



**An alliance of Victorian
Public Education community campaigns**

'Every child in Victoria should have access to high quality
state primary and secondary education in their local community'

Infrastructure Victoria Draft Options Book
submission by Our Children, Our Schools (OCOS), Victoria
16 June 2016
Nina Kelly on behalf of OCOS

Introducing Our Children Our Schools (OCOS) and its aims

Our Children Our Schools (OCOS) is an alliance of 25 Victorian Public Education community campaign groups which advocates the establishment of a properly government funded essential infrastructure for government school provision. Such funding must ensure social cohesion, provide well regarded facilities for learning and be accessible and affordable to all. In summary we believe that every child in Victoria should have access to high quality state primary and secondary education in their local community.

OCOS formed because we want to see a transparent equitable process for school provision free of political and other agenda considerations.

The alliance currently comprises 25 groups, among them:

- [Beaumaris School Community Group \(BSCG\)](#);
- [A new school for Bannockburn District](#);
- [High School for Coburg \(HSC\)](#);
- Doreen and Mernda Secondary School Alliance;
- [Friends of Elwood College](#);
- [Friends of Kyneton Education \(FoKE\)](#);
- [Nunawading Primary School Site Preservation Group Inc](#);
- Oakleigh Ward Local Secondary School (OWLSS);
- [High School for Preston](#);
- [Point Cook Action Group](#);
- [Public Education Group \(PGR\)](#);
- [Reopen Our Schools \(Banyule City\)](#);
- [Richmond High School Choices \(RHSC\)](#);
- [Secondary Education for Seddon, Kingsville and Yarraville \(SKY High\)](#);
- [Restore Strathmore Heights' School Zones](#);
- [TwoSchoolsNow \(Port Phillip and Southbank\)](#);
- Docklands Community Forum;
- [Fishermans Bend Network](#);
- [Northern Mallee School Council Presidents Group](#);
- [Keysborough South Action Group](#);
- Save Former Calder Rise Primary School
- City Schools 4 City Kids;
- State High School for Prahran;
- North Melbourne Primary School Parents Group (NMPS Parents);
- Your Cheltenham School;

OCOS welcomes the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria (IV) and this report in particular. We regard IV as an opportunity to be *the* authority to clearly define long-term goals for Victoria. Our belief is that IV has an important role to play in creating an equal and transparent school provision process and to improve education planning as a whole. It was therefore very promising to see a section dedicated to schools included in your considerations.

State schools are essential local infrastructure and their proactive planning is not a given

351 Victorian schools were closed during the Kennett years, a legacy which is still with Victorians today. Research tells us that the benefits of students being educated in their local communities include increased resilience, school and community connectedness and improved transitions between Kindergarten, Primary School and Secondary School. In Victoria, these local schools were not only closed but new schools ceased being built where they were needed. This has meant that the state shifted from a policy of measuring demand (to plan accordingly) to needing to be convinced, that demand for state schools exists in the first place.

When entire suburbs are planned and built without a local state school, the community immediately notices and starts to ask the obvious question, as is the case in the Docklands, an inner city suburb:

“My children were born here, they went to playgroups and kinder here. This community is their home. Why can’t they go to school here?”

Mother from the Docklands area, Melbourne, Victoria

Plan Melbourne has rightly made reference to the need for ‘schools’ to be planned for and built but the prefix ‘state’ has been omitted, and this does not send a positive message to parents that the governments of the day are truly planning to build and support state schools. Melbourne is the fastest growing capital city in Australia and yet the state of Victoria has a backlog of at least 220 schools, according to predictions of growth. This year, despite the population boom, no state school was opened. This is unprecedented.

This has meant that parents, like the ones in the OCOS alliance are now having to spend countless hours campaigning, assuming the roles of demographers and city planners to agitate and lobby to even propel governments to provide new local state primary and high schools. They also campaign against the sale of schools or school land to keep government schools’ student cohorts as representative of their local community as possible, and keep them from being ‘creamed off’ by other education providers through advertisements, scholarships and the like.

The funding cuts to state schools and the complete lack of future planning to set aside sites for new schools, have reportedly meant that in one overcrowded primary school parents are having to provide toilet paper for their children.

Public schools must be pro-actively planned for and built, well-maintained, staffed and funded appropriately. Proper planning for and building of public schools to suit the needs of their communities will not only enhance the sense of community but will enhance student learning outcomes, student engagement and pride.

Our Submission

In the following sections, OCOS' submission will directly discuss the various options presented in the Infrastructure Victoria Draft Options Book.

School boundary enrolment SOO

Parents want local schools and are lobbying for them across the state. The right to a local school, although enshrined in legislation, is not defined by any proximity to actual local community. As an organisation we want an equal playing field for all students. Perceived “middle class flight”, “white flight” and “poverty flight” are shaping the education outcomes for Victoria to the detriment of those who need the most assistance. Freedom of choice only benefits individual schools and not the entire local community. Choice and competition policies in education only benefit those students who are already advantaged, and adds further disadvantage to those who are already disadvantaged.

There is currently no data on the actual movements of school-aged children to access their local primary and high schools, especially the amount of travel time young people have to put up with. What is ‘local’ is quickly becoming blurred, ill-defined and effectively a new form of social segregation by street, not just suburb any more.

1) Recommendation:

Monitor student travel times to their state schools on an ongoing basis and make sure these are linked with the evidence-base around active, safe and affordable modes of student transport and public health outcomes for children.

