major renovation.

These typologies were tested within interstate and ACT school environments against five criterion: safety in the learning environment; the range of pedagogical encounters supported by the learning environment; the ability for teachers to supervise students in the learning environment; the range of professional learning opportunities which are offered to staff; the learning environments provide teachers and students with adequate space.

The additional factor of the ability to change the internal configuration in the future, without major renovation was also used to determine best practice. Overall, the research best practice for learning space design in the ACT is Type D of the Dovey and Fisher Model.

Outdoor learning spaces

The use of both indoor and outdoor learning spaces is a feature of many ACT schools. Recent school improvements have seen a significant investment in the development or upgrade of outdoor learning spaces. Throsby School and Evelyn Scott School boast a range of well-designed and functional outdoor learning spaces that leverage the abundant physical space available at these sites.

Image of Evelyn Scott School outdoor spaces

As a response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, 23 new shade structures were installed in ACT public schools as part of a $3 million budget allocation.

These structures were completed by the end of 2022. These outdoor spaces have enhanced teaching and learning practices that develop in students the learning skills of creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking.

CROSS CULTURAL IMPACT

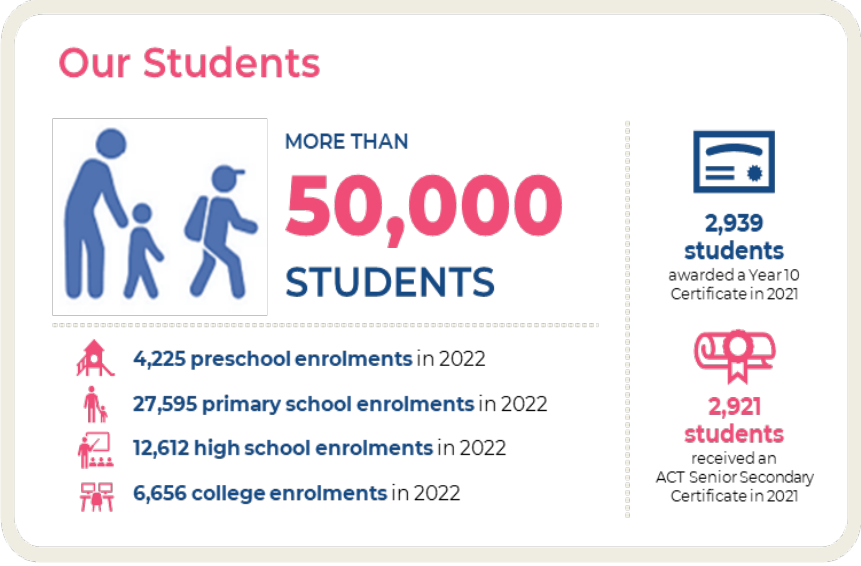
Our Growing and Culturally Diverse ACT Community

The population of the ACT was 454,499 in the *2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census*.

The ACT had the highest rate of population growth (positive 14.4 per cent) of all states and territories in the five years since the 2016 Census. At 35-years-old, our population is younger than the median Australian age of 38 years with millennials (25 to 39-year-olds) overtaking baby boomers (55 to 74-year-olds) as the largest generation.

Our ACT community is diverse, with 28.7 per cent of people born overseas and two per cent of people identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Most people in the ACT only used English at home (71.3 per cent), down from 72.7 per cent in 2016. The next most common languages used are Mandarin (3.2 per cent), Nepali (1.3 per cent), Vietnamese (1.1 per cent) and Punjabi (1.1 per cent).

A Multi-Cultural ACT Public School Community



Our diverse ACT community is reflected in our ACT public schools. According to the *February 2022 Census of ACT public schools* there were 50,615 students enrolled in ACT public schools. In that Census, 25.9 per cent of ACT public school students identified as speaking a language other than English at home. The top ten languages were Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese and unspecified), Urdu, Hindi, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Bengali, Telugu, Spanish, French and Korean.

In the *August 2022 Census of ACT public schools*, there were 2,121 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people enrolled in ACT public schools, representing 4.2 per cent of total enrolments. This was a decrease of 83 enrolments since August 2021, with preschool enrolments dropping by 63 and college enrolment dropping by 28 in that period.

Enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students increased by 209 students (10.9 per cent) since August 2018. Ninety-three students were enrolled in Koori preschool programs; with 46 children taking up the option to attend both Koori and universal preschool programs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement

The ACT Government launched the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy* (ATSIPP) on 31 May 2019. The Government's aim for the ATSIPP is to support the objectives of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028*.

