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*Member for Maiwar ▲*

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Inner West Primary School Project Team  
Building Future Schools  
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## **Submission on the new primary school for Maiwar - third round of consultation**

To the Building Future Schools team

### **Introduction**

I welcome the opportunity to provide further feedback in this third round of consultation about the new inner west primary school project. Firstly, I'd like to thank the Building Future Schools team for making themselves available to meet twice, once with me and once with my team. I also appreciate the BFS team taking the time to respond to written questions from my office.

I'm happy to give feedback on the provided four page [Project Update](#) and the further plans and drawings published around 28 April 2022. However, neither I nor local residents have seen the Concept Master Plan to which the Project Update refers, and on which the current round of consultation is apparently focussed.

In my last two submissions ([here](#) and [here](#)), I made it clear that my preference and the preference of the Maiwar community was for the Department to purchase private land for the new school. It's clear that neither the Toowong Bowls Club site nor the previously proposed Indooroopilly State High School site are ideal locations for a new primary school. I see it as a failure of long-term planning that the Department has decided to proceed with the old Toowong Bowls Club location, rather than securing a more suitable location.

I also take this opportunity to confirm my position that a new primary school in the inner west school is needed urgently. As the Department is aware, Indooroopilly State School and Ironside State School are operating at or beyond their capacity. With this in mind, I urge the Department to do whatever they can to make sure the school opens day one 2024 as promised.

### **Confusion around site selection**

The Education Minister made statements on 19 April 2022 that led many in the community to believe that the Toowong Bowls Club site is being reconsidered as the location for the new inner west school. Based on my communications with the Department, I understand that the Building Future Schools team is not reconsidering the site selection, but is instead continuing with previously planned work on flood risk assessment and mitigation.

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## **Limitations of the second round of consultation**

### *Short consultation period*

The predominant feedback I heard in this round of consultation is that it was too short to be useful. Three weeks of consultation does not allow for broad community awareness of the consultation or sufficient time to write a detailed submission.

There was also limited notice of the Department's drop-in information sessions, with only 10 days between the consultation opening on Monday 18 April (a public holiday) and the first drop-in session. Many locals told me they would've liked to attend a session but they weren't able to do so given the short notice. I was able to attend the session on Thursday 28 April, and I know many in the community would have appreciated more opportunity to provide direct feedback at this stage of the process.

### *Limited and unclear information*

A number of local residents contacted my office confused by the four page Project Update and the plans released on 28 April 2022. Unfortunately the images and diagrams in both were either of low quality or missing labels. This meant that some people struggled to read or understand the diagrams. Following my feedback, I was glad that the Department released better quality images and diagrams on around 28 April 2022, but there were unfortunately some issues with the legibility of the labels on these images.

The further documents released around 28 April included plans for pedestrian, cycling and public transport access and traffic movement. The delay was unfortunate, given many in the community had already filled out the survey or emailed in their submission before this date.

In my meeting with the Department, they indicated that they only provided a four page Project Update, as they did not want to overwhelm people with too much information. However, the consistent feedback that I have received from residents is that when the Department provides only limited information, it makes it more difficult to provide useful feedback.

While I recognise the time pressure for delivery of this project, I believe it's crucial that this consultation process be done well. When residents view the Department's consultation as inadequate or perfunctory, it leads to community distrust of both the Department and the project.

I understand that the next round of consultation will be the statutory period under the Ministerial Infrastructure Designation process, which requires the publication of substantially more detailed impact assessment and underlying technical work. I encourage the Department to make this material available as early as possible to allow for detailed scrutiny by interested residents.

## **Flooding**

Flood risk has emerged as one of the major concerns about construction of a primary school at the old Toowong Bowls Club site, which is entirely unsurprising given the flooding at the site in February 2022. I appreciate that the Department released some information in the Project Update regarding the proposed building heights relative to historical flood levels, but the limited information makes it difficult to provide detailed feedback. There is a particular need for more detailed information about creek flooding, overland flow, and upstream and downstream flooding analysis than what is provided in the Project Update.

While the Project Update indicates that "A flood expert has conducted a school flood risk assessment and developed a flood risk management plan", my conversations with the Department indicate that this assessment and plan are still in development, and that they will be made available as part of the MID process.

Based on the Project Update, I am glad to see that every classroom will be above the Q500 flood level, and that both classrooms and support space areas will be above Q100, 2011 and (based my own personal observations at the site) the 2022 flood levels. I am also glad to see the causeway linking to Gailey Rd as the primary flood egress on foot.