The current lack of SOO has been to the disadvantage of a large number of communities across Victoria. Parents should not have to lobby the State Government to ensure their LGA school remains open or land ownership remains with DET or local council. Current examples of advocacy campaigns included La Page Primary School, Nunawading Primary School, High School for Preston, Charles La Trobe and other regeneration project mergers and closures, Coburg and Restore Strathmore Heights' School Zones.

When students have no local Secondary school in their suburb, as was the case in Beaumaris (new school funding secured State Budget 2016-2017), and they do not live in the zone for neighbouring state high schools. Families feel they have no choice but to attend a fee paying independent school. One OCOS member school cites examples of Docklands families travelling nearly 8 kilometres away to the closest state high school.

The earlier SOO are introduced within Victoria the higher the likelihood that schools will improve links within the local community. The report called “Uneven playing field: The state of Australia’s schools” states;

*For two-thirds of Australia’s schools the local community is increasingly not the community of the local school. More than ever before, students go elsewhere to school, or the local school’s enrolled students come from somewhere else. Less than a third of our schools have an enrolment which resembles the cross-section of people in the schools’ local community. Regardless of school sector and location, schools are increasingly detached from, and less representative of, their adjacent communities.*¹

¹ “Uneven playing field: The state of Australia’s schools Pg36 <http://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/The-State-of-Australias-Schools.pdf>

If the local school is increasingly detached from and unrepresentative of its surrounding area, then our communities lose another avenue for social exchange and gathering, and our communities are less cohesive overall.²

2) Recommendation

Publish school social cohesion data as part of regular IV reporting. IV should work with DET to consider short and long term planning options to make state schools more inclusive and representative of their communities. International best practice to school boundary management should be reviewed.

Review of physical barriers hindering access with SOO

One area of obvious concern for OCOS when implementing SOO are physical barriers hindering safe walking and cycling access within the SOO. These physical barriers include but are not limited to waterways, drainage channels, industrial estates, main roads, freeways and railway lines.

Implementing SOO requires thorough planning

Some school zones Albert Park for example, appear to be arbitrarily drawn lines on a map and this can result in students being zoned out of their local school because they live on the wrong side of the train or tram line.

Specialist programs can contribute or detract from SOO effectiveness

Specialist programs such as music and sports are currently offered at individual schools. These programs should be available within all schools so that children do not need to travel as much to access curricular choice.

Some secondary schools are attracting funding and students from outside their zone by styling themselves as specialist schools for science, performing arts or sport. OCOS supports the notion that all schools should be adequately funded to provide these programs and serve the needs, interests and talents of students in their local area.

One OCOS member school cites examples of a nearby zoned SEAL school “cherry picking” students from out of zone because of their perceived academic, social or performing arts skills. Some of these students were granted entry into the zoned school even though they were not part of the SEAL program. This is neither fair, not ethical and OCOS welcome DET’s decision to stop accrediting SEAL programs in mainstream schools and warning against enrolling “attractive” students from out of the school zone.

Flow on effects

SOO has other positive flow on effects such as reduced traffic congestion in and around schools. Local schools within safe walking and cycling distance improves student’s overall health, concentration, social independence and reduces environmental impacts. Clear school boundaries allow Public Transport Victoria (PTV) to improve transport links and to extend those that do not exist in and around schools.

² “Uneven playing field: The state of Australia’s schools Pg38 <http://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/The-State-of-Australias-Schools.pdf>

With current Renewable Energy Targets (RET) SOOs are no brainers

Schools consume a lot of energy and are therefore already a target of funding streams to improve energy efficiencies such as the National Solar Schools Program (NSSP). Schools need to be heated and cooled so there are many opportunities for good public policy making. However, when schools install water tanks, lights, insulation, shading structures or solar cells the public is missing active monitoring of use and non-use in fact. OCOS would like IV to take a more active role in using state schools as sustainability hubs and allow them to implement diverse measures to reduce their carbon footprint instead of one size fits all energy efficiency schemes.

- 3) Recommendation: IV needs to work with DET and MPA to establish effective ways of planning, maintaining, contracting (cleaning etc) and funding sustainable school infrastructure. IV needs to gain an holistic understanding of the building of capacity of state schools as education, environmental, employment and community centres with active movement opportunities. IV needs to map where infrastructure decisions are made at the 'wrong' level to allow effective planning and possible review of such decision making (ie. continuum of DET, Regions, Principals, School Councils etc).

Implementation

OCOS strongly believes in implementing school boundary enrolment (SOO) for the start of the 2019 school year at both Primary and Secondary. The SOO areas would be published on the DET webpage removing additional workload for individual schools and provide clarity to the community. Implementing this change in 2019 would allow any schools requiring infrastructure improvements to be carried out in the 2017/2018 budget. The Prep class of 2019 represents today's two year olds. The birth rate of this class born across 2012 & 2013 is Victoria's highest since records started in 1900. 2012 saw 77,278 births (ABS data) Victoria's highest birth peak to date and the following year 2013 recorded a birth rate of 73,969. The last peak period with over 70,000 births each year was between 1968- 1972 as per ABS data.

OCOS also recommends the introduction of capped Prep intake of no larger than 80 students. DET enrolment data from 2015 clearly shows over 94 schools across Victoria had over 100 prep students start school in 2015. In reality, freedom of choice seems to be hindering DET. Without clear zones, DET forecasters are unable to predict if students will stay in the LGA or drive through four other LGA to get to their school of choice, some up to 11 kilometres away. By capping class sizes and implementing SOO would trigger the Regional DET office to commence regular reviews and monitor SOOs. When SOOs are reviewed, adjusted the need to open a new school would be much more obvious and therefore plannable in a more timely matter.

