



9 November 2020
PO Box 539
Port Macquarie, NSW, 2444

The Honorable Sarah Mitchell MLC
Minister for Education
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

Through:
Leslie Williams MP,
Member for Port Macquarie.
Suite 6
27 Grant St,
Port Macquarie NSW 2444

Dear Minister,

As the elected members of the Hastings Secondary College, Port Macquarie Campus P&C Association, and on behalf of the Westport Campus P&C Association, I am writing to you on behalf of Hastings Secondary College community. This letter to you addresses our concerns over the current infrastructure upgrades planned for Hastings Secondary College Port Macquarie Campus and Hastings Secondary College Westport Campus.

The objects and functions of P&C Associations incorporated under the Federations of Parents and Citizens Association of NSW include:

- Object: to assist in providing facilities and equipment for the school and in promoting the recreation and welfare of the students at the school.
- Function: to report, when requested by the Minister for Education and Training, on the material requirements of the school and to advise on the subject of maintenance of the school, alterations and additions to school facilities, and the selection of new sites

Hastings Secondary College Port Macquarie Campus is no longer fit for purpose. Since 2008, many promises have been made to the campus for infrastructure revitalisation funding, but minimal financing has been invested at the campus. This is also evident at Westport Campus, built in the 1980's, which has not had any significant maintenance invested at the campus.

HASTINGS SECONDARY COLLEGE PORT MACQUARIE CAMPUS P&C ASSOCIATION

EXCELLENCE INNOVATION OPPORTUNITY SUCCESS

PORT MACQUARIE CAMPUS Admin: | PH: (02) 6583 1844 | FAX: (02) 6584 1632

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Maintenance in some areas of the Port Macquarie campus has stopped since 2012. These areas are now in such a state of disrepair that we are told we are considered the worst in the state. We understand that much of this maintenance ceased due to the long standing promises the governments continues to make, to invest in the urgently needed infrastructure revitalisation of our campuses.

On 30th October 2019, a consultative process was undertaken by the Department of Education with the Port Macquarie and Westport Campus P&C Associations and teaching staff of the Hastings Secondary College Port Macquarie and Westport Campuses. The significant constraints with current teaching spaces at the Port Macquarie Campus and the urgent need for upgrades on both campuses were addressed during the consultation and in the documented outcomes. The workshop identified that in all areas of teaching, the campuses cannot provide to students;

- Spaces for collaboration
- Spaces for creation and experimental learning
- Spaces for presentation or demonstration of learning
- Spaces for small group study or discussion
- Spaces for individual work
- Spaces for large group meetings

In February 2020, Port Macquarie Campus P&C Association hosted a community engagement session for the budgeted infrastructure upgrade for Hastings Secondary College. This session introduced the concept and funding proposed for the revitalisation of Hastings Secondary College Westport Campus and Hastings Secondary College Port Macquarie Campus. Unfortunately, expenditure and funding allocated to this project and the extent of works was not made clear during this meeting. Plans and options presented by the Department did not resemble anything like what had been originally presented to over 50 parents and citizens.

In March 2020, The Department of Education Infrastructure project team provided initial concepts for the Hastings Secondary College Upgrades. Representatives from the P&C Association were included as representatives at this community were provided with a face-to-face information session. There were a significant number of issues that were raised at this session, especially the lack of many components of the proposed upgrade, included in the 2018 Masterplan.

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There has been no community consultation since this March 2020 as the intended session to inform the Parent community, on 25 March 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. The Infrastructure teams, like all of us during COVID, advised they would look to engage digitally, but this did not happen.

Recent engagement has commenced (October 2020) through the Project Reference Group (PRG), and a member from each P&C Association has been invited to this forum. There is, however, minimal opportunity for us as P&C Association representatives to engage with the community on the PRG outcomes, due to it being a confidential process. The Department conveners of the PRG have indicated at the first meeting, that the time period for consultation on the intended upgrades is completed, and the project has transitioned to the next phase.

While we remain pleased to be seeing some upgrades planned for both campuses, we feel that it's important to raise some significant issues that need to be addressed, for this project to be successful. We have listed these issues below.

Communication and Engagement

As previously discussed, there has been no community and minimal teacher engagement regarding this project, since March 2020. The project appears to have transitioned to a new pre-construction phase, with concept designs developed and pre-tendering for detailed designs occurring. The first stage of ground works is planned for December 2020/January 2021.

With such a rush to commence this project, we see there will be little opportunity for the department to provide any community engagement forums. Additionally, the P&C Association members of the PRG are limited by what messages they can provide to their communities due to stringent and binding confidentiality requirements imposed by the PRG. It is inappropriate that the community is not appropriately engaged and unable to provide a voice or feedback on such a large project that impacts such a large section of the Port Macquarie community.

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Campus sizing

The current proposal for upgrades to the Port Macquarie campus is based on modelling that indicates the campus's ultimate capacity should be around 650 students. Currently, the number of students at Port Macquarie Campus is 764, which is much higher than the Infrastructure modelling suggests. Adopting these numbers has resulted in the campus being advised that they will lose at least two dedicated science laboratories, a woodworking/metalwork room and staff room spaces.

