

**BASSENDAN PRIMARY SCHOOL — CAR PARK**

*Grievance*

**MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean)** [9.11 am]: My grievance is to the minister representing the Minister for Education. This morning I want to talk about the state government's decision to build a car park on what is currently the Bassendean Primary School oval. The new car park is part of an upgrade of the school's administration block. The admin block upgrade is welcome, but the partial destruction of the school oval is not. The oval was built in the early 1970s after a community campaign to provide an oval for the school. The state government purchased six houses next to the school and demolished them to create an oval for the school and a recreation space for the whole community. The parents fundraised to provide the reticulation and since 1974 the oval has been an important asset for both the school and the community. Roll forward to September 2014, and the government, by press release, announced the administration upgrade for Bassendean Primary School. That announcement did not reveal the partial destruction of the oval and it was not until some months later that the fate of the oval became widely known to the parents and the community. Since then, there has been a tremendous campaign run by locals to get the government to rethink the plan, and in particular to save the play space.

The campaign so far includes a petition of over 340 signatures presented in this place, an online petition with over 500 signatures, a Facebook page, a host of social media, TV coverage, radio interviews, and even a “knit-in”, in which parents and community members staged a sit-in that stopped work on the car park for a day. Despite this very determined campaign, the Barnett government has so far refused to save the oval or even to halt works while alternatives can be considered. That is why members of the community have asked me to bring this matter on for debate today in this house. It clearly makes no sense in the twenty-first century to be turning play space into a car park. We know how important active play is to a child's development. The research on this is absolutely clear. Therefore, the government should never have put forward this plan in the first place. There are other ways that the administration block upgrade could be delivered without damaging the oval. Other car parking solutions are available if the government is serious about this issue.

I do not want to hear the minister in his defence get up and say that this plan has been endorsed by the parents and citizens association or the school council. Firstly, the government should never have put forward this plan in the way it did. As I said, reducing play space to build a car park just does not make sense. Secondly, the planning application was made in December 2014 and approved in January 2015 by the Department of Finance before it was known to the parent community. Since then, parents on the P&C and the school council have effectively been told that it is a done deal and that the oval must be sacrificed to get the admin upgrade. This is not good enough. Do not stand up today and use the P&C or the school council as parental human shields to justify the bad decision that the government has made. I want the government to listen to the community on this issue and reconsider.

The other issue in this matter that the government has refused to acknowledge is that the wider Bassendean community was never consulted. The oval is an asset for the whole community. It is not just a school resource; it is a community resource. As backyards become smaller as urban density in Perth increases, community green space, such as the Bassendean Primary School oval, becomes even more important. In this regard, the general community was not consulted at all before the government adopted this plan. This is not acceptable. There are options that could deliver the admin upgrade and still provide sufficient staff parking. There is a possibility of additional parking on Whitfield Street. That would require agreement from the Town of Bassendean, but that is possible. The new administration block upgrade could go up rather than out, resulting in a smaller building footprint, therefore leaving some room for additional ground floor parking. All that is possible if the government is prepared to listen.

What the community would like to hear from the government this morning is that it will halt works on the car park before any more money is spent and that the government will sit down with parents, the school and the community to find a solution. I am sure that the Town of Bassendean would be happy to be part of this process. The administration block upgrade should have been a good news story for the school, the community and the government. Instead, it has generated unnecessary controversy and conflict. The government could change that by stopping work and giving a commitment to find a solution that saves the oval. That is what the community wants and it is now up to the government to listen and act. As I said earlier, in the twenty-first century it is simply unacceptable for the government to propose to reduce community and school green space in order to build a car park. I ask the minister to take this issue on board, I ask the government to listen and I ask the government to act.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz):** Public in the gallery, you are very welcome to listen, but you are not allowed to make any noise, thank you.

**MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Minister for Planning)** [9.17 am]: I acknowledge the concerns that the member for Bassendean has raised on behalf of the community in his area who have expressed concern to him about the provision of car parking on the Bassendean Primary School site. I am responding on behalf of the Minister for Education.