To improve overall planning OCOS encourages DET to implement compulsory SOO enrollment of Prep and Year 7 by end of June the year prior. This should encourage at least 90% of families to enrol their child. For example, individual primary schools will be able to plan class sizes and the number of physical classrooms earlier. Rather than having an unexpected shortage in a physical classroom and teacher and a jump of 19 students per class up to 24 students per class in late December.

Primary Schools

OCOS would suggest a staggered introduction of SOO so that siblings of children already enrolled in an LGA school not in their own SOO are still able to attend that primary school for Prep in 2018 if the older sibling is in Grade 5 or under. This is demonstrated in the table below. For those with siblings in Grade 6 only this is not an option to encourage the correct SOO zoning. The family would only be split with multiple drop offs at primary school level between two schools for 12 months.

We suggest that Principals should not take early enrolments for 1st born children outside the SOO for the 2018 Prep year onwards. Using this suggested method would ensure that the majority of primary students are in the correct LGA zoned school by 2021. All primary students would be in the correct SOO by 2027.

Primary

Younger sibling Prep Start Year	Sibling attending school out of zone
Prep 2018	Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, Grade 4 & Grade 5
Prep 2019	Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3 & Grade 4
Prep 2020	Grade 1, Grade 2 & Grade 3
Prep 2021	Grade 1 & Grade 2
Prep 2022	Grade 1
Prep 2023	All students in SSO zoned school.

Secondary Schools

We suggest that siblings of children already enrolled in an LGA school not their own SOO are still able to attend that secondary school for Year 7 in 2018 if the older sibling is in Year 10 or under. As demonstrated in table below. For those with siblings in Year 11 & 12 only this is not an option to encourage the correct SOO zoning. The family would only be split between two schools for 2years whilst the elder sibling completes Year 11 & 12. Using this suggested method would ensure that the majority of students are in the correct LGA zoned school by 2019. All secondary students would be in the correct SOO by 2025.

Younger sibling Year 7 Start Year	Sibling attending school out of zone
Year 7 2018	Year 8, Year 9 & Year 10
Year 7 2019	Year 8 & Year 9
Year 7 2020	Year 8
2021	All students in SSO zoned school.

OCOS recommendations for SOO transition summed up

Our Children, Our Schools recommends the following in regards to SOO:

- 1) Introduction of SOO in the 2018 school year as above tables at both primary and secondary levels.
- 2) Clear SOO boundaries published on the DET website to reduce the workload for individual schools and to provide clarity and certainty to the community.
- 3) Introduction of capped Prep intake no larger than 80 students flags to Regional DET office that zones needs to be reviewed and potentially a new school opened.
- 4) Transparent audits be carried out to ensure that students who attend schools in particular zones, do in fact, live in those zones

School campus utilisation SCU1

The introduction of staggered school hours will be detrimental to the community. OCOS strongly believes the Government should build more schools not cram more students into the existing space. It is inconvenient for working families and increases demand for childcare spaces. It increases costs to families to pay for additional before and after school care. It would be an unacceptable disruption to most families.

Would excursion options & inter-school activities be reduced to students attending staggered school hours' approach schools? Using the Zoo and Aquarium as examples, these education facilities do not open at 6am. Some schools have already introduced staggered lunch breaks to cope with small playgrounds and growing enrolments but stretching it to staggered school hours is nonsensical. To illustrate this, other factors impacting this staggered school hours' approach are listed below.

Workforce Participation

Not every workplace offers staggered hours to employees. For example, for those that work in retail, limited hours are available. A 7am or after lunch start is highly impractical.

SCU1 further disadvantages working parents, in particular working mothers and single parents. In 2013 the Australian Human Rights Commission³⁴ found workplace discrimination was prevalent at all stages of motherhood – during pregnancy, parental leave or return to work. OCOS believes staggered hours will lead to further workplace discrimination, as parents are seen as less flexible in the workforce.

An Australian National University (ANU) 2016 study⁵, commissioned by a leading childcare provider, found a working mother could lose up to two-thirds of her gross earnings in tax and childcare fees. Once a child begins school it can be the first time in potentially five plus years that a woman maybe financially ahead due to reduction in childcare expenses. These staggered hours will again enforce additional costs before and after school costs onto these families.

Access

Another obstacle is transportation and safety. A staggered start will place additional pressures on provided school transport solutions and potentially reduce the right transport access to students. It seems more money would be spent on providing additional bus services than money spent in the classrooms.

A reduction in the number of students accessing Public transport at the same time may lead to a reduction in safety of travelling in numbers. Siblings travelling together may be separated due to school-age or their actual hours of school.

Teachers & support staff

A number of questions to consider relating to staggered the hours' approach;

- 1) Will the introduction of staggered school hours be sustainable; will it reduce the number of students a teacher has at any given time?
- 2) Teachers with school-age children may be inconvenienced if their child's school does not use this same staggered approach?

³ <http://www.news.com.au/finance/work/at-work/can-you-believe-discrimination-against-pregnant-women-and-parents-are-still-rife-in-australia/news-story/d09184a9fa836539c3a1648cde42edf7>

⁴ https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/SWP_Report_2014.pdf

⁵ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-18/some-mothers-losing-money-by-turning-up-to-work-study/7426416>

- 3) Will teachers be expected to work both staggered sections of the day? If so, the following needs to be considered.
 - a) What number of classes will be taught each day by a full time teacher?
 - b) When will teachers have time for Preparation, Marking and Collaboration?
 - c) How will this staggered school hours' approach allow flexibility for parent/ teacher meetings?
 - d) How will teacher burn out be addressed?
 - e) Will it block opportunities for teachers to continue professional development?