The P&C Association are concerned that this upgrade is not taking into account the current growth in the Port Macquarie region and its undeniable impact on the campus student numbers. This has been especially evident in 2020, with the COVID impacts providing incentive for city dwellers to move to regional locations. Currently the campus is at capacity and is now closed to all students that are out of zone. Already there are 6 streams in year 7 classes and for next year there will be 6 streams for year 8 and year 9.

It is our opinion that there are a number of other factors that are extremely likely to result in an increase in student numbers in the coming years including; improved leadership from our executive team; likely economic factors resulting in less parents being able to afford private school fees; and these planned campus upgrades with improved facilities attracting students previously lost to the private system returning to public education.

These proposed infrastructure upgrades will result in a loss of teaching spaces due to inaccurate and out-of-date modelling. This is negligent and will result in inadequate teaching spaces for our students. It is also an inefficient use of government funding resulting in the government having to undertake future upgrades that should be planned for now. This will only increase the disruption to our students, who are already going to be disrupted for at least the next two to three years. Proper project management would indicate that it makes logical sense to complete all works required to minimise costs and disruption.

Additionally, to cater for student teaching spaces during the upgrades, additional portable classrooms are being provided. These will be located on the large sports oval at the school. Given that the upgrade is not going to address the current student numbers, we are fearful that these buildings will be required to remain as permanent installations, to ensure we have the appropriate number of classrooms. This is not a good outcome for Port Macquarie campus and our students, including taking up green-space for our students

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2018 Master Plan

There are many upgrades that were proposed in the 2018 Master Plan, that have not been included in the upgrades. These are listed below.

Port Macquarie Campus

- New 2-3 story library, senior study and STEM Lab
- Refurbishment and extension of the Administration Building including new entrance to the school Café to be operated by the hospitality learning unit
- Refurbishment of the existing community hall to a performing arts centre
- Relocation & refurbishment of the COLA and sports court
- Demolish of C block and construction of a new 2-3 story building housing TAS, Visual arts etc
- Relocation of science to the existing library and refurbish to reflect a flexible and adaptable learning environment

The upgrades to the Port Macquarie Campus ultimately provide some new facilities, however only 12 of our 30 plus classrooms, which are all very aged and outdated, actually end up being refurbished.

Westport Campus

- New COLA for the basketball courts for all weather activities
- New Forecourt

It has also been identified with infrastructure project teams, on numerous occasions that there are other facilities required for the Westport Campus of which answers have not been forthcoming. These include:

- CAPA Facility or a combination CAPA/PDHPE sporting facility.
- Replacement of roofing which currently leaks throughout the school and has caused health issues of staff and students.
- Modernise existing colours throughout the campus in keeping with the front entrance and works happening at Port Macquarie Campus to ensure that Westport Campus is not seen as the poor cousin of Port Macquarie Campus and in keeping with the College vision – One College Many Opportunities.

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On Thursday 5 November, Port Macquarie Campus P&C Association hosted a Parent Lounge community engagement session on the Hastings Secondary College Infrastructure project. 93 community members participated via zoom and asked many questions or which some have been raised in this letter. Other community issues include:

- Sustainability of build to include solar power and air-conditioning
- Front entrance does not reflect the teaching practices of the College and has been likened to a 'bus stop'. The front entrance has to be exactly the same on both campuses.
- The front entrance needs to have access for parents and community and access for students with the ability to lock areas so it minimises truancy of students which affects attendance data.
- The concept for the architectural look of the entrances and the new CAPA building proposed for the Port Macquarie Campus is outdated and does nothing to modernise the look of the school.

The upgrades planned for each campus, do not provide the outcomes expected and promised to our communities. They do not address the requirements identified in the 2018 Master Plan, they do not provide the required number of learning spaces for our students and they do not fully address the issues of outdated and aging facilities and classroom spaces across the College at both campuses.

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We would like to urge that you, as the Minister or Education,

- Ensure that community engagement and collaboration on the infrastructure upgrades, is a priority for the Department as they manage this upgrade project.
- Enquire about why the department is using modelling to determine upgrade requirements, that is clearly outdated and does not reflect reality, and ensure that the modelling is updated as a priority, to reflect the current numbers at each campus.
- Ensure that the funding provided enables the full scope of works, as proposed in the 2018 Master Plan, to ensure that all our aged and out of date facilities and classrooms are upgraded to meet current teaching and safety standards and match the facilities provided by other public and private schools in the region. This includes backlog maintenance to occur at each campus during the build phase (whilst there is already disruption to our community)
- Ensure that all upgrades occur during this project (2021 to 2023), to minimise further upgrades and future disruption to our students.

We look forward to your response to this letter and your assurances that the much-needed infrastructure revitalisation for the Hastings Secondary College campuses, are fit for purpose and meet the objectives and proposed outcomes of the 2018 Master Plan.

Yours Sincerely

Belinda Green

President, Port Macquarie Campus P&C

Hastings Secondary College, Port Macquarie Campus & Westport Campus P&C

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