



**Hon Sue Ellery MLC
Minister for Education and Training
Leader of the Legislative Council**

Our Ref: 61-28724

Mr Michael Pettersson MLA
Chair
Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Email: danton.leary@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Mr Pettersson

Thank you for your correspondence dated 6 April 2021 regarding the Inquiry into the Management of ACT School Infrastructure. The Department of Education Western Australia has advised the following in relation to the Terms of Reference you provided:

a) The management of hazardous substances and materials in schools

Department workplaces follow the *Western Australian Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996* requirements for hazardous materials. This includes creating a hazardous substances register along with the relevant safety data sheets for each substance, completing risk assessments for each hazardous substance and ensuring people who use or are exposed to the hazardous substances are trained (and evidence of this is kept). All hazardous materials must also be clearly labelled.

b) Planning for the ongoing maintenance of school facilities, including the process to identify and address current and future infrastructure needs in schools

The Department undertakes a Building Condition Assessment (BCA) of all school sites approximately every three years. The BCA inspections are designed to provide detailed assessments of defects in buildings on school sites, as well as information in relation to the condition and functionality of buildings and rooms.

The BCA data is used to develop maintenance and minor works programs at school sites. Additionally, ad hoc programs are undertaken based on breakdowns, faults and needs that are the result of infrastructure failure.

c) The management of capacity issues in schools, including the use of temporary facilities for schools running above capacity and the plans for schools running below capacity

The Department conducts a biannual census, which informs annual enrolment projections for the out years. This, along with demographic projections in new and growth areas, informs business cases to Treasury for funding for additional permanent accommodation and new schools. It also helps to inform allocations for the provision of temporary accommodation.

School capacity is calculated through equivalent full-time teaching area allocation to learning areas, typically at 100% utilisation in primary schools and 83% in secondary schools.

New schools are master planned to allow additional permanent and temporary accommodation to address future growth.

Schools running below capacity do feature in Western Australia's system, but do not often require closure. They can occasionally be subject to amalgamation. These schools offer surplus accommodation that can be utilised by targeted programs initiated by the Department.

d) The adequacy of heating and cooling systems in schools

In the late 2000s, a dedicated program provided evaporative air-cooling systems throughout all classrooms where no previous provision was made. New facilities were provided with a mix of evaporative (paired with gas heaters) and some reverse-cycle air-conditioning to spaces of high occupancy or heat load.

In 2019, the Department revised the air-cooling policy to reverse-cycle heating/cooling as standard in new primary and secondary schools (and temporary accommodation).

e) The demand for sporting facilities on school grounds and measures to address this demand

A typical site size is nominated and sought for primary schools and secondary schools, allowing for provision of a standard suite of outdoor sporting facilities. In some cases, a smaller site is paired with local government administered public open space, with shared-use agreements formed for access to Local Government Association (LGA) maintained ovals. Older sites are usually generously sized and not lacking in provision.

f) Classroom design

The Primary School Brief (PSB) is used for the design and construction of new primary schools, including classroom design, and as a basis for any alterations and additions to existing infrastructure. The PSB is formally reviewed biannually and may be reviewed from time to time to resolve specific issues such as recently in response to the need for new primary schools to accommodate larger enrolments.

Secondary schools are governed by the Secondary Schools Planning Guide (SSPG), which provides non-prescriptive guidance, principles of design and comprehensive and specific benchmarks for designers on fit-for-purpose spaces. Provision of infrastructure is based on student projection modelling undertaken by the Department, scheduled on sliding scales in accordance with facility size, and required to be master-planned to allow for future expansion both in permanent and temporary accommodation to suit changing requirements.

Similar to primary schools, major secondary works are subject to post occupancy evaluation, which feeds back into the biannual briefing review.

g) The environmental sustainability of school infrastructure and facilities

All infrastructure projects of more than \$2 million in value are required to meet equivalence to 4 Green Stars. Additionally, new primary and secondary schools are now provided with photovoltaic (PV) systems in the base build. Current pilot programs are installing PV systems in 30 additional schools and, separately, battery storage systems in a further 10 schools. Both projects will inform policy for further installations and assist in transitioning to greater use of renewable energy.

h) The adequacy of parking and bike storage facilities

Parking for new and major upgraded facilities is scheduled in accordance with formulae agreed with the Western Australian Local Government Association, and typically reflected in the requirements of each local government. Funding is allocated on a case-by-case basis for car parking upgrades in sites not earmarked for other large capital additions or refurbishments.

Bike storage is by similar formulae in new builds.

i) Accessibility for students and staff with disabilities

While new builds are required to be fully compliant, established sites are made compliant based on the needs of enrolled students and/or staff presenting with disability. Student requirement is assessed by the Schools of Special Educational Needs and submitted to the Capital Works and Maintenance directorate for programs of work to be progressed or declined.

j) Accessibility of school facilities by local communities

Public schools and, in particular approximately 80% that are Independent Public Schools with greater autonomy and one-line budget allocation, are at liberty to manage after-hours hiring of facilities to community groups, which is often highly successful. Base facilities are designed to promote an interaction with the school community around events (such as assemblies and theatre productions). Also, as noted above, an increasing number of primary and secondary facilities include a shared-use agreement with local government for collocation of outdoor ovals and pitches, increasing the access of community to facilities.

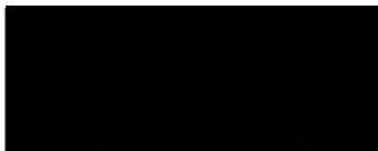
k) Any other relevant matters

Increasing pressure on school sites in the inner city and nearby areas has resulted in the development of high-rise schools. These schools showcase innovative design features and have created opportunities to enhance contemporary teaching and learning practices.

Should you be able to visit Western Australia, I recommend Bob Hawke College, Balcatta Senior High School, Victoria Park Primary School and Highgate Primary School as examples of the innovative approaches to school design.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me.

Yours sincerely



SUE ELLERY MLC
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- 3 MAY 2021