This Agreement includes the focus area of employment and economic participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Canberra Region.

The tender identifies and encourages opportunities for Indigenous management, staff, and sub-consultants during the design of a project.

CASE STUDY 5:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses

helping build our schools

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and workers were engaged in two ACT public school expansion projects completed in 2022.

Two Gungahlin schools, Gold Creek Senior School and Amaroo School, were expanded to create more space for students in the local community. Rork Projects (Gold Creek) and Projex (Amaroo) delivered these projects as part of the ACT Government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy (ATSIPP) to support increased employment and economic participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Canberra Region.

These companies engaged local Indigenous businesses as part of the project to help with capacity employment opportunities for Canberrans, but more importantly indigenous Canberrans. The investment in the new learning environments for both schools also supported the economic development across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Image of Amaroo School Upgrade

Engaging the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community in School Naming Processes

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community input is a key feature in the naming of new schools, led by the Education Directorate in consultation with the ACT Place Names Committee. The Committee is guided by the ACT Government's *Public Place Names (Naming of public places) Guidelines 2021* . These guidelines identify a number of relevant considerations when naming a public place. Among others, these include the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*; the desirability for names to be reflective of diverse cultural situations and cognisant of community sensitivities; local Aboriginal vocabulary; people who have had a long association with the place; and the nomenclature theme assigned to the suburb.

The Education Directorate will continue to engage with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body about proposed names for new schools, including the name selection for new high schools in Kenny and Taylor during 2023.

CASE STUDY 6:

First ACT school named after an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Woman

Evelyn Scott School is the first school in the ACT to be named after an Indigenous woman.

Dr Evelyn Scott was an advocate for reconciliation and the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and women for more than 30 years. Her advocacy began in the 1960s, where she was active in the Federal Council for the advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and the landmark 'yes' campaign for the 1967 referendum.

She campaigned for the protection of the great barrier reef and over 250,000 people marched across the Sydney harbour bridge in the walk for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Dr Evelyn Scott's family travelled to Canberra to be at this event and spoke on the day. Dr Scott's daughter, Ms Charmaene Scott is a member of the Evelyn School Scott school board.

Lynnice Church, Ngunnawal artist created the artwork which is being unveiled as a school mural on the side of the gym.

Introductory English centres

To assist new ACT public school students who have minimal English integrate into the school system, Introductory English Centres (IECs) are co-located in six schools across Canberra.

These centres provide intensive language teaching prior to entry into mainstream schooling. IECs provide a safe and inviting place to introduce school life in Australia to students with little or no English. Students attend full-time for a determined period, prior to transferring to a mainstream school. Bus services are available to assist students access one of these centres.

Primary Introductory English Centres

- North Ainslie Primary School;
- Throsby School;
- Hughes Primary School;
- Wanniassa Hills Primary School; and
- Charnwood-Dunlop Primary School

Secondary Introductory English Centres

- Dickson College

Multi-Faith Rooms

Provision is made for multi-faith rooms across ACT public schools to ensure that both members of staff and the student community have a space for prayer and religious observance during school hours. Schools must provide a non-denominational space that can be used for multi-faith prayer and religious observance which can be adapted and serve for religious or spiritual practices for a range of faiths. These spaces in high schools and colleges will usually be co-located with the student or well-being services area. They are easily accessible by students and staff. Spaces in primary schools are often close to front office or reception areas for ease of supervision.

CONTEXT FOR STUDENTS FROM VARYING INCOME BACKGROUNDS

An Equitable and Inclusive Education System

The Education Directorate's mission as stepped out in its *Strategic Plan 2022-2025* is designed to create a coherent, equitable and inclusive education system where:

- all children and young people are supported to learn, thrive, have agency, participate and achieve high expectations;
- exciting, innovative, and tailored learning opportunities are delivered that set children and young people up for a successful life;
- people are valued and supported to develop in their work and aspirations;
- cultural integrity is central;
- everyone is safe and well, including supporting wellbeing and physical health;
- families and communities are welcomed and included;
- research, evidence and feedback are sought out and accountability is provided;
- continuous quality improvement for the whole system is delivered; and
- people work together to achieve this in a way that is aligned, supporting everyone to be successful.

