

Alex Greenwich
Member for Sydney
58 Oxford Street
Paddington 2021



Jamie Parker
Member for Balmain
112A Glebe Point Road
Glebe 2037

24 June 2015

Tony Whitfield
A/g Auditor General
GPO Box 12
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mr Whitfield

Ultimo Public School

I write to ask you to investigate the NSW Government's process for assessing costs for proposed Ultimo Public School to be constructed on the former City of Sydney Wattle Street depot.

I understand that while the land was valued at more than \$100 million, the government negotiated a reduced price of \$74 million with the City of Sydney based on its assessment that remediation would cost \$42 million. While the City's estimates for remediation were as low as \$11 million based on Environmental Protection Authority standards, both parties agreed to the price of \$74 million and the government made an announcement before the March 2015 State election, which included the agreed price and remediation costs.

The Department of Education and Communities now says that decontamination will cost \$53 million and has pulled out of the deal. It is unclear whether department officers have inspected the site and details have not been provided to explain the increase to stated decontamination costs. No assessment has been provided comparing capping soil and construction over the government's proposal to remove all underlying soil, despite these methods reportedly used to provide safe school sites elsewhere while meeting environmental standards. I understand the new costs exceed NSW Government standards, setting an expensive precedent for similar projects.

The Wattle Street site was to provide a 1,000-student school with an 80-place childcare facility. The now proposed redevelopment of the existing school site will cause significant disruption to current students and is slated to result in only 650 to 700 places with no childcare.

The current school is already full and its catchment area has been reduced so it is no longer available to many local families with children. There is significant community concern that this redevelopment will not result in a promised new larger school open by 2017, and will not be able to meet expected demand for primary school places in the future given more families are staying in the inner city and massive redevelopments are planned and proposed adjacent to Ultimo including at Darling Harbour, the Bays Precinct and potentially the Powerhouse Museum.

(2)

It does not appear that any other sites have been examined, nor the cost-benefit of such a limited number of new places on the current school site.

Could you please review the development of this project to ensure appropriate costings and assessment including the number of students, expected demand for school places and remediation costs, and inform me what action you will take?

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AG' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alex Greenwich
Member for Sydney

A handwritten signature in black ink, clearly legible as 'Jamie Parker'.

Jamie Parker
Member for Balmain