

Department of Education-School Infrastructure
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Re: Narrabeen North Public School - Submission by Health Promotion, Northern Sydney Local Health District

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the development of Narrabeen North Public School which will be within the proposed Narrabeen Education Precinct. Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD) Health Promotion is committed to ensuring that the built environment has a net-positive impact on the health and well-being of individuals and the wider community, including our schools.

We commend NSW Department of Education (DoE) on developing the Narrabeen Education Precinct, with the aim of providing permanent learning spaces and upgrading core facilities at Narrabeen North Public School, which will also ensure they meet enrolment demand in the area. It is particularly pleasing that the DoE will share the education precinct's sporting facilities with the general community.

It is important that playground space is not diminished when providing permanent learning spaces and upgrading facilities. Playground space is defined as any area of a school site that could feasibly be used for outdoor recreation by students, during recess/lunch breaks.¹ Playground space commonly includes marked and unmarked courts, grassed areas and sporting fields.

Currently, only a minority of children meet daily recommended levels of physical activity² and strategies to increase children's physical activity are needed. Research suggests that the school environment, specifically school playground size, has a positive association with physical activity levels. Quality open spaces and diverse play equipment also help develop cognitive skills and social skills.³

In NSW, the current space guidelines state that schools with enrolments of 1000 students should provide at least 10m² play space per student,⁴ however this figure is not based on evidence relating to the health and wellbeing of children. Recent Australian research concludes that the combined effect of primary school playground space and loose equipment has a positive and rapidly incremental effect on physical activity as the play space increases up to 25 m² per student⁵.

Key recommendation:

- **Planning for Narrabeen North Public School should specify a minimum of 25m² free play space per student, along with ready access to loose play equipment.**

Other recommendations:

- Where the 25m² benchmark cannot be met, alternative designs are to be considered to ensure play space is maximised and the encroachment of buildings and car parks is minimised.
- Where the 25m² benchmark is still not achievable the design team should conduct a local play space audit to identify alternative opportunities for physical activity.
- Ensure genuine stakeholder consultation when preparing the design brief. Relevant stakeholders include students, parents, educators, local health promotion service and the community.

- Ensure that play spaces and play equipment are inclusive for all abilities as per ‘Everybody can Play’ guidelines⁶ and ‘Better Placed Design Guide -Education SEPP Design Quality Principles’.⁷
- Where possible, provide play space access to the local community and follow Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED⁹) principles, which reduce the likelihood of antisocial behaviour and property damage.
- Provide natural shading and structured shading as appropriate for all play equipment and activity nodes.⁶
- Retain vegetation and protect urban tree canopy to mitigate the urban heat island effect.⁸
- Provide drinking fountains at play areas to encourage water consumption and to minimise use of single-use plastic bottles.⁶
- Provide space and support maintenance for a school garden.¹⁰
- Integrate Aboriginal culture and heritage signage where appropriate.⁸

Thank you for considering our recommendations regarding this proposal to upgrade Narrabeen North Public School. We are willing to assist further with this project to support the health, wellbeing and safety of our school communities, particularly in relation to quantifying and providing sufficient play space per student.

If you have any questions about this submission, please contact our schools Health Promotion Officer Eve Clark on 9388 5293 or Eve.Clark@health.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

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Director
NSLHD Health Promotion

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