



**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: 15**

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## **SUBMISSION ON THE INQUIRY INTO THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE ACT** 31 March 2023

The Molonglo Valley Community Forum (the Forum) is a non-political and secular group with the objective to preserve and improve the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Molonglo Valley and its community.

The Forum welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the *Inquiry into the Future of School Infrastructure in the ACT*. We recognise that school infrastructure plays an important role in supporting quality education outcomes, as well as providing facilities and services used by the wider community.

The Forum would like to focus its submission on Terms of Reference c), h), i) and j). In particular, we would like to see **increased height limits for secondary schools and colleges in the Molonglo Valley**, to ensure scarce community land is used optimally. As detailed in Attachment A, this is an issue that the Forum has previously raised with the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, with minimal success to date.

The Molonglo Valley is growing and developing rapidly, with over 86,000 people expected to be living in the region by 2060.<sup>1</sup> The district has a limited amount of land suitable for urban development, due to its topography and proximity to areas of national environmental significance. Land use planning therefore needs to be strategic and efficient, balancing competing demands and maximising benefits to the wider community.

The Forum appreciates the efforts of the ACT Government to provide adequate school infrastructure for our growing community, as evidenced by the two primary schools and one high school that have already been delivered. However, we are concerned that the current planning approach is not sustainable or optimal in the long term. There is a need to rethink the design and delivery of school infrastructure in the district, considering not only current needs, but also future projections and possibilities.

One way this can be achieved is by increasing the permitted height of secondary schools and colleges in the Molonglo Valley, from a maximum of four to six storeys. This would allow for more efficient use of land, as well as creating more opportunities for innovative and flexible learning environments. There are many benefits associated with taller schools, both for students and for the wider community. These benefits include:

- The ability to accommodate more students on smaller sites, reducing land consumption and preserving open space for other purposes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.treasury.act.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/2181985/ACT-Government-population-projections-2022-2060.pdf](https://www.treasury.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/2181985/ACT-Government-population-projections-2022-2060.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See details provided in Attachment A.

- Providing more opportunities for natural light in classrooms, which is proven to improve the health and wellbeing of students and staff.<sup>3</sup>
- Taller schools can contribute to urban design and placemaking, creating landmarks and focal points for the community.<sup>4</sup>

The Forum acknowledges that there may be some challenges to implementing taller schools in the district, such as accessibility standards and cost implications. However, we believe that these can be overcome with careful planning, consultation and innovative design. We also note that there are a growing number of successful examples of vertical schools in Australia that can provide inspiration and guidance for such facilities in our district.<sup>5</sup>

The Forum strongly recommends that the Inquiry consider our proposal for increased height limits for secondary schools and colleges in the Molonglo Valley. We believe that this would be a forward-looking and visionary approach that would benefit not only our students, but also the community as a whole.

Members of the Forum Executive Committee would be happy to appear before the Education and Community Inclusion Committee to discuss any aspect of this submission.

Yours sincerely,

**Ryan Hemsley**

Convenor

Molonglo Valley Community Forum



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### **Summary of attachments**

Attachment A - Letter from MVCF to Minister Berry regarding the Molonglo College

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/environmental-design/news/2022/mar/importance-daylighting-classrooms-and-its-effect-primary-students-academic-performance>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346694858\\_Vertical\\_schools\\_as\\_community\\_hubs\\_in\\_high-density\\_residential\\_neighbourhoods](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346694858_Vertical_schools_as_community_hubs_in_high-density_residential_neighbourhoods)

<sup>5</sup> <https://architectureau.com/articles/vertical-schools-on-the-rise/>