This plan brings to life a shared commitment to the *Future of Education* principles of equity, inclusion, access and student agency, with the aim of ensuring every child and young person can grow with confidence and creativity as lifelong learners and active community members.

Achieving excellence as an education system is only possible when all children and young people are supported to learn. Every child and young person must be supported to learn and grow in an environment that is inspiring, inclusive, and aspirational. Over the next three years, the Education Directorate will measure its impact across four key areas to understand where it has success, and where it needs to improve:

Learning / Belonging / Equity / Wellbeing

Learning: strengthened educational outcomes

Belonging: increased identification with school

Equity: greater equity between all learners

Wellbeing: improved indicators of wellbeing

Schooling Resource Allocation

All ACT public schools are well-resourced with funding levels that exceed the national Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). The ACT is the only jurisdiction in Australia that meets the minimum funding requirements as set out by the SRS.

Under the SRS, the ACT Government is required to fund 80 per cent of public school costs, while the Commonwealth is required to fund 20 per cent. The ACT Government current funds schools at approximately 90 per cent of the SRS, well more than what is required as the minimum funding contribution for the ACT Government.

Available funding is then distributed to ACT public schools through a needs-based funding model known as the Student Resource Allocation (SRA).

The SRA is a student needs-based school funding model. The following key components are reflected in each school's SRA Statement:

- core allocation;
- per student funding;
- stages of schooling; and
- base funding.

Loading Allocations:

- students with a low socio-economic status background;
- students with English as an additional language or dialect;
- Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Student Support (Cultural Integrity); and
- students with disability.

This ensures that every ACT school is funded to meet the unique characteristics of their school community.

CONSIDERATION OF THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING CLIMATE AWARENESS

Sustainable Design Principles

EDIS details the Education Directorate's sustainable design principles that aim to create education environments, comprised of architecture, landscape, transport, linkages to broader networks and infrastructure that are low carbon, water sensitive and resource efficient in both construction and operation.

The Education Directorate maintains infrastructure strategies, policies and guidelines that encourage the adoption of environmentally sustainable design and construction principles for capital works activities within ACT schools. It also closely manages climate awareness and adaptation within its existing portfolio of assets via the *EDU Strategic Asset Management Framework* (SAMP) and *Operational Asset Management Plan* (OAMP).

ACT public schools are supported with tailored advice on the identification, initiation and cost benefit of capital works projects that target improved sustainability and living infrastructure within schools. This includes new infrastructure as well as projects and/or analysis to improve the efficiency or usability of existing assets.

New and upgraded schools include solar panel arrays to generate power. Buildings are positioned to maximise natural daylight and fresh air. Double glazing and insulation support thermal comfort and reduce energy consumption; recycled or renewable materials continue to be used and emerging products such as carbon offset concrete are also being trialled.

All new ACT public schools are fully electric allowing them to run on renewable energy sources and to reduce greenhouse gases. In 2022, the Education Directorate opened its third zero-emission operation school - Throsby School.

The ACT Government's 2021 submission to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion's previous *Inquiry into Managing ACT School Infrastructure* steps out in detail the Government's commitment to providing comfortable and healthy learning and teaching spaces to

maximise learning outcomes for all children and the wellbeing of the school community. It also steps out the role ecologically sustainable development plays in achieving this goal.

CASE STUDY 7:

Lake Tuggeranong College's 'Sustainability in the Community' Unit

Students in Lake Tuggeranong College's 'Sustainability in the Community' unit are partnering with various community groups to volunteer their time, while learning about the environment.

The students work with Waterwatch ACT to monitor and take care of Lake Tuggeranong, by collecting regular samples and conducting tests in their classrooms each month.

The college has also teamed up with other southside schools to share their knowledge and grow awareness of caring for their local environment. This includes working with Wanniassa High School students on keeping the lake clean and mentoring students from Wanniassa Hills Primary School in water conservation, making compost and maintaining their vegetable garden.

Image of Lake Tuggeranong College

The submission steps out how sustainable design is integrated into new schools, major projects, capital upgrades and outdoor facilities and the funding programs that support energy efficiency and emission reductions, tree planting, solar battery trials and water management plans.

