



**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), Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

## Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the Future of School Infrastructure in the ACT

**Submission Number: 12**

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31 March 2023

**RE: INQUIRY INTO THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE ACT**

Dear Standing Committee on Education and Inclusion

The Lyneham Primary School Board would like to respond to some points in your inquiry into the future of school infrastructure in the ACT.

We would like to see both our [submission](#) and an extract from the proof of transcript from our Chair's appearance to the previous inquiry into the management of ACT school infrastructure (included in the text below) considered. We believe that these previous submissions are relevant in relation to school infrastructure (a) and long-term planning(j) to meet appropriate needs in relation to access to spaces in schools (b).

Warmest

Mia Swainson

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Mia Swainson (*she/her*)

Parent Member, Lyneham Primary School Board

**Proof of transcript: Extract**

**KARLSSON, MS TIFFANY**, Board Chair, Lyneham Primary School Board

**TILLEY, MS TINA**, President, Mount Stromlo High School Parents and Citizens Association

**SEXTON, MS JENNIFER**, University of Canberra High School Kaleen School Parents and Citizens Association

**WILD-RIVER, MS SU**, University of Canberra High School Kaleen School Parents and Citizens Association

**THE CHAIR:** Good afternoon and welcome to the sixth public hearing of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion inquiry into the management of ACT school infrastructure. Before we go further, the committee acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. The committee acknowledges and respects their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of the city and this region. We also acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

During the proceedings today we will hear evidence from the following organisations: Lyneham Primary School Board, Mount Stromlo High School Parents and Citizens Association and University of Canberra High School Kaleen Parents and Citizens Association.

There are a few housekeeping matters that I wish to draw to your attention. Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and will be transcribed and published by Hansard. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live. When taking a question on notice it would be useful for everyone if you just say, "I will take that as a question taken on notice." This will help us afterwards.

Please be aware that today's proceedings are covered by parliamentary privilege, which provides protection to witnesses but also obliges them to tell the truth. The provision of false and misleading evidence is a serious matter and all participants today are reminded of this. Please ensure that you have read and understood the pink privilege statement. If I can get each of you to acknowledge that you have read the pink sheet next to you? It would have been sent to you.

**Ms Tilley:** Yes.

**Ms Karlsson:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** There are some opening statements. We will start with Ms Karlsson.

**Ms Karlsson:** Thank you for the opportunity to attend today. In the three years I have been on the Lyneham Primary School Board it has become quite clear that the most significant risks for the school involve capacity and building maintenance. The building was built in 1959 and is obviously a very ageing building. Further, with the development of more high-density living in the school priority area, the pressure on the school is definitely increasing.

The school and the board, I am really keen to say, appreciate their cooperative working relationship with the Education Directorate, and the individuals we deal with are particularly lovely and we appreciate everything they are doing for us. However, we consider that the system and the processes surrounding it in terms of the capacity and maintenance issues are not supporting them or the school as we might like. I am keen to set out two major ongoing issues that we think would benefit from having more processes and structures in place and would therefore lead to a more proactive and less reactive approach to the school capacity and maintenance issues.

Firstly, to take the capacity issues, there are three sub-issues within this area. The first is the way that the government is calculating Lyneham's capacity. We have here a plan. This is the footprint of the Lyneham Primary School. The way the school has calculated the capacity—and I am not sure if you can see from there—is that all the little green dots are calculated at 25 students per classroom. The directorate has used that 25 students per classroom as an average of the actual requirements.

The way the capacity has been allocated to Lyneham Primary School does not actually reflect the reality of what is required for the different age groups that go into those classrooms. For example, the ACT government policy says for kindy to year 3 and preschools there must be only 22 students per classroom, as the capacity, and for students in years 4 to 6 there can be 30 students. What has been done in terms of our footprint is that has been averaged out to 25 per classroom.

However, more than half and probably closer to three-quarters of the Lyneham Primary School classrooms are actually kindy to year 3 and there are composite classrooms for years three to four. That means most of the classrooms here actually need to have 22 students in them. The way the capacity has been calculated does not reflect the actuality of the children that are in that classroom, if that makes sense. It is like the capacity requirements are not being complied with because they are being applied as an average and not what the children actually sitting in those classrooms look like.

