

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose of the Inquiry

To examine the current state of public school infrastructure across all jurisdictions, assess future needs in light of demographic, technological, and pedagogical trends, and recommend policy and funding reforms to ensure safe, inclusive, and future-ready learning environments for every child.

2. Scope of the Inquiry

The Inquiry will consider:

The importance of infrastructure

- Australian and international evidence on the relationship between school infrastructure and:
- Student outcomes (academic achievement, attendance, engagement, motivation, behaviour and wellbeing).
- Principal, teacher and staff effectiveness, motivation, wellbeing, engagement, job satisfaction, retention and career intentions.

The condition and safety of public school facilities

- The physical condition and adequacy of classrooms, amenities, facilities and digital infrastructure in public schools.
- The extent to which current school facilities support modern teaching and learning, including a full range of academic and vocational pathways as well as student wellbeing, inclusion and belonging.
- Whether schools meet sustainability, safety, accessibility and compliance standards and are adequately maintained.

Future needs

- Projected enrolment growth, demographic trends and expected changes in the student population.
- The future infrastructure requirements of public schools to meet complex and diverse student needs and successfully prepare students for the workforce or further study.
- The integration of technology into teaching and learning and future technology requirements for public schools.
- Climate resilience and sustainability requirements and ways to improve the energy efficiency of schools.

Equity and Inclusion

- School infrastructure gaps in low-SES, regional, remote, Aboriginal communities and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Capital investments that would help schools to improve the education and support of students with additional needs and increase family and community engagement, e.g. full service schools.
- Requirements to ensure public schools are inclusive and culturally safe.

Funding

- Current and projected capital expenditure in public schools by state and territory governments and the Commonwealth.
- The long term investment strategies required to ensure every child learns in a safe, modern and well-resourced school.
- The educational, economic and social benefits of an increased investment in public school infrastructure.

Consultation

The Inquiry will consult with:

- Public school principals, teachers, education support staff and families.
- The Commonwealth, State and territory governments and education agencies.
- Principal Associations, Education stakeholders, unions, community and not-for-profit organisations, researchers, youth and student bodies.
- Organisations representing Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people, rural and remote Australians, young people experiencing disadvantage and students with disability.