Has a significant negative impact on non-school activities

Many students and families fear that staggered school hours will result in reduced opportunities to participate in after school activities, and care for younger siblings. With the increase in obesity access to after school sports activities may be limited further compounding this issue.

It could also limit the opportunities for older students to hold part time jobs. Holding a part time job is extremely important to the development of individuals, especially those lacking a strong academic mindset.

School Community

SCU1 does not foster community among students and parents. Students may live down the street from one child but they attend different start sessions disrupting the community further.

Cleaning and maintenance schedules

Implementation of the staggered approach may lead to a reduction in cleaning and maintenance. When will cleaning and maintenance occur between staggered sessions?

OCOS does not recommend SCU1 for the following reasons;

- 1) Implementing staggered school hours will be detrimental to families' work force participation
- 2) Various transport access barriers
- 3) Teachers and support staff rights are unclear in this document
- 4) High cost to the family due to increased cost in after and before school care
- 5) Negative impact on non-school activities
- 6) Does not foster community
- 7) Risk of reducing school facility quality balancing cleaning and maintenance schedules
- 8) It directly contravenes article 26, section 2 of the UN Human rights charter which safeguards full development, including opportunities to develop friendships:
- 9) **"Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace."**

School facility use for Out of School Hours Care SFU

OCOS would like to see planning certainty for OSH services. These services are a vital part of the school community and often attend to the whole child, especially the social and emotional well-being and wellness of children. Whatever IV plans or investigates needs to preserve the integrity and priority of this vital service. Of course, school facilities can be used for community purposes beyond the school operating hours and sometimes meaningfully within. It is therefore a matter of context and should ultimately rest with the school council as budgetary implications and community impact needs to be considered at the most local level.

The missed opportunity here is the better utilisation of school playgrounds for the whole community not just school-aged families on the weekend for example. Outside areas can be just as valuable as a community infrastructure than inside facilities.

School infrastructure funding certainty SIF

OCOS supports the recommendation that the State Government publish a proposed plan for school capital works for the next 30 years (new and upgrades) and beyond against a proposed timeline for delivery and alongside a long-term funding allocation for the proposed pipeline. This thirty-year demand planning approach would allow planning for those children born in 2028, twelve years from now. It would plan their start of Prep in 2033 to their completion of Year 12 in 2046.

There is limited knowledge about how schools are funded within the general community across the State. Council regions such as Greater Dandenong, Hume and Brimbank have a higher demographic mix of new migrants, low socio-economic, refugees and English as the second language at home. Within these regions of our various campaigns we have come across a number of assumptions made by the community members about who is responsible for the construction and upgrades of schools. Such funding assumptions include; councils build schools, the individual school or the Federal Government build schools. This lack of understanding can cause much confusion and blame. For example, the community can have the perception that the individual Principal does not have clear goals to improve infrastructure. So these families select another school with 'perceived' better physical infrastructure. When in actual fact the funding decision-making is resting on the State Budget cycle not the Principal.

What is grossly misunderstood is the formula that the state government of the day uses to calculate the level of funding for state schools versus independent schools and that now some independent schools are receiving more funding than state schools.

The planning decision-making around school provision and funding is currently only considered in the short term or not at all and it does not provide any certainty to communities. Current OCOS members are individually meeting with DET to discuss targeted campaigns for their communities. Land may be secured for a new school site in one budget cycle but there is no certainty as to when the school will be opened. This leaves the community wondering if funding will be secured in the following budget cycle or in ten years' time.

The Age reported on 11th June 2016 that:

*"At the end of last year, 361 of Victoria's 1528 government schools were in deficit." "The situation was so challenging at 66 schools that they had to call in help from the Department to pay staffing costs." The article goes on to explain that funding allocated to some individual schools in the recent State Budget was only paying off the deficit not directly benefiting the future of the students."*⁶

⁶

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/schools-in-the-red-and-battling-to-balance-books-20160609-gpfy4o.html#ixzz4BE3p4Weg>

Another uncertainty leading to “flight issues” we raised earlier is the lack of clear proposed time lines and funding for upgrades of existing school infrastructure. Schools are drip fed funding through the budget process. For example, Chandler Park PS received \$3million in upgrades in 2016-2017 State Budget. Timing and funding of the final \$1.6million to complete the Master Plan upgrade has not been confirmed. An underfunded “flight” example is Newlands Primary School; it is surrounded by several full or oversubscribed schools but is bypassed by families in spite of good results. This is due to perceptions based on the poor and underfunded infrastructure including, but not limited to, a sloping oval.

Grant process

Schools are having to use the already limited time of administration staff to apply for Grants. Parents in some school communities are also devoting a day a week to researching and making applications to private funding bodies for funding. Such recent grants include the School Pride grant, Musical instruments grant and shade grant.

We strongly believe that these Grants be pre-allocated on need rather than encouraging schools to apply to demonstrate a need. In discussion with local Principals not all are aware that they are able to apply for these Grants. It is an inequity if it is left to individual schools to apply as it further disadvantages school communities which may not have the social capital of parents to help with grant finding and writing.

Parent contributions

In order to compete with other public schools, contributions by parents are increasing from year to year and the costs of public schools are already prohibitive for low socio-economic communities. This is a disgrace for an OECD country which believes in the fair go.

The whole child

Schools should meet the needs of the whole child at every school not a selected handful. Primary schools should not have to apply for additional funding for programs of Science, Music, Sport, Languages, IT and Home Economics. The funding for schools is determined on numbers of students and numbers of students who are in need of specialist help in the classroom. There are also funding allocations dependent on growth, for example from 450 students upwards. We have no real data tracking educational inequity in terms of curricular choices and access within schools apart from occasional studies highlighting some areas of the curricula.

