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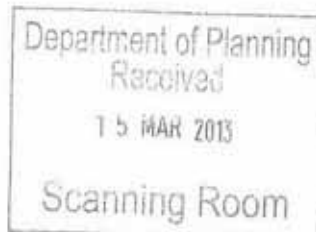


# NEWCASTLE·EAST PUBLIC·SCHOOL

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## SCHOOL COUNCIL SUBMISSION

Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy 2012



## Issues Arising from Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy

### Increasing population pressures currently affecting schools

- Data from the 2011 census showed dramatic overall total population growth in this area, from 2997 to 3800, an increase of 25.8%.
- ABS Census data indicates particularly strong growth in the 0-4 years age range, and the 5-9 age range, in the inner-city, increases of 81%, from 103 children to 187.
- More widely, within the Newcastle LGA, from 2006 to 2011 the number of 0 to 4 age grew by 740, and. The number of 5 to 9 age grew by 362. There is a clear need to reveal what is the NSW government's plan to accommodate this growth.
- The pre-school increase in that five year period, 85%, is significant, since that cohort will be entering our schools in the next five year period.
- The increase was especially in the under 1 year age. These babies will be turning three this year and seeking to enter kindergarten from 2015.
- There was also an increase of 42 (135 to 177) in 0 to 4 year-olds in Cooks Hill which contributes to both Newcastle East and The Junction school drawing areas
- Given maximum class sizes (twenty students) for Kindergarten, these figures indicate the need for another five infants classes in the inner-city by 2016, based on known demand. This does not allow for additional children moving into the city as families take up continuing townhouse, apartment and in-fill housing.
- Clearly, any additional population movements into the inner-city will require significant investment in additional accommodation, staffing, and school sites.

### Local Schools for Local Children – limiting “school miles”

- Current government policy limits the access of children to schools other than their local school, in order to ensure that school populations are not subject to dramatic short-term variations.
- In addition, this policy encourages localised, low-energy means of transport to and from schools, including walking and cycling. As part of an overall carbon-reduction strategy, the “local schools for local kids” policy contains a dis-incentive to drive children to and from school, and reduces reliance on buses.
- The policy is reliant on the provision of adequate, planned, readily-accessible local schools.
- The policy is breached when children are bussed long distances to take their lessons in empty class-rooms in distant schools.

## Adequacy of planning for future schools and pre-schools

- Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy predicts long-term population increases of 12600 persons, living in 6000 additional dwellings, over the life of the strategy
- For the Newcastle LGA, the age groups from 5 to 19 represent 17.1% of the population. Thus the school age population may be estimated at about 16% of the population. Even if the inner city has a lower proportion than the whole LGA of school age children, say 12%, this still represents about 1,500 additional school age children.
- At the minimum this requires an additional large primary school and a significant expansion of Newcastle High School. It will also add to demand pressure on other high schools including Merewether, HSPA and Lambton High Schools. A new high school is certain to be needed in the inner 5 km ring of Newcastle within the next 25 years.
- Increasing numbers of families with school-age children currently live in apartment-style housing, or in town-houses, and this type of accommodation clearly forms the hub of the revitalisation strategy.
- Demographers making projections on green-field sites envisage 1.4 children per household, but for medium and high density housing use lower ratios.
- Significantly, the "revitalisation" zone considered in the strategy neatly circumvents all three inner-city schools, Newcastle East Public School, the Newcastle School (Laman Street), and Newcastle Grammar School.
- The revitalisation strategy focuses on "promoting a university presence and educational hub", but makes no planning provisions for educational facilities other than the University of Newcastle Law faculty's move into the inner-city. The strategy seems to make no mention of other educational opportunities, including pre-schools and schools, which will be necessary for both the wave of inner-city residents, and the projected 6000 tertiary students who will come into the city each day for study purposes.
- The conclusion is that the number of school-age children living in inner-city Newcastle will increase markedly over the cycle of this strategy.
- Clearly existing schools in the inner-city have little or no excess capacity for growth in student numbers.
- It is essential therefore that planning at this strategic level makes adequate provision for additional accommodation on new sites within the revitalisation zone.
- Unless this occurs families moving to live and work in the inner city will find themselves having to drive their kids to middle ring suburbs like Adamstown and Tighes Hill to go to school, defeating the purpose of inner city consolidation.
- In addition, many parents from outer suburbs who work in the city would prefer to have their children attend school near where they work, to reduce the time their kids have to spend in before and after school care. Given recent government incentives such as paid parental leave, aimed to retain women in the workforce, this trend will increase.
- The Regional Director of Schools for Hunter/Central Coast, Mr Frank Potter, was recently interviewed on ABC 1233 (28 February). He noted that following the NICE committee report in 2007, the Department of Education and Communities had reserved the Newcastle School site in Laman St, as a potential future public school site. As it is a small site with limited open play space, it might require a creative approach, including use of the nearby National Park area for recreation. Another option might be to use it to extend Newcastle High School, and as a trade off use part of Newcastle High grounds for a new Primary School.

## Recommendations

1. That planners should take as a starting point for their medium and long-term strategic plans the provision of adequate human services to cater for projected population growth.
2. That the proposed "Educational Precinct" should include more than merely one faculty of the University of Newcastle. In particular, the precinct should include consideration of pre-school educational facilities, and facilities for primary education.
3. That the current site of the old Newcastle Special School, currently closed, be set aside for future use as a primary school. Another option could be to use it to expand Newcastle High School (a senior school?) and use part of the Newcastle High School grounds to develop a new Primary School.
4. That strategic planning for Newcastle Urban centre should include allocation of a site for an additional modern primary school to be operated by the public sector.
5. That consideration should be given to creative re-use of certain heritage buildings within the CBD, such as Newcastle Railway Station, as possible educational centres.
6. Those responsible for the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy should urgently convene a meeting with senior officials of the Department of Education and Communities, and other relevant stakeholders including current inner city public and private schools. The objective of this meeting should be to ensure there is adequate land set aside for public schooling in inner Newcastle to meet current and anticipated growth over the next 25 years.



John Mowatt – NEPS School Council President

On behalf of the NEPS School Council