In its response to the May 2022 report of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion's *Inquiry into Managing ACT School Infrastructure*, the ACT Government agreed to Recommendation 11: *The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensures the use of environmentally sustainable materials in the construction and upgrade of schools*

The ACT Government continues to action this recommendation, as outlined in the Government's response below:

The Education Directorate will continue to mandate the use of environmentally sustainable materials in the construction of schools. One of the overarching principles within the Education Directorate Infrastructure Specifications (EDIS) document is that of 'Sustainable Design'. The commitment to the principle of 'Sustainable Design' requires the design to consider, and to incorporate the necessary elements to create sustainable education environments. These elements include architecture, landscape, transport, linkages to broader

networks and infrastructure that are low carbon, water sensitive and resource efficient in both construction and operation.

OPTIMAL SCHOOL SIZE

School Sizes

The Education Directorate's Infrastructure Specification (EDIS) guidelines has some recommendations for school sizes, but these are not an infrastructure requirement.

EDIS notes that the size and configuration of an ACT Primary School is dependent on the following factors:

- the Education Directorate's Class Size Policy and maximum student numbers per class group for Years K-6 mandated by the Enterprise Agreement (EA) and for Pre-school by National standards;
- all students residing in a Priority Enrolment Area (PEA) are able to be guaranteed a place in their local school; and
- national, international research and current ACT data for the achievement of high quality learning, social, well-being and industrial outcomes for students and staff.

These sizes describe the maximum Long Term Enrolment (LTE) or the average enrolment figure that accommodates the natural fluctuation of enrolment over a 15 to 25 year cycle. It is important to note that this is not the peak enrolment figure for the school.

While EDIS suggests a preferred approach to school sizes, it is important to note that school size is about how the available space is used. Some ACT public schools are larger and smaller than those set out below and these schools operate effectively, they deliver great learning outcomes for students and are great places to work for our staff.

There are three proposed sizes for primary schools:

- three pre-school sessions and a capacity of 585 P-6 students
- four pre-school sessions and a capacity of 780 P-6 students
- five pre-school sessions and a capacity of 975 P-6 students.

Two proposed sizes for high schools:

- an LTE of 600 students representing the optimum size for a High School; and
- an LTE of 800 students as the maximum size for a High School.

Two proposed sizes for colleges:

- an LTE of 800 students representing the optimum size for a college; and
- an LTE of 1100 students as the maximum size for a college.

Class Sizes

Class sizes are a significant variable and input in determining the effective usable capacity of a school and consequently the need for investment into school capacity. School enrolment projections developed by the directorate to inform planning are complemented by projected school capacity and classroom utilisation analysis. This also supports our commitment to the education workforce and adhering to the *Class Size Policy*, as part of the *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement*. The *Class Size Policy* recognises the valuable contribution class sizes make to learning outcomes and places limits on class sizes depending on the school year group.

Classroom capacity is determined using a multiplier (representing an average number of students considered in relation to the directorate's class size policy). This approach considers the number of teaching spaces within the school, how many specialist classrooms are required to offer a full curriculum and how many classes could be reasonably run within the school's general learning and specialist classrooms. For instance, college class sizes tend to be lower because they require a greater number of specialist classrooms to offer a full curriculum.

Due to differences in curriculum and the way that classes are organised between primary, high school and college, the directorate calculates utilisation separately for each academic level.

For primary school level, preschool enrolments and capacity are not included in the calculation of utilisation. The class size policy and the way roll groups are organised within a school (for example composite classes) might make the available capacity and spare capacity in a school very different from utilisation.

For high demand schools where capacity reaches around 80 per cent, the Directorate begins to monitor utilisation of facilities on a room by room basis. When utilisation increases to 85 per cent, the Directorate very closely monitors longer term enrolment projections as well as assess the availability and suitability of play, general and specialist learning spaces in relation to safely managing capacity.

This approach provides consistency and comparative data across the sector and supports the directorate to analyse and predict future utilisation rates across the system. Use of the multiplier facilitates longer term planning and removes the impact of fluctuations in enrolments year by year. It is important to consider these inputs together, especially in case of high demand established schools in regions experiencing significant growth, as when actual utilisation is considered against the number of classrooms available and in accordance with the class size policy, the effective utilisation may be lower than the overall capacity might suggest.

While class sizes may be individually negotiated to exceed the policy in specific cases, the class size limits are an important input used to determine the new or expanded capacity required to meet demand pressures.

TABLE 2: Class size limits

School year	Class size
Pre-schools	22
K- year 3	21
Years 4-5	30
Years 7-9	32
Year 10	30
Years 11-12	25

The Directorate uses a different approach to calculate utilisation. The utilisation in a school is the share of capacity filled up by enrolments.