Owing to a shortage of teachers who are maths, science or IT specialists it is well known that some schools are staffing classes with teachers who are teaching outside of their subject matter expertise.

How many schools have qualified PE teachers? Professor Dick Telford from University of Canberra spoke on radio this month (June 2016) about the reduction in hours spent by primary school in physical education in recent years. "Kids are not as fit, not as active, and fatter than they were".

OCOS would like to see a holistic and inclusive school design, uniting infrastructure with pedagogy, curriculum and assessment for the whole child. Infrastructure funding needs to reflect and support what happens inside the school and to make it possible for students, teachers and parents to enjoy being there. Places to retreat can be just as important at places of activity, for example. Places of technology and nature can provide much needed balancing and relief for 21st century children who also want to be mindful and not overwhelmed in their senses.

Safest place

For some children school is the safest place in their whole lives. These children need funding security in the most literal sense to ensure they have access to equal infrastructure and additional services to make attending school the best time of their lives. The full service school needs to be on tap if schools need additional services. Early investment in children is always beneficial for the whole society.

OCOS recommendations for SIF

Our Children, Our Schools recommends the following:

- 1) A clear plan of all proposed school capital works projects for the next 30 years and beyond to be made public and to be based on demonstrated need according to rigorous and regular maintenance audits and projected school numbers
- 2) Meeting the needs of the whole child at each and every public school throughout Victoria
- 3) The provision of an excellent, innovative, engaging and well-staffed education program at every public school in Victoria.
- 4) The infrastructure plan cannot end at the 30 year mark it must continue beyond this period.

School regional level maintenance contracts SRM1

There is a concern that outsourcing the maintenance and cleaning contracts at a regional level would mean increased workloads for already under resourced school Business Managers and office staff who may have no particular training in procurement practices. However, OCOS is interested to see actual modelling if shared services could be proposed in such a way as to release vital resources for other programs.

School resource sharing through technology SRS

OCOS supports the introduction of SRS. We are aware of a number of public secondary schools that already have SRS informally in place. Principals of these schools have implemented SRS to ensure that their students get access to whatever resources they need to study.

The experience at our secondary school is that DET currently determines bandwidth for computer/IT access according to student numbers ie the larger the school, the more access there is to the internet/wifi.

School resource sharing will only work where the school is able to have the appropriate level of IT /technology support and bandwidth.

OCOS suggests that formal networks are already in place, however more could be done to develop them further and encourage collaboration at a regional level. Exact modelling of school resource sharing needs to be developed before opinions can be meaningfully formed as to the feasibility and school level impact of such initiative.

School sector-wide planning information SSW

OCOS agrees that there needs to be more transparency around private sector assets and there might even be ways of sharing resources better across the sectors. However, when it comes to planning schools more effectively, state schools are enshrined in legislation as a right whereas non-government schools are not.

This means the DEFAULT needs to be state school building. The idea of 'proving market share' equates to the residualisation of state schools as non-government schools have generally more flexibility to open schools than their state counterparts. OCOS therefore disagrees with the assumed premise behind the sector wide planning information sharing. The current and future demand for Catholic and non-government schools, and location of these schools should be irrelevant to the adequate and proper funding for new and existing public schools. When there is no government school in the area, parents will consider a Catholic or independent school as a default if within easy commute distance but that's not how 'choice' is meant to operate.

This option of data sharing may be perceived as a low cost to the community. However, it will also provide non-government schools with additional demographic information to grow their own market share. These non-government schools are businesses and are interested in 'creaming off' students. They did not build in a suburb to provide a not for profit facility to assist those most disadvantaged in our community. In the long term creating more non-government schools in areas of high demand forces those families most at need to travel further to public schools and can force these public schools over capacity. Government schools have been consistently shown to be better value for the tax payer as well as the individual.

It could be argued that student numbers at St Francis Xavier Catholic College in Cardinia Shire & the City of Casey for example, have increased because of poor planning and provision for public education. In the early 1990s there was only the original campus in Beaconsfield. In the early 2000s a lack of planning for public schools in the region created an infrastructure gap to accommodate the swell in population growth.

This Catholic College was one of a number of non-government schools in the area that used this planning gap to their advantage. In 2003 the College expanded to Berwick campus⁷, a further expansion took place in 2012 and the school opened a 7-9 campus in Officer.

In comparison, the public government school Officer Secondary College was only opened in 2013 to cater to in excess of 1200 students.⁸ If this is a greenfield site, the following should be reviewed;

- 1) Why was construction left so late in comparison to the independent schools in the area?
- 2) Why such a large student capacity?
- 3) Why not two secondary schools entire side of the Princes Highway? New land developments are on both sides of the highway.

This population explosion in the number of school aged children continues to impact both Cardinia and Casey regions. Families should not feel compelled to enrol in independent schools because there is no proper provision for public schools.

OCOS recommendations for SSW

Our Children, Our Schools recommends the following:

- 1) Strongly opposes the sharing of public school information with Catholic and other non-government schools and does not wish to make public school students 2nd or 3rd rate infrastructure users or travel more than their private counterparts because of funding inequities resulting in wealthier schools having more assets to share. Government schools should be funded well so real education value is front and centre for the tax payer and for Infrastructure Victoria.

⁷ <http://www.sfx.vic.edu.au/OfficerCampus/OfficerCampus.html>

⁸ <http://www.officersc.vic.edu.au/school-profile/story/>

School shortages SSS

How we can learn Free Range Chickens

The ability to effectively plan new schools is possibly being hampered by the unclear legislation regarding the maximum number of students allowed on each site. As of March 2016, the free range chicken industry has clear guidelines regarding site size. A maximum of 10,000 hens per hectare⁹. If the chicken industry can move forward with such reform, the Education State should be aiming to implement similar certainty in legislation for children in Victoria.

