



Department of **Planning,
Lands and Heritage**

Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage Submission

**Inquiry into the response of Western Australian schools to climate
change**

Education and Health Standing Committee

November 2021

Introduction

The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Education and Health Standing Committee's inquiry into the response of Western Australian schools to climate change. The Department plays an important role in State level land use planning and management, including planning for school sites. The Inquiry presents an opportunity to more broadly consider how schools can best reduce climate impact and respond to climate change, from early stages of school site selection, design brief development, procurement, delivery (construction) and operation.

The Department understands this inquiry extends to all Western Australian schools but has a focus on Government schools. In considering how schools respond to climate change, it is important to note that 33 per cent of students in WA¹ currently attend a private school. As such the climate impact of private sector schools is significant and should be included as part of this Inquiry.

The Department's Design Policy and Urban Environment directorate is responsible for the Design WA project - a State Government initiative tasked with creating policies that share a common purpose to improve the design of Western Australia's built environment, as outlined in the foundation policy [State Planning Policy 7.0 - Design of the Built Environment](#). Sustainability is one of the ten principles of good design under this policy.

The focus of this submission is on the opportunities for design policy to support planning for climate change responsive schools and help reduce the climate impact of schools. The Government Architect has provided a separate submission addressing sustainable school design more specifically, and increased transparency in demonstrating the benefits of improved environmental performance for schools.

General comments

Draft Operational Policy 2.4 (Draft OP 2.4) – Planning for School Sites

[Draft OP 2.4](#) sets out the Western Australian Planning Commission's general locational criteria, configuration and design standards for the provision of primary and secondary school sites.

Efficient use of land

- Draft OP 2.4 facilitates supplementary and complementary land uses on school sites and encourages appropriate adjacent and surrounding land uses.
- This includes encouraging the co-location of community infrastructure and public open space. The shared use of open space with the community will assist with water resource (reticulation) rationalisation within local government areas. Co-locating additional or supplementary services such as education support services, childcare services and childhood health clinics has the potential of reducing vehicle trips.
- The use of public open space by schools and the public outside of school hours is considered desirable, with the efficient use of land and resources recognised.

Active transport

- Draft OP 2.4 encourages active transport by requiring new school sites to be:
 - located within a walkable catchment of activity centres or public transport services
 - serviced by well-designed bike and pedestrian networks that are safe and accessible
 - conveniently connected to surrounding networks, residential areas and train stations.

¹ As of Semester 2, 2021 - [Statistical Reports - School Information - The Department of Education \(det.wa.edu.au\)](#)

Innovative design

- Draft OP 2.4 provides for innovative design, however, more site responsive design of school sites and buildings could be further promoted and encouraged from within the Department of Education to provide for more efficient use of land.

Draft State Planning Policy 2.9 (Draft SPP 2.9) – Planning for Water

- [Draft SPP 2.9 and its Guidelines](#) provide new guidance on climate change in recognition of the increasing pressure from climate change on water resources and the need to better respond to the anticipated impacts from climate change.
- Development, including new schools as well as changes or additions to existing schools, should be appropriately designed to remain resilient to water-related impacts, including climate change.

Local planning frameworks

- Local governments are able to prepare local planning policies (LPP) to provide further guidance on land use and development in a local government area.
- For example, the City of Canning is preparing a draft LPP for electric vehicles. This may potentially include requirements that relate to charging infrastructure on ‘educational establishments’, including Government school sites.

Response to the Terms of Reference (ToR)

a. The co-benefits of climate action in schools

There are significant co-benefits of well-located, planned and designed schools that can assist in climate action while simultaneously having positive health and well-being impacts on local communities.

Evidence shows that the planning and design of street networks and the location of school sites can have impacts on the potential for children to walk to school. Neighbourhoods with connected street networks designed for light traffic showed increased potential for children to walk to school which “highlights the importance of carefully considering school siting and, particularly, street design in school neighbourhoods.”²

The [Design Standard 02 – The Design of the Education Environment](#) provides guidance for delivery of well-designed learning environments that respond effectively to climate change.

c. Barriers that schools encounter in undertaking climate action and how these can be addressed

A barrier for schools in undertaking climate action is the processes for identifying and acquiring land for school sites for both Government and non-government schools. New Government school sites are identified at structure planning stage, with Draft OP 2.4 setting out the general locational criteria, configuration requirements and design standards for the provision of Government and non-government primary and secondary school sites, and the developer contribution methodology for the provision of Government primary school sites. There is an opportunity within this process, for more attention to be paid to ensuring that location of schools and associated urban infrastructure is optimised to support pedestrian and cyclist accessibility.

² Health & Place 17 (2011) 545–550

This could consider greater involvement of design review in structure planning preparation and assessment processes that could consider planning and design issues for school sites.

It is suggested that design briefs for new schools prioritise site planning and urban design that promotes local accessibility by active transport for students, staff and visitors.

d. [What more can be done to support schools to respond to climate change](#)

The [State Design Review Panel](#) is a multi-disciplinary panel of highly experienced built environment professionals that provides independent advice on the design quality of major development proposals, which can include structure plans.

[State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the Built Environment](#) includes performance-based design principles, which provide means for evaluating the merit of proposed solutions by professionals with appropriate design expertise.

Resources

Travel and Environmental Implications of School Siting [Travel and Environmental Implications of School Siting | US EPA](#).

Whole Building Design Guide (National Institute of Building Sciences) (US) [Optimize Site Potential | WBDG - Whole Building Design Guide](#)

School site and the potential to walk to school: The impact of street connectivity and traffic exposure in school neighborhoods. B. Giles-Corti et al. / Health & Place 17 (2011) 545–550