Schools have flexibility in how they use learning spaces, and this can change term-to-term and year-to-year, as well as according to the unique circumstances of each school and its students. Generally, all schools can operate comfortably around 85 per cent utilisation and colleges can operate safely at higher levels of utilisation due to the flexibility in their curriculum and the way they use their learning spaces.

Where enrolment projections demonstrate sustained or strong projected growth beyond 85 per cent utilisation, the Directorate undertakes planning to develop responses to meet that growth. Demand and capacity planning is not always visible to the community when it is in the planning or development stages and is often delivered in a just-in-time approach. We do this by anticipating future enrolments using projections, closely monitoring enrolment fluctuations, and delivering the most appropriate demand response (either through enrolment policy, expanded or new capacity).

SYNERGIES WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Education and the *ACT Infrastructure Plan*

The ACT Government is building for Canberra's future to ensure Canberra remains one of the most liveable cities in the world for decades to come.

Established just over 100 years ago on Ngunnawal land, Canberra has become one of the most progressive and inclusive in Australia. As the city grows, strengthening connections and striving to meet the needs of the community is the focus for future infrastructure decisions.

As a city, we respond and adapt to climate change. We embrace new technologies, and the ACT Government is focused on ensuring infrastructure projects are well planned and thoughtfully delivered.

Over the coming years, the ACT Government will be delivering on the infrastructure priorities outlined in the *ACT Government's Infrastructure Plan* but also what comes next to support the future of the city.

Education is a key focus of the *Infrastructure Plan* with a significant proportion of the ACT Government's infrastructure budget allocated to building new and expanding and upgrading existing ACT public schools. Future updates to the *Infrastructure Plan* will provide an update on future education infrastructure priorities.

LONG-TERM PLANNING AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Demand Response Planning

The Education Directorate undertakes long term demand response planning on an ongoing basis through a regional approach to planning. This is based on a student enrolment forecast developed and updated continually in collaboration with the ANU School of Demography.

Through this approach we consider the needs, growth, and capacity of each public school individually as well as for each region collectively. This approach allows the Directorate to test and design effective long-term responses that maximise capacity of the overall region and best respond to future growth, while also considering circumstances of individual schools.

We also consider the long term multi decade demographic lifecycle of a catchment area, particularly in developing areas with new residential development and associated population fluctuations. The Directorate considers a range of inputs to respond to enrolment growth.

In the first instance, enrolment policy levers support demand management and enrolment integrity, building on successful approaches to maximise existing available capacity, by keeping enrolments local. Enrolment policy is also very cost effective. This includes changes to limit out of area enrolments in capacity constrained or high demand schools (changing from Category B to Category A schools, designating High Demand Preschools), changes to Priority Enrolment Areas, and redirecting NSW students to NSW Pathway Schools with available capacity to accept enrolments from non-ACT residents.

At a system wide level, in 2017 35.3 per cent of all public-school enrolments were from out of area. This decreased to 30.4 per cent in 2022. This decline will continue as students already enrolled outside their local area finish school, including for a tail of out of area students who enrolled as concurrent siblings (in accordance with enrolment criteria), who will eventually exit

when they finish school. For example, Lyneham High School has experienced a significant reduction of out of area students, while its in area enrolments have grown. In 2017, 559 of the school's 1,084 students were out of area, or 52 per cent. By 2022, only 207 of the 1,035 students were out of area, or 19 per cent.

Demographic Change

The Directorate projects enrolments for all schools in collaboration with the ANU School of Demography and regularly updates projections based on enrolment trends and new demographic information. Through this partnership we also undertake demographic research and have improved the Directorate's approach to forecasting enrolments. This collaboration ensures a high level of integrity and access to specialist demographic and modelling knowledge and techniques.

Projections and planning occur in advance of significant capacity pressure. This ensures necessary future infrastructure needs are identified, funded, designed, and built in the right place ready for use at the time it will be required.

Projections are most useful when considering the next five years, as beyond five years they become less reliable given they are subject to fluctuations from a range of influences, and why we need to continue to revisit projections as a planning input. It is informed and driven by regional level demographic trends, forecast enrolment growth and available capacity over the long term, aligned with the overall urban planning strategy of the government.