Students should not be treated like sardines or caged chickens squished into smaller and smaller blocks of newly acquired land. Clearer number of students per hectare guidelines need to be agreed upon in consultation with educators and the community, implemented and then made publicly available. These documented guidelines would clarify factors such as what is the minimal recommended and acceptable outdoor learning space and indoor learning space ratio per student. It would also give the public certainty in emergency situations such as free corridors for fire escaping and OHS compliance.

Promises, promises, promises of public schools to come

Children in new housing estates are penalised. Developers make empty promises to buyers on new estate Master Plans about school provisioning within walking distance. Developers then finish projects and walk away leaving communities without the 'promised' school/s, blaming State Government for the lack of delivery. The State Government does not tend to consider school provision studies of these new estates prior to the population reaching a minimum of 15,000 residents. Even though the Department of Planning clearly identified locations of schools in the new estate master plans. Some new estates have waited over ten years for a provision study to be conducted by the Department of Education and Training (DET). Why should children of pioneer families in these estates be penalised? Examples of this can be seen in new estates across Victoria in areas such as Point Cook, Keysborough, Mernda and Cardinia Shire. Children in these estates are travelling via car on average 20 minutes to reach their nearest public schools, most are poorly funded and overcrowded.

Land size Greenfield

In Greenfield locations, OCOS does not support the acquisition of smaller school sites as suggested in this Draft Options report. There is clear evidence in the Fishermens Bend area for example that developers made millions of dollars from favourable land rezoning decisions and there is still no adequate planning for schools to satisfy the demand of a population of 80,000.

OCOS recommends that Victoria should introduce a developer school land site donation policy which is not Tax exempt. This would be applied to all new developments and those yet to finalise all stages of released land sales without schools dating back to 2007. Going forward buildings such as display home/ land sale offices could form part of the school infrastructure for example, the administration building for a new school. A tax would be levied for all developers (not to be passed onto landowners) to make sure state schools are provided for the residents of a new SOO.

New school land size in existing & infill suburbs

Despite the assertion that DET uses "relatively sophisticated forecasting tools" for school demand this has not been the reality. Public school action groups in Coburg, Preston, Docklands, Albert Park area for example, have been able to demonstrate that DET figures used to project demand for school places are inaccurate.

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<https://www.finance.nsw.gov.au/about-us/media-releases/agreement-reached-free-range-egg-labelling-standards>

In the meantime, wealthy private schools such as Haileybury have been given permission to build new schools in the city centre without putting forward a needs case.

The MPA¹⁰ has published a non-government school's booklet outlining land size required for a school

"equivalent government schools (i.e. 3.5 ha for a primary school, 8.4 ha for a secondary school and 11.9 ha for a P-12 school)"

However, information regarding the land size for public government schools is extremely hard to locate. We are unable to locate documentation outlining minimum land size requirements. These guidelines should be publicly available not locked away in DET internal policy documents. We recommend that this information is made available to the public.

Outdoor learning spaces

The rise in childhood obesity and the reduction of hours spent on physical education in primary schools have been highlighted again recently by Professor Dick Telford from the University of Canberra. A Parliamentary report from 2006 also highlights overweight and obesity as an issue with Victorian school students.¹¹ 2011 predictions based on the inadequacy to fight obesity in current policies suggest that "this would result in around one third of 5-19 year olds being overweight and/or obese by 2025".¹²

This fact clearly identifies the need to ensure that outdoor learning spaces; playgrounds, gardens beds, science garden beds, oval, basketball courts, soccer area, etc. are large enough for all students to play and learn. The value of learning through play should not be overlooked. It has been found that having more outdoor space reduces stress and anxiety in individuals.

Outdoor spaces should be clearly defined as a learning space; not as a cost cut to land acquisition or a place to sit portable classrooms. Therefore, new school sites whether they are for greenfield areas or in existing suburbia should not have their land size compromised. In fact, a real opportunity exists to develop expertise in the area of life-long learning where old and young people can come together on school grounds and are common practice. We also recommend that there be clear guidelines about playing field space to prevent such spaces being used instead by portable classrooms.

Vertical model & the 3 kilometre radius of Melbourne CBD

OCOS has concerns over the use of the vertical model. OCOS does not support vertical schools outside a 3 kilometre radius of Melbourne CBD. For inner city locations with vertical campus, student density needs to follow agreed ratios per floor and outdoor space; not roof space or terraces.

Public education advocates, such as Trevor Cobold of Save Our Schools¹³, remain concerned that *high rises will sacrifice crucial playing space, light and enough greenery for children.*

¹⁰ www.mpa.vic.gov.au/wp-content/.../PSP%20Note_Non-Government%20Schools.pdf

¹¹ http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/archive/obesity

¹² DHHS, 2011, Future prevalence of overweight and obesity in Australian children and adolescents 2005-2025, https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/getfile/?sc_itemid=%7BAC8FC0C8-20C2-4F74-BEFB-EE1B12A43010%7D&title=Future%20prevalence%20of%20overweight%20and%20obesity%20in%20Australian%20children%20and%20adolescents%202005-2025

¹³ http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/the-rise-of-the-highrise-high-school-20160602-gp9qvy.html?&utm_source=social&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=nc&eid=socialIn%3Afac-14omn0013-optim-nnn%3Aanonpaid-25062014-social_traffic-all-organicpost-nnn-smh-&utm_campaign_code=nocode&utm_promote_channel=social_facebook#ixzz4AwR533Ox

State Government must now plan to put aside funds to buy back expensive land in the CBD where and when it becomes available for public schools. As previously stated, we believe it is also important to seek land donations and taxes from developers for school sites.