#### *Transport implications from flooding*

I welcome the Department's consideration around the transport implications of a potential flooding event at the site. I support in principle the Department's proposal to regrade Heroes Ave, given how regularly that street floods, but I note that the hydrological consequences of any regrading here is a critical piece of information in the flood risk assessment and management plan.

I understand that Council was not able to provide the BFS team with any information on how frequently Heroes Ave floods, and I remain concerned that the Department has underestimated the frequency and consequences of Heroes Ave being inundated, even in less severe rainfall events, as a result of overland flow. While the regrading of Heroes Ave will allow site access through the easternmost entry/exit (into the undercover parking), any loss of access along Heroes Ave as a result of heavy rainfall would be severely disruptive of traffic in this area, especially at school pick up or drop off times.

I raised this issue in a recent meeting with the Department. The BFS team indicated they're not especially concerned about this issue, given their understanding was that this site would not be inundated by overland flow very often, and that any rainfall event severe enough to inundate this section of Heroes Ave would also cause flooding in other parts of the road network in Toowong.

With respect, I believe this is incorrect, and I encourage the Department to collect whatever information is available about localised flooding here.

My understanding, based on my own experience and from speaking with long-time residents, is that this section of Heroes Ave floods regularly - sometimes multiple times in a year after significant rainfall - and is the first (and often the only) section of road in this area that is flood affected.

This scenario must be adequately accounted for as part of the flood risk assessment and management plan given the fact that flooding on Heroes Ave will disrupt school drop off and pick up even outside of riverine flooding events.

#### *Sewage pumping station*

The site is located beside a Queensland Urban Utilities pumping station that is responsible for moving sewage through the network of pipes to sewage treatment plants.

During the 2022 floods, water and effluent appeared to flow out of this pumping station from relatively early in the weather event. Based on my conversations with QUU workers on site at the pumping station in the week after the flood, I understand that this is an inevitable and widespread impact of major flooding events on the sewerage system, and similar effluent release occurred at various places around Brisbane.

Nevertheless, the area around the old Toowong Bowls Club smelled of sewage for weeks after the flood, and surrounding (but lower-lying) Council assets were closed for some time.

I'm not aware of any information released by the Department in this round of consultation about how this issue would be managed, either during construction or while the school is operating. This is one of the most visceral impacts of flooding, and is a key concern for some residents.

## **Ecological values and Flying Fox roost**

### *Flying foxes*

As the Department is well aware, many residents and I are concerned about the impact of the new school on the neighbouring flying fox colony. I outlined these concerns in detail [in the last round of consultation](#).

I was pleased to hear the Department's commitment that it will not attempt to disperse the colony. It was also reassuring to hear the Department indicate that the construction process will be planned around and responsive to the needs of the colony, including the breeding cycle.

It is important that the Department produces a detailed ecological assessment and in-situ management plan for the flying fox colony and make this available for scrutiny during the MID consultation. This should include information on any adjustments to the construction process to accommodate the colony. To ensure community support for this project, it's essential that the Department is upfront with locals, advocacy organisations and wildlife rescuers about any impacts this project may have on the colony.

Some residents and others interested in flying fox conservation have raised concerns that the undercroft area of the Learning Hub may act to trap flying foxes, so I would encourage the Department to address that particular risk.

I am also seeking the Department's confirmation that the MID documents will include a long-term management plan that addresses any risks to students from the presence of flying foxes so close to the school, including any animals that may die on or near the grounds.

### *Tree clearing*

The Department indicated in one of our meetings that some tree clearing will likely be necessary for this project. I want to stress that the Department should do everything possible to avoid clearing large established trees, and ensure replanting to compensate for any losses. To facilitate proper community feedback, the Department's documentation in the MID consultation must include the details of all the trees to be lost, including any in Jack Cook Memorial Park that might be lost to the road upgrades at Gailey Rd and Heroes Ave.

### *Toowong Creek*

In the last round of consultation, [my submission](#) highlighted the ecological significance of Toowong Creek itself. My hope is that the Department carefully considers the preservation of this crucial urban habitat within their planning process. Within the next round of consultation, I would like the Department to release information as to how the building process avoids affecting the waterway corridor.

## **Contamination**

Since this site was first considered back in 2021, locals have raised concerns regarding soil contamination at the site as a result of the historical use of the site and surrounding areas as dumps. My understanding is that the Department was investigating this issue late last year, but I have not seen any information

about the outcomes of these investigations. I encourage the earliest possible release of land contamination assessment to explain to the community the extent of the contamination and how it is proposed to be addressed.

## Transport

My priority is to make it simple, safe and pleasant for families and students to walk, ride or get the bus to the new school. Every school generates some localised congestion at pick up and drop off time, so my priority is to minimise the number of families who are forced to drive.