The unique nature of a new or an existing school due to its location, nature of the site, surrounding demographics, existing infrastructure, proximity to other schools and transport corridors means there is no one size fits all capacity planning approach.

Enrolment Forecasting (STEP) Model

The Directorate's Kindergarten to Year 12 enrolment projections are based on a cohort transition approach to estimate future student enrolments. This is based on taking the ACT population projection produced by ACT Treasury for 4-year-old preschool entries, allocating them to a local primary school and tracking them as they graduate through to high schools and eventually college. Projections include several inputs and underlying assumptions including historical schooling preferences, suburb and catchment specific demographics. The core of the model is a matrix that

connects every grade level at every government and non-government school, from one year to the next.

The Student Transition and Estimation Projection Model (STEP) enrolment projection methodology previously used birth data to predict four-year-old enrolment intake entries. From 2022 onwards, the model uses the population projection for four-year-old produced by ACT Treasury, for greater accuracy.

A key feature of the model is that it explicitly aligns the enrolment forecast with demographic forecasting and does so by explicitly incorporating net migration (entries and exits) into the model. The model is continually updated to consider current enrolment trends and other new information where this becomes available. More sophisticated custom modelling is also undertaken at a suburb level whereby we can include the unique circumstances of each region and develop custom scenarios to test planning responses.

Projected Growth of Students

We can be confident the government can identify and respond to demand to deliver new or different planning responses when they are needed, by anticipating future enrolments using projections, combined with continuing to closely monitor and respond to enrolment fluctuations. This includes monitoring the students already enrolled in ACT public schools and planning to ensure there are sufficient high school and college places available in the right regions, as those students age through schooling. For example, the model can predict where year 10 students who will soon exit high school are likely to enrol in college.

Infrastructure Investment for New and Expanded Capacity

Permanent expansions are only considered where enrolment growth is projected to continue in future years, and where additional permanent capacity is the most appropriate response.

Schools with lower levels of enrolments continue to be thriving schools. They have turned smaller catchments into a strength. Those schools make the most of their size by developing deep connections with their families and students, as well as developing a very strong sense of community.

New schools require significant investment and are appropriate where projections demonstrate ongoing and sustained population growth which will in turn sustain the viability of the school over the long term, particularly in developing greenfield areas in anticipation of growth, and in regions where that growth cannot reasonably be met by established schools within a region.

In every jurisdiction in Australia, transportable classrooms, also known as relocatable learning units (RLUs), provide an important source of flexibility for schools that are experiencing temporary growth in enrolments, as well as to provide time to plan for and deliver permanent investment in capacity where it is needed for the long term. Schools that are built in greenfield suburbs experience a demographic peak in enrolments and then decrease towards a lower level of enrolments. RLUs are a normal part of planning for growth at these types of schools and many schools choose to retain RLUs in the longer term where they provide additional learning spaces that meet the unique needs of each school.