The 3 kilometre CBD radius we are referring to above includes the following suburbs; 3000 Melbourne (0 km), 3006 Southbank (0.9 km), 3008 Docklands (1 km), 3003 West Melbourne (1.1 km), 3056 Brunswick Lower (1.2 km), 3006 South Wharf (1.5 km), 3207 Garden City (1.5 km), 3002 East Melbourne (1.6 km), 3051 North Melbourne (1.7 km), 3205 South Melbourne (1.8 km), 3065 Fitzroy (1.9 km), 3053 Carlton South (1.9 km), 3053 Carlton (1.9 km), 3066 Collingwood (2 km), 8002 East Melbourne (2.2 km) , 3052 Parkville (2.4 km), 3121 Cremorne (2.7 km), 3121 Richmond South (2.7 km), 3004 Melbourne (2.8 km), 3121 Richmond North (2.8 km), 3121 Richmond (2.8 km), 3121 Richmond East (2.8 km), 3067 Abbotsford (2.8 km), 3206 Albert Park (3 km), 8873 Port Melbourne (3 km) & 3054 Carlton North (3.3 km).

To ensure equality of access to all facilities, OCOS suggests any school (public, Catholic or non-government) within this inner CBD 3km zone (not outside) which receives government subsidies needs to share facilities within 400 metres of its campus. This 400metres is based on PTV's bus stop measurement.

These shared non-government and Catholic facilities would be utilised at no cost to government schools. A designated number of hours would be allocated by DET to use these shared facilities, not determined by non-government or Catholic sectors. Such facilities could include swimming pools, music, theatre, bike storage and stadiums for everyday and inter-school activities.

Lack of state planning and spending has real effects every day, not just on children's learning but wellbeing

Parents from new suburbs, large infill housing developments, plus inner city areas with medium and high density gentrification feel open hostility towards them and their children at existing state schools, as they are "blamed" for the overcrowding (seen as the reason for it) rather than understanding that the lack of state government planning is the principal factor for this pressure.

For example, Port Melbourne Primary has had an enrolment explosion in the past decade, due in part to the addition of more students from South Melbourne, Southbank and Docklands. To try to make more room for these students, without losing any more play areas for the children, Port Melbourne asked and was lucky enough to receive a new double storey portable classroom which would sit in the footprint of one of their older one storey portable classrooms. All in all, this gave the school an additional, and much needed, two classrooms. This could have been a happy ending for all involved.

The problem with all of this, however, is that the portable classroom removal began last year before school ended in order to allow the builders to have enough time to erect the new one before the start of this school year. Therefore, during the last weeks of school last year, four different year one classes were required to move classrooms, and a part of the oval was off limits due to safety reasons. All of these things were tolerated by the school community because parents knew what they were getting in return. Fast forward to the morning of the first day of school and just a little bit of chaos ensued. The new portable was not ready for the students yet, and four classes were required to find space in an overly full school. The school did their very best on this, moving students into rooms such as the music, art and French classrooms. Parents were told that it would take about two weeks for the new portable to be completed. On February 26 2016, the students were finally moved from their temporary classrooms into their permanent classroom for the year, a full month into the school year.

OCOS has observed many schools with overcrowding issues and so is dismayed to hear about these instances, especially when students are denied the opportunity to access and belong to a school community. OCOS wants all parents and children to feel genuinely a part of the school community, and not just 'tolerated'.

Our alliance of state school campaigns is still growing because Victorian parents want high quality local public schools, they want them to be properly regulated and staffed and they want them to ensure equal access for all. Parents want local schools to be funded in a way that supports the needs of all local children, no matter what their needs are and have the facilities to support good learning and play/ physical activities.

Public schools and public health are complementary in terms of good public policy making. When local schools are absent, it hurts the whole community and deprives them of opportunities to thrive.

Lessons from the 1950s & 1960s

The current lack of infrastructure issue is similar to the population boom of the 1950s. Fortunately we are yet to see students crammed into huts, halls and community centres. Legislative Council Hansard Wednesday 5 February 2014¹⁴ states across Victoria there are 27,000 Light Timber Construction (LTC) buildings over 1750 government schools. Note this Hansard record regarding the total number of schools in Victoria does not match DET report of 1524 government schools in February 2016.¹⁵ Using this LTC model Victoria learnt the hard way, these new schools may have been thrown together quickly and inexpensively. But schools built according to the LTC model were only built to last 20 years¹⁶. Victorian tax payers are now footing the huge ongoing bill to maintain these 60-year-old buildings, whilst at the same time attempting to deliver the approximately 220 plus new schools required to meet the new baby boom.

Victorians want to see high quality school buildings and grounds not a 'quick fix' that will only provide facilities for one school generation. In planning for future needs, also what needs to be included is a plan to rebuild these hastily constructed schools as modern schools of the 21st century. Many of these schools have outlived their use by date, and require ongoing expensive maintenance. New school builds are imperative to cope with demand, but equally are refurbishments and rebuilds where schools are ageing in order to provide adequate facilities. This should form part of any infrastructure plan around public school provision.

Involvement of the private sector through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)

OCOS is concerned about the introduction of PPP to build and manage our new schools as announced in last year's budget. PPPs are expensive and not necessarily the most efficient use of public money.