A new school closer to home will give many hundreds of families the chance to walk, cycle or scoot to school, which should actually reduce congestion, but only if we get the infrastructure right.

It is disappointing that the Department has not released an indicative catchment for this round of consultation, especially given my understanding that one has existed for over 6 months. Information about the proposed catchment is crucial for getting meaningful feedback from local residents on the transport implications of the project, and especially in relation to new active and public transport requirements.

For this reason, I understand that a lot of the transport feedback provided by residents to the Department will relate to the streets directly surrounding the school site. I urge the Department to not take this feedback as indicating that these are the only streets that need improvement in the area.

### *Pedestrian Movement Study*

I understand from our conversations with the Department that it is currently undertaking a Pedestrian Movement Study that considers both cycling and walking, and that the results of this study will inform further possible pedestrian and cycling safety upgrades. I also understand that it will be published as part of the MID documentation.

### *My New School Streets Survey - preliminary snapshot of results*

As the Department may be aware, I have been conducting my own transport survey - the *New School Safe Streets* survey. Unfortunately, I won't be able to provide a detailed summary of the results, as the closing date is 8 May 2022. Once the survey is complete and a detailed summary prepared, I would be grateful for the opportunity to present the results to the BFS team.

For the purposes of this round of consultation and to inform the Department's own Pedestrian Movement Study, please see below a preliminary snapshot of our survey results. Unfortunately these suggestions also suffer from the lack of any published indicative catchment to inform them.

Residents identified the following **pedestrian safety hotspots** in the area around the school:

- Dangerous Intersections:
  - Gailey Rd / Heroes Ave
  - Gailey five ways (Swann Rd / Gailey Rd / Indooroopilly Rd)
  - Heroes Ave / Indooroopilly Rd
  - Sir Fred Schonell Dr / Gailey Rd
  - Brisbane St / Josling St / Herbert St
- Narrow, incomplete or non-disability accessible footpaths:
  - Gailey Rd

- Heroes Ave
- Indooroopilly Rd
- Swann Rd
- Alpha St
- Commonly recommended improvements:
  - Footpath widening (esp Gailey Rd)
  - Signalised pedestrian crossings
  - Zebra or raised wombat crossings
  - New or upgraded footpaths
  - Pedestrian bridge/overpass
  - Safer and lower speed limits

Residents identified the following **cycling safety hotspots** in the area around the school, and requested safe, physically separated on-road bike lanes or wider footpaths:

- Dangerous corridors and intersections:
  - Gailey Rd
  - Indooroopilly Rd
  - Brisbane St shared path between the school side and Bicentennial Bikeway
  - Gailey five ways
  - Sir Fred Schonell Dr / Gailey Rd intersection
  - Gailey Rd / Heroes Ave intersection
  - Heroes Ave

Residents requested the following **public transport upgrades**:

- A dedicated Translink school bus route or routes to service areas of the catchment that are not accessible on foot.
- More mainstream Translink bus services, especially around school start and finish times.
- Large bus shelters with adequate shade. I note that this will be a particular concern for students waiting for buses on the eastern side of Gailey Rd facing the western afternoon sun.

#### *My position on selected transport upgrades*

The Department has outlined a very short list of proposed public and active transport upgrades in this round of consultation. As mentioned above I am hoping and am anticipating that the MID consultation stage includes more upgrades focussed on active transport.

#### Pedestrian safety:

- **Heroes Ave:** I welcome the proposed signalised pedestrian crossing on Heroes Ave at Gailey Rd but it is unfortunate this is the only new safe crossing proposed.
- **Gailey Rd:** I am concerned that the Department has not committed to any new pedestrian crossings on Gailey Rd, instead relying on the existing island refuge crossings between Heroes Ave and Prospect Tce and the signalised crossing at Sir Fred Schonell Drive. Gailey Rd is a busy commuter road that is not safe for young people to cross. Having such a long distance between Gailey Rd pedestrian crossings (200m+) risks students crossing without protection. In my experience as the MP for this area, many parents would not consider the existing island refuge crossing adequate protection on such a busy road.
- **Uncontrolled slip lanes at Gailey Rd / Sir Fred Schonell Dr:** Under the Department's proposal, the only signalised pedestrian crossing across Gailey Rd will be the existing crossing at the Sir

Fred Schonell Drive/Gailey Rd intersection, which until recently included two dangerous uncontrolled slip lanes. I understand that the slip lane on the northern side of the intersection is currently being upgraded by BCC, but for school students the southern one is more important. It will carry every single student wishing to cross Gailey Rd and to catch the bus, and most students walking to St Lucia. Cars heading to and from UQ sometimes take the corners very fast and often ignore waiting pedestrians. I would like to see the team commit to remove or signalise the southern slip lane.