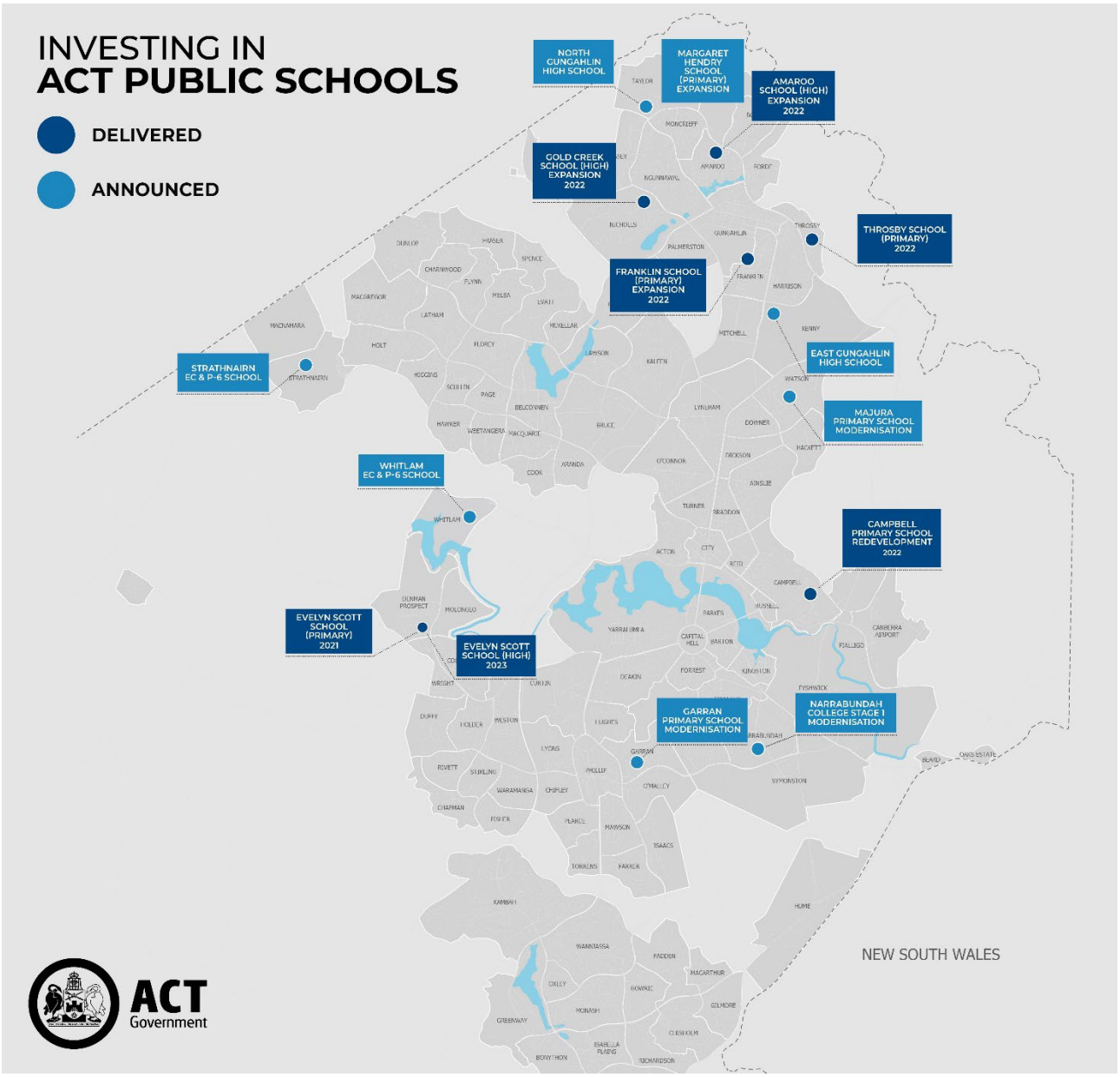
Modernisation is a key ongoing element of schools planning, as well as alongside permanent expansions, to update ageing and end of life infrastructure and ensure safe and inclusive environments that support learning and participation.

The ACT Government is committed to continuing to invest in modernisation to ensure school infrastructure keeps pace with modern pedagogy, the needs of students and the workforce, for inclusive education and to uphold the highest levels of safety and amenity.

New, Modernised and Expanded Schools

The *ACT Infrastructure Plan* released in October 2019 identified indicative future investments in public education, including new and expanded schools within five years. The next update of the *ACT Infrastructure Plan* expected to be released in mid-2023.

- North Gungahlin High School in Taylor will have 800 places when it opens;
- East Gungahlin High School in Kenny will have 800 places when it opens;
- a new EC to 6 primary school at Strathnairn in Ginninderry will have 780 places plus ECEC places, when it opens as the first new school in the developing West Belconnen area; and
- a new EC to 6 primary school in Whitlam which will provide 780 places as well as ECEC places in the Molonglo Valley.



As with recent years, forecast growth will not be evenly distributed across the ACT. Correspondingly, the need for new schools and expanded capacity will be concentrated in areas of greatest development.

In Gungahlin, for example, with new suburbs in the region coming online in conjunction with higher levels of expected births, there will be increased school enrolments in the future.

In Woden and Molonglo, growth is coming from the new developments in Molonglo and infill development around Woden. In Belconnen, growth is coming from Ginninderry, along with some central infill growth.

In the central region, the growth is coming from infill development. For instance, the inner north is experiencing significant residential redevelopment.

While it is more challenging to predict enrolments in greenfield areas, the Education Directorate monitors land release and residential development to predict when new people move into an area, so we can be sure we're predicting that demand as accurately as we can and delivering new school capacity in time to meet that demand.

The Education Directorate's development of enrolment projections with the ANU School of Demography uses robust data sources to help predict population growth and the demand for enrolment in developing and greenfield areas.

ACT Government

ACT Government Submission

Education Directorate

March 2023