In The Age March 2015 Kenneth Davidson speaks out against the high cost of PPPs

"Treasury announced that it has shortlisted two "experienced private sector consortia" to compete for the construction of 13 new public primary schools with a capital value of \$223 million. Based on a return of 10 per cent over 25 years, the schools will cost \$24.3 million a year or \$608 million in total compared to \$12.7 million a year or \$317 million if financed by public debt."¹⁷

This recent PPP portfolio contains 15 new schools. Although this portfolio is minimal at this point in time, what will happen to maintenance around the 15-20 years' stage? Buildings will start to see substantial wear and tear at this point in time.

OCOS poses the following questions re PPPs;

- 1) For these existing PPPs sites will new buildings be constructed to meet additional student growth?
- 2) Will portables be ruled out as options for these sites?

¹⁴ <http://hansard.parliament.vic.gov.au/isysquery/8aabdc45-8156-49e2-88f7-a4ede2d45802/1/doc/>

¹⁵ <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/factsandfigures.aspx>

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Light_Timber_Construction_schools

¹⁷ <http://www.theage.com.au/comment/momentum-for-public-private-partnerships-grinds-on-despite-dismal-returns-20150326-1m8rui.html#ixzz4BbHhdix3>

- 3) Will PPP providers only conduct patch up jobs before the 25-year contract review.
- 4) Or will they hand back contracts to DET or another PPP deal without minor or major maintenance issues outstanding.

OCOS recommends that:

- 1) Documents clearly outlining minimum requirements for individual student/ land ratio for both indoor and outdoor learning spaces are made public;
- 2) In Greenfield and infill developments developers' donation of land for school sites dating back to 2007;
- 3) There is no reduction in sizes of new schools in greenfield and infill suburbs; Outdoor learning spaces are seen as crucial as indoor learning space;
- 4) The vertical school only be introduced within the 3 kilometre radius of Melbourne CBD as outlined above;
- 5) Victoria embraces lessons from the 1950s population boom, that a quick cheap fix is not the best solution long term for the future of education provision;
- 6) There be no PPPs to build new schools, complete refurbishments and maintain existing infrastructure. The research shows us that this in fact makes the schools more expensive to build;
- 7) There is impact modelling on introducing a developer tax for state school provision.

Schools with low performance SLP

The impact of funding cuts and uncertainty around delivery of infrastructure not only can lead to overcrowding but means that some public schools are compromising the quality of their programs by employing more graduate teachers to save money. This means that these schools do not have the desirable mix of junior and senior staff required for effective educational collaboration which can lower teacher effectiveness, and therefore educational outcomes for our students.

We need our children to be funded in schools according to their individual needs. The use of CRTs should be reduced and instead staffing ratios should be developed so that 10-20 % is calculated as absent due to one reason or another (sickness, PD, collaboration, planning etc). This would create employment opportunities and increase the effectiveness of learning.

The short term attitude of much decision making and indeed funding cuts, hurts the optimal development of our children. Funding for early screening of learning disabilities and the provision of appropriate interventions to assist these students needs to be increased. We are also still very slow at diagnosing and servicing all forms of disability – with latest figures suggesting 1 in 5 students are affected. This is of particular concern in school populations of low SES and in regional, rural and remote areas. It is particularly concerning that public education has become unaffordable to low income families. In Victoria thousands of school aged students are said to not be at school and the community deserves to know and have transparency in outcomes reporting across all student cohorts. Young people who are not studying, working or training should also be tracked more effectively. It is still a high percentage of Victorians who fit this category and this should be distressing for all Victorians.

The creaming off by private and select-entry public schools and the increasing non-representativeness of even public schools is an indication that we have further entrenched disadvantaged young people and urgent action is required to seek redress. SOOs are part of that plan.

My School & NAPLAN

The creation of the My School webpage & NAPLAN results have had a negative impact on the reputation of

some schools where parents use these as the sole indicator of the worth of the school and the value add that the school is providing to its students. This may mean that parents may overlook a school in their local catchment without even attending a tour.

Literacy & numeracy

Ongoing funding allocated to improve literacy and numeracy is encouraged, through programs such as Mathletics. Plus, encouraging the community to connect further with schools providing children with reading buddies. As we are aware CALD students can at times be disadvantaged if their parents do not speak English as a first language. The cost of the Working with Children Check can be a deterrent to the retired community and SES families volunteering in schools.

OCOS recommendations for SLP

- 1) Implementing the findings of decades of funding the Disadvantaged Schools Program;
- 2) Utilising evidence-based programs which make a difference and funding them beyond pilots;
- 3) Additional training for teachers in accommodating learning differences/ disabilities of all students in mainstream classrooms;
- 4) Increase in targeted funding to improve literacy and numeracy, e.g. utilising learning analytics and investing in evaluating educational technologies and software programs so the taxpayer is assured they work, e.g. Mathletics and bringing back Mathematics and Literacy coaches through the Regions;
- 5) Encouraging the community to connect further with schools by acting as reading buddies for children. As we are aware CALD students can at times be disadvantaged if their parents do not speak English as a first language. The cost of the Working with Children Check can be a deterrent to the retired community and low SES families volunteering in schools;
- 6) Encouragement of collaborations between kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools such as the Elwood Learning Hub where students of all ages experience activities in each setting and older students assist younger students with learning projects, reading, sport and mathematics;
- 7) Supports in place to improve literacy of parents with CALD backgrounds which in turn will assist with individual student growth. Some schools in south east Melbourne already offer English language courses.

Thank you for your time to read this submission. OCOS is happy to elaborate on any statements and provide further feedback should Infrastructure Victoria have additional questions.

OCOS looks forward to further deliberations.