- **Indooroopilly Rd / Heroes Ave intersection:** Local residents know this intersection is dangerous due to high speeds and poor driver behaviour. They have been telling me since before the school was proposed. It is very concerning that the Department has not committed to any upgrades of the existing refuge island crossings, especially since both will be very close to a busy drop off zone on Heroes Ave.
- **Brisbane St / Herbert St / Josling St intersection:** I have received specific feedback, which I agree with, that the very wide and complex intersection of Brisbane St / Josling St / Herbert St 300m north of the site is dangerous for pedestrians. It includes two unsignalised slip lanes on the main north-south route from Toowong Village to the school site along the western side of Brisbane St. This is clearly not an acceptable outcome for primary school students. I would like to see the Department remove or signalise all slip lanes at this intersection to improve safety to students and all pedestrians and cyclists using this footpath.
- **Crossings on Burns Rd:** Students accessing the school from the northern side of Moggill Rd in Taringa or west Toowong will most likely approach Perrin Park by crossing Burns Rd, either from Campbell St or Alpha St. The two existing crossing points on Burns Rd are the Alpha St / Indooroopilly Rd roundabout and the pedestrian refuge south of Josling St. Both of these are refuge island crossings, with no other signage or road markings. With the number of students and increased traffic using these streets, it is essential that the Department provide raised wombat crossings or traffic signals at one or both of these crossings.
- **Footpaths:** It's unfortunate to see that this round of consultation does not include any planned improvements for footpaths aside from the area directly outside the school frontage. Many of the footpaths around the school site are narrow or incomplete and not safe for large numbers of pedestrians. Gailey Rd and Sir Fred Schonell Dr are commonly mentioned difficult pedestrian routes. In particular, there is a persistent issue that apartment complexes on Sir Fred Schonell Drive leave rubbish bins on the footpath once per week, blocking safe pedestrian access. The next round of consultation must include a commitment to and details of planned footpath upgrades.

#### Cycling safety:

I'm glad to see the Department is including separate bike access and cycling facilities in the proposed design. Whilst these facilities will help, I believe many will not brave the busy commuter roads unless more is done for cycling safety.

It is not accurate to claim, as the Department has, that any footpath (no matter how narrow) is a "cycling route". The gold standard, which we should aim for here, is a physically protected on road bike lane similar to the outstanding infrastructure outside the newly constructed Brisbane South State Secondary College.

I was disappointed to hear the Department has no intention to install bike lanes around the school on the basis that cycling among primary school students is low. With respect, this is at least partly because of the unsafe road environment created in part by this very attitude and the lack of safe cycling infrastructure around almost all schools. The Department should be using this project as an opportunity to create a very cycling friendly school, but that cannot happen without proper infrastructure. This attitude also ignores the growing cohort of parents who ride their kids to school on cargo bikes, often with electric pedal assistance.

I also stress that dedicated cycle lanes in this area would benefit many others in the community, including those who commute to UQ or the CBD.

#### Vehicle movement:

I support the signalisation of the intersection of Heroes Ave and Gailey Rd.

I am seeking clarity on the proposed layout of the Gailey Rd / Sir Fred Schonell Drive intersection. The Gailey Rd leg of this intersection currently includes two northbound through traffic lanes and one right turning lane for vehicles accessing Sir Fred Schonell Drive. This right turning lane was recently extended southwards to accommodate extra vehicles. The Department's Public Transport Movement drawings show a wide footpath and an indented bus bay on the western side of Gailey Rd outside the school frontage, but only two northbound through traffic lanes on Sir Fred Schonell Drive with no right turn lane. In general, I support reallocating road space away from private vehicles and towards public and active transport, but if this tradeoff is proposed, it should be made explicit and clearly justified in the Department's MID materials.

I also encourage the Department to consider creating a permanent 40 km/h zone around the school campus. The feedback we have received from locals is that the streets surrounding the school are busy commuter roads that often see poor driver behaviour. A permanent 40km/h zone gives drivers no excuse for poor behaviour during or after school hours. It would improve safety for users of Perrin Park and for the many children who use athletics facilities at Jack Cook Memorial Park, home of the Toowong Harriers.

#### Public transport feedback:

My hope is that it will be convenient for students and families to take public transport to and from the new school. Upgrading the existing bus stop on Gailey Rd is a great first step. I strongly support more dedicated school bus routes and mainstream bus services. At a minimum, the Department must ensure that every part of the new catchment beyond the 400m walking distance threshold is accessible via public transport.

