



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION  
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA (Chair), Mr Jonathan Davis MLA (Deputy Chair),  
Mr Peter Cain MLA

## Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the management of ACT school infrastructure

**Submission Number: 8**

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**Inquiry into the Management of ACT School Infrastructure.  
Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion,  
ACT Legislative Assembly.**

## **Harrison School Parent & Community Association submission.**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Harrison School is a large 'super school' running from Preschool to Year 10 which has been in operation for 13 years. It is the second-largest public school in Canberra, and opened in 2008 as a preschool to year 6 school and expanded to include years 7 to 10 incrementally from 2011–14.

The school has been experiencing capacity and infrastructure issues since inception, in part due to the larger than anticipated school-going **population** in the vicinity. According to the 2017 Review, "enrolments have steadily increased and are predicted to continue growing due to increased high density housing in the surrounding area. The panel notes that this anticipated growth will continue to have impact on infrastructure requirements and resource allocations."

We appreciate that there are **plans for new schools in the region** – a primary school in Throsby, the expansion of the Franklin School to P-6, and the development of High School in Kenny in coming years, but we are experiencing significant capacity and infrastructure issues *now*, which require *urgent* remedy.

### **CORE CONCERN**

Our main concern is the apparent emphasis on the **number of classrooms**, to the exclusion of all **other infrastructure and spaces** which are so important to scaffold the learning experience, and support the community around the school. Namely:

- Multipurpose spaces
- Breakout teaching and shared team-teaching spaces
- Specialist classrooms
- Storage space
- Maintenance workshop / workshed
- Playgrounds and physical activity spaces
- Offices for teaching staff, administrative staff, and other support staff such as Defence Support Transition Officers (DSTOs), Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) etc
- Community sporting and cultural activities and events spaces
- Out of school hours care
- Canteen – food preparation and service areas
- Uniform Shop storage and service area



While classrooms and Learning Support Units (LSUs) are obviously and appropriately the priority, and are essential spaces in a school, our concern is that current infrastructure assessment processes focus solely on the need to meet minimum requirements for the number of classrooms, at the expense of, and often the loss of, all of the **other important spaces a school also needs.**

#### **CAPACITY TRIGGER**

Currently the Harrison School is sitting at 86% capacity, which we understand is just above the trigger point for Infrastructure and Capital Works investigation. In the High School Year 7-10 section of the school we are sitting on 95% capacity ie we are experiencing serious pinch/pain points. We understand that the Demography Unit and the Infrastructure and Capital Works (ICW) Unit have been in discussions with the school during 2020 regarding a **new building.** However discussions seem to have halted.

Instead, ICW have been exploring ways to create additional classroom spaces in existing buildings, by repurposing open plan/flexible spaces into classroom by building walls. Our concern is the **loss of these flexible, multipurpose and breakout spaces** which are essential to modern teaching techniques, and also essential to other support services and community needs which the school also accommodates.

#### **CLASSROOMS**

Currently, due to space limitations in the senior school, Harrison School is forced to run several **core classes in specialist classrooms** which are inappropriate for the pedagogical methods, eg English classes in a kitchen/Food tech classroom, HASS in dedicated Maths classrooms, and PE Health in Food prep classrooms.

In the junior school, since the school first started we have been using four **demountables** in the Preschool and Kindergarten, and we currently have 3 Preschool classes in **overflow** at Franklin Primary school.

This year we needed to find two additional LSU rooms, which had a domino effect on other spaces resulting in a **Multipurpose Room** being converted into a Music room.

This has resulted in limitations on all other activities in the Multipurpose Room, including the operation of Out of School Hours (OSH) Club, the P&C Uniform Shop, which earns between \$7 - \$10k a year which we return to the school as a donation, and the operation of the P&C Community Morning Tea which provides a place for parents and carers to unite and support each other - in particular the large contingent of Defence families in our school community.

There may well be other hirers and users of this space which have also been impacted, of which we have not been made aware.



## IMPACT ON P&C OPERATIONS

From the P&Cs perspective, our business model is to provide two services which support the school community, namely the Canteen (in both junior and senior schools) and the Uniform Shop. We then donate the profits from these operations back to the school to invest in priority resources and equipment to improve the school, and support the community.

Due to space limitations, we have not been able to expand the operations of the **Canteens**, to meet the ever increasing demand for food services by students and staff. We had high hopes for the proposed new building, hoping that an expanded kitchen for food preparation, and enlarged food service area would ease congestion issues in the senior school, and allow us to expand our offering to staff and students.

We have also not been able to expand the **Uniform Shop** operations. In fact this year we have had to *downsize* our operations due to storage area limitations, and the scheduling of classes in the space where we usually run the shop, as the Multipurpose Room has been converted into a classroom. We had plans to expand further into the sale of new uniforms, and to appoint a casual staff person to fulfil orders for new uniforms, and coordinate the operations of the second hand uniform shop. Unfortunately these plans have had to be cancelled (or hopefully just postponed), until additional space can be found for operations and storage.

## CONCLUSION

Aside from providing an adequate number of classrooms, we would like to emphasise just how important and essential these other infrastructure and facilities are to the learning environment and culture of the school - they're not just a 'nice to have'.

Any investment from the ACT Government into additional infrastructure at Harrison School, in particular a new building (either temporary or permanent), would provide a release of the significant pressure on existing

- classrooms and LSU spaces
- offices for teaching, admin and support staff
- storage
- maintenance
- multipurpose spaces
- flexible teaching spaces

which would enable

- core classes to be conducted in standard classrooms, not inappropriate specialist classrooms
- students in overflow to other schools to be returned to our school
- community sporting and cultural groups to more readily book multipurpose spaces
- the P&C to expand Canteen and Uniform Shop operations, which would result in an increase in donations back to the school for resources and equipment.