



**Ms Yvette Berry MLA**

Deputy Chief Minister  
Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
GPO Box 1020  
Canberra, ACT 2601

13 April 2022

Dear Minister Berry

**Request to meet regarding Molonglo High School/College**

As the community council for the Molonglo Valley, we wish to meet and discuss with you our concerns over the planning, development and design of the Molonglo Valley High School/College.

The timely delivery of school infrastructure is an issue that is frequently raised with the Forum. Residents are keen to ensure that young people who grow up in the district have access to modern, local facilities that meet the needs of the diverse and growing Molonglo Valley community.

Simultaneously, we are hearing concerns about a lack of local, green recreational spaces.

The Molonglo Valley is forecast to have less than one-third of the neighbourhood and urban open space provided to other parts of Canberra (2.4 hectares per 1000 residents in Molonglo compared to the Canberra average of 8.6 hectares per 1000 residents). We are keen to ensure that what land we do have is used efficiently.

We are therefore quite concerned about the details of the proposed high school/college at the Molonglo Group Centre that have emerged with Technical Amendment to the Territory Plan TA2022-01. As shown in [Figure 1](#), this latest plan reserves 10 hectares of land for the high school/college. This is almost double the amount of land set aside in the draft concept plan released in December last year (5.7 hectares), and more than eleven times the amount dedicated in the 2014 concept plan (0.9 hectares).

This growth of the high school/college site has unfortunately come at the expense of publicly accessible open recreation space, which is in both short supply and high demand in the Molonglo Valley. As residential densities are expected to be highest in and around the group centre, this nearby open space is likely to be even more desirable.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and representatives from the Education Directorate to discuss alternative ways of retaining the required floorspace of the proposed high school/college without negatively impacting the amount of open recreation space at the Molonglo Group Centre. Our previous efforts at contacting the Directorate about this issue have not yielded a response that addresses our concerns in a satisfactory manner.

We believe there is an opportunity at the Molonglo Group Centre to create a taller high school/college building with a narrower footprint and shared community facilities on the ground floor, such as a theatre, gymnasium, dance and flexible arts spaces. This approach would provide genuine placemaking opportunities to create an integrated school and town centre precinct that promotes a shared sense of community.

This concept of a vertical high school/college at the high density Molonglo Group Centre is consistent with your comments at a recent hearing of the Inquiry into the management of ACT school infrastructure (see [Figure 2](#)). We also understand that the Planning and Education Directorates had previously reached an agreement for a taller facility at this site during the development of the 2014 draft concept plan.

We look forward to meeting with you and collaborating to create a high school/college that enables students to:

- develop and gain the skills needed to live life well
- be healthy and access Canberra's natural environment
- feel a sense of identifying and belonging, and
- develop social connections and build community.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

**Ryan Hemsley**

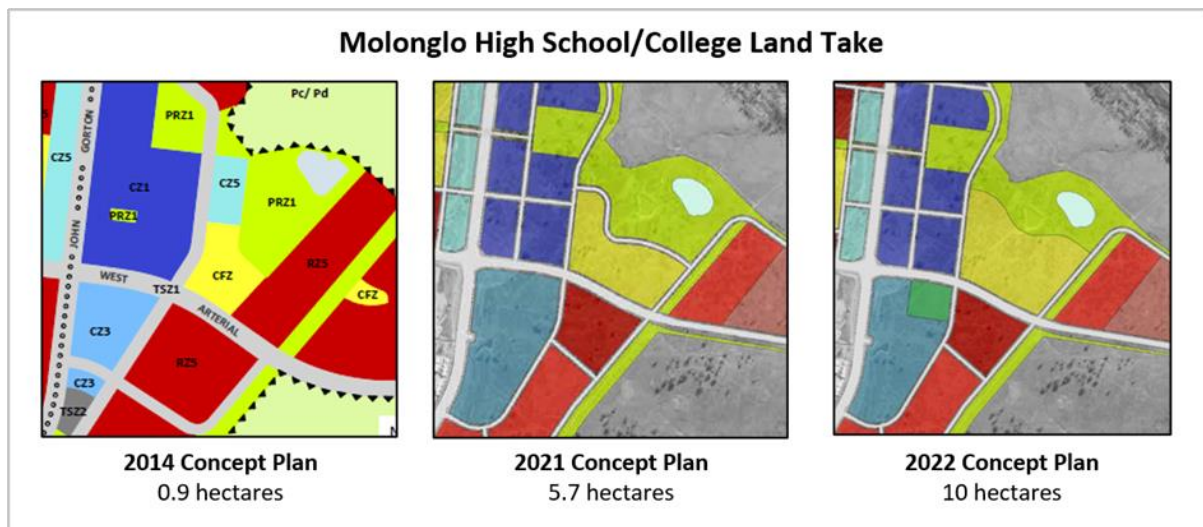
Convenor

Molonglo Valley Community Forum



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**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**

**MR DAVIS:** One of the things I have been struck by, from our school visits, and from looking particularly at some of our newer schools, is that most of the schools, most of the time, are single level. I am struck by that because we seem to be a pretty landlocked territory. I want to gauge from you what appetite the government has to consider two-, three- or four-storey schools, or schools that I would argue would better utilise the finite land that they are on, going forward.

**Ms Berry:** This is something that governments across the country are tackling, around utilising land for schools. I have visited some vertical schools in different states and territories; that is the name by which they are referred to. They have several storeys. Of course, when I was growing up, our high school had three levels.

It is something that we definitely need to consider as land becomes more finite and more difficult to manage, particularly within higher density areas of the ACT. It is probably more suitable in the high school and college space than in the primary and early childhood space, from the feedback that I have been getting from teachers and parents about their experiences in those kinds of schools.

For those younger cohorts, with multilevels, there is the noise, and the inability to move to areas where you can have calming spaces in schools. I do not think it is a policy direction at the moment, but it is definitely something that is on the directorate's radar as our city continues to grow.