Firstly, to provide some background to the development that is being undertaken the moment, Bassendean Primary School is an older metropolitan school and has experienced an increase in student enrolments in recent times, I understand. As the existing administration area is less than the standard primary school-sized administration area, Bassendean Primary School was selected for an administration block upgrade at an estimated total cost of \$1.3 million. This upgrade will provide the school with much-needed new facilities, including waiting and reception areas for families and visitors; offices for the principal, deputy principal and administration staff; a student medical room; and an interview room for meetings with parents. Bassendean Primary School is one public school benefiting from the state government's investment in administration upgrades, which totals \$11.9 million in the 2014–15 financial year and \$6 million in 2015–16.

Because of the age and condition of the existing administration building, which I understand is heritage listed—it is certainly a heritage building—the new administration block will adjoin the existing administration block, which is the site of what has been the parking area up until recently. The Department of Education submitted a development application for the new administration building on 15 January this year and the submitted plans included replacement on-site parking, which is a standard requirement, as based on previous submissions. As the delegated approval authority, the Department of Finance sought advice on development applications from the Town of Bassendean. The town recommended that because the proposed buildings would be located over an area of car parking spaces, sufficient alternative on-site car parking would need to be provided to accommodate the bays that would be removed. The approval to commence development, given by the Department of Finance's Building Management and Works division, was granted subject to seven conditions. The fourth condition required all parking, including the replacement parking, to be constructed as per the submitted plan. The Department of Education has advised that if it did not provide replacement on-site parking, the development application would have listed this as a condition for compliance. Under the provisions of the metropolitan region scheme, through the Western Australian Planning Commission, a project cannot proceed without meeting all planning conditions.

The new car park will be an 845 square metre linear strip along one end of the school oval. This reflects a 12 per cent reduction in the size of the oval, but 6 000 square metres of oval space will remain for student use. With the school's current enrolment of 361 students, this provides about 18 square metres for each child. Numerous other primary schools, particularly in older inner metropolitan suburbs, have smaller ovals than the oval at Bassendean Primary School. The department considered other options for replacement parking, such as using hardcourts. However, hardcourts were not considered a viable option because it would have left the school without any hardcourt facilities. The replacement car park has been designed to minimise the impact on play space for students and a consultant from a nature-based playground company will address the school's playground committee to assist in identifying new areas for play and further development of existing play areas. I am advised that this is likely to occur before the end of the school year.

I am advised that consultation was undertaken with the school community before and after the lodgement of the development application. This was undertaken through the usual school communication channels, including school newsletters, discussions at parents and citizens association meetings and a presentation of the school council by the project team. In addition, the building plans have been on display in the school's public foyer since May this year. I am advised that the project was supported by the school council, the P&C association and school staff. The project consultative group, which has been involved with the planning of the new administration area since October 2014, comprises representatives from the Department of Education, the Department of Finance, the architect and the principal. I am also advised that the principal kept the P&C association and school council fully informed. As the member indicated, work has commenced. In order to minimise local inconvenience and traffic congestion, and in the interests of public safety, the car park element of the project commenced prior to the building element. Building works on the new car park commenced on 3 August and will be completed by the middle of October. Construction of the administration building has also commenced. I am very well aware of that, because I drove past the site about an hour ago on my way to Parliament House this morning. The new administration building and relocated car parking will provide improved facilities and benefits for the school community, albeit there clearly will be a change in the parking arrangements and a 12 per cent reduction in the size of the school oval. Overall, this is very much a good news story for Bassendean Primary School.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** It will provide brand-new facilities for the school administration and students and for parents to visit.

**Ms J.M. Freeman** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order, member for Mirrabooka!

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** Overall, this development will provide a much better situation for Bassendean Primary School, which is the point of the development. That is why it is being undertaken and why this government has allocated the substantial amount of money it has for school administration upgrades, including those at Bassendean Primary School.