We have written to the minister several times about this issue. We have received responses in the past but not in recent times. When we wrote in 2019 the response came back with a utilisation rate that would have been 81 per cent in 2020 but the calculations have been based, as I said, on the erroneous representation of what the actual classrooms are. The letter also said that in the next

decade the utilisation rate would not exceed 86 per cent. However, on our calculations, because students need to be at 22, not the 25, we are already over that at the moment. That is the first sub-issue in terms of capacity that the government's own requirements are not being actually applied in practice in terms of our capacity issues.

The second issue is that in our floorplan the specialist learning places have been included. We consider this is an issue because, for example, the science room, the dance room and the French room have all been included in those capacity figures.

For the first time last year, the French room was converted into an actual classroom. Some of the issues there are that, firstly, the students are losing their specialist immersive French learning space, which is problematic because the children then do not have that; the teachers have to travel around from room to room.

Some of the other issues there—and one of our daughters is in that classroom—are that it was never intended to be a full-time classroom space. It is very dark, for one. There are obvious WHS issues with having children in a space which is not meant to be a full-time classroom. There are no internal windows, for example, leading to the outside. It is just an internal room, very dark, only meant to have students in there for a few hours a day while they are doing their French class and then going back to their normal classroom. Because our capacity figures have been calculated as they have been, we have been losing those specialist spaces. We no longer have that specialist French classroom.

The space is also isolated from the rest of the school. You will see in this plan these are all the classrooms around there. The former French classroom, where one of our children is, is over here and is isolated from the rest of the actual classrooms. It is near the dance studio and the science room which are meant to be the specialist temporary rooms.

It is also accessible to the public. You have the midwifery clients coming into that area; you are having people walk past to get to that specialist dance space where you have different classes like Taekwondo and different things going on. It is physically isolated from the rest of the school. It is accessible to the public, which I think is problematic in that anyone can walk in and open the accessible door; they do not have to go past the front office which you have to walk past to get to the rest of the classrooms. which I think is highly problematic.

I think there is a safety issue there. Anyone can walk in and, at worst, snatch a small child. At best, it is probably not great having small children being able to run out. These are six-year-olds. I feel there is a safety issue in terms of converting some of those specialist spaces that are away from the rest of the school into classrooms.

**THE CHAIR:** In the interest of time, Ms Karlsson, could you potentially wrap it up in a couple of moments?

**Ms Karlsson:** Yes. There is so much to talk about in this space. Some of the other issues are that, for example, the dance studio next to the French classroom received commonwealth government funding in the Building the Education Revolution in 2009; so it is joint state and commonwealth funding. That is also calculated in the capacity. The science room, the dance room and the French room are all counted as rooms that can be converted into classroom space. I think, at best, it is bad faith to count rooms that have been funded for specific purposes—it has got springboards in there so that it can be used for dancing—to count them as rooms that can be easily converted into classroom space.

The second key issue that I want to mention is the building maintenance issue, so the building is over 60 years old. It is past its end of life. Specific issues have included windows and doors with drafts, cracking walls, lead paint, asbestos, old and ripped carpets, cracked walls, flammable cladding, broken blinds, and unhygienic bathrooms that no amount of cleaning can fix. While the directorate has spent some money recently on this—and we are really thankful—there is an overarching issue here that the issues are not being consistently addressed and no amount of communication from the school board or the school itself is remedying those.

There is no current building condition report, which is quite concerning given that you would expect any building, particularly one past its end of life, should have a building maintenance plan. We only have a partial plan from 2013 that only related to fire. We have no plan for the building itself, which I think is quite risky in terms of risk management.

Some of these issues are raised as overarching issues. There is the lack of proactive management of the building and capacity issues. We are constantly chasing up these issues and there is no clear way to get money and there is no clear plan to proactively address the issues. Secondly, there is the lack of engagement or responsiveness in terms of the issues that we are raising. It is also, thirdly, an alarming approach to risk management to just sort of hope for the best and not proactively manage an ageing building. And fourthly, it is clear that these are not isolated issues to Lyneham. The whole inner north, as far as we have been talking to other schools, is experiencing similar issues.

In terms of recommendations, we are really keen to see some proactive management of ACT buildings and capacity and to have internal policies lining up in terms of capacity actually relating to the reality of the school and not to lose specialist learning spaces. We think a review would be really quite beneficial in terms of capacity and also how building maintenance issues are being addressed. Rather than trying to chase up issues for resolution, we need to have some kind of forward plan working and also some clear communications from the directorate in terms of the real risks that we think are being posed to the children in the ACT system.

**THE CHAIR:** I am going to need to jump in because we have only got a set amount of time. That map you brought, could the committee have a copy of that?

**Ms Karlsson:** Yes, sure.