### **Building Design**

Unfortunately, I can't provide a lot of feedback on the building design, as not a lot of information has been released. One aspect of the design I would like to highlight is disability access. As Queensland's first "vertical primary school", this is something of a new frontier for the Department. My understanding is that the plan is for three lift wells, including one which will sit wholly above the Q500 level to ensure flood immunity.

### **Community Facility**

I'm glad to see the Department has taken onboard community feedback and that the school building includes a community facility. I appreciate that this facility will be able to operate separately from the



school campus, including its own separate entrance, as this allows for community groups to use the space both in and out of school hours.

While this facility is very welcome, it does not truly compensate for the loss of the Toowong Bowls Club facility, simply on the basis of its much smaller size. With this in mind, my hope is that any compensation for the loss of greenspace (whether financial compensation or a land swap agreed to by the BCC) should also contemplate provision of a community facility.

### **Green space**

In my previous submissions I stressed to the Department that the new school project must result in no net loss of green space for the local community. Green space is being continually lost on the west side, and the provision of other necessary community infrastructure, like this school, cannot be allowed to contribute to that trend.

The Minister put on record in Parliament that a proposal is under active consideration to offer Council a parcel of land owned by the Education Department as compensation for the approximately 11,000m<sup>2</sup> Bowls Club site. I understand the parcel under consideration is an area of just under 7,500m<sup>2</sup> at the northern end of the QASMT campus, between Toowong Creek, Vera St and Fewings St - commonly referred to as the "Vera Street Commons".

I'd like to reiterate my stance that Vera St Commons is not adequate compensation for the loss of the Bowls Club site. Not only is Vera St Commons a significantly smaller patch of land, it's land that is already used as greenspace by the community - even accommodating a community garden. While this land is owned by the Education Department, I understand it's very unlikely that the Department will build on this land.

I have previously made my position on this clear in correspondence with [the Education Minister](#), [the Lord Mayor](#), and [the local Councillor](#). If Council is offered this parcel of land by the State Government by way of a land swap, I believe they should reject it.

It's essential that the State Government provides Council compensation that is sufficient to purchase a site equivalent to the former Bowls Club site. For a site to be considered equivalent, it should be in close proximity to the Bowlo, of a similar size and include scope for a replacement community facility. If the State Government is not willing to provide adequate compensation, they should purchase an equivalent site to accommodate for loss of greenspace and community facilities.

The former ABC site would be the perfect site to compensate for the loss of the Bowlo site. The ABC site is of a similar size, within 1 km of the Bowlo, close to new high density residential developments, and has a potential replacement community facility in Middenbury House. This proposal has wide community support and would benefit many within the community. It would be unfortunate to miss such a rare opportunity to secure a new riverside park before it's lost to private development.

### **MID process**

I understand from my discussions with the Department that many crucial documents will be included in the next round of consultation, which is required under the Ministerial Infrastructure Designation (MID) process. In our discussions, the Department has committed to including:

- A Flood Risk Management Plan, including flood modelling for overland flow, upstream and downstream flooding analysis;
- An indicative school catchment;

- The Pedestrian Movement Study and proposed active transport improvements recommended by that Study;
- Plans for tree clearing and detailed ecological assessment work.

Given the extensive information that is planned to be released during the MID process, it's crucial that the community is given sufficient time to understand the application materials and contribute meaningfully to the consultation. The minimum 15 business day consultation period provided for in the Planning Act 2016 is patently inadequate for consultation of this nature.

I implore the Department to give residents more than the bare minimum 15 business day consultation period to both understand this information and provide detailed feedback.

## Conclusions

The overwhelming feedback I have heard from residents is that they struggled to contribute or contribute meaningfully in this round of consultation. This can be attributed to a short consultation period, the paucity of detailed information on the project, and many folks' inability to attend a drop-in session and ask questions. It's crucial that the Department take this feedback into consideration during the MID process. I urge the Department to not take the limited number of submissions during this round of consultation as an indication that the community doesn't have strong feelings about this project.

I'm looking forward to being able to provide more detailed feedback during the MID process, the outcome of my New School Safe Streets survey in the coming weeks. I trust that the Department provides the community with detailed information on all aspects of the project including flood mitigation, impacts on the flying fox colony, indicative catchment mapping, and active transport upgrades.

As the plans progress, I would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet regularly with the BFS project team and the Project Reference Group, which has not met since September 2021. This kind of collaboration is vital to facilitate community involvement in the planning process.

I very much appreciate your work on this project, and look forward to collaborating closely in the months and years to come.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office on 07 3737 4100 if you would like to discuss any of the issues raised in this submission in more detail.

Kind regards,



Michael Berkman MP