



**JENNY LEONG MP**

**MEMBER FOR NEWTOWN**

**THE  
GREENS**

**13 February 2019**

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, Premier  
The Hon. Rob Stokes, Minister for Education  
52 Martin Place  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister Stokes and Premier Berejiklian,

**Re: Inner City High School**

I am writing to request an update on the proposed catchment boundaries for the Inner City High School on Cleveland St. It is unacceptable that so many families who live within walking distance of the school have been excluded from the proposed catchment.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported that you had urgently requested a review of the catchment boundaries, and that this would be completed in time for the new school year.

Now that we are several weeks into the school year, I am writing to follow up on the outcomes of this review. As you can imagine, many parents have been in contact with my office concerned that their Year 6 children will soon be commencing transition to high school programs, and they don't know what their local high school will be.

The key issues that must be resolved are:

- Allowing children who live within walking distance of the school to attend their closest public high school;
- Having a transition plan so that the cohort of students at Bourke St and Darlington Public Schools can attend the same high school (currently they will be split up into 3 different high school catchments);
- Sibling rights to enable families with more than one child to enrol both kids at the same school;
- The perception that the wealthy suburbs have been included and poorer suburbs have been deliberately excluded;
- That the school will presumably use community facilities in Redfern (eg Redfern Oval and the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence) and it should service that local community; and
- Congestion and traffic issues due to a large part of the proposed eastern catchment being a long way from the school.



Please find attached a summary of all the comments and concerns that parents have raised with my office.

I would appreciate any information you can provide as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



**Jenny Leong MP**  
**Member for Newtown**



## **ATTACHMENT: Comments from local residents affected by the proposed catchment**

My concerns are that local children in Surry Hills, Waterloo and Redfern are being excluded from attending a High School they can walk to. This will drastically affect the community of the area. School should be the hub of a local community for those close by.

*Amy, Waterloo*

I live across the road from this school and would like my son to have the opportunity to attend. The students at Bourke Street Public need to move as a collective unit. There should be no reason why an area already coping with the challenges of being low socio-economic should miss out on the clear advantages a new educational setting such as this would provide.

*Daniel, Redfern*

Redfern, Waterloo, Surry Hills, and Darlington are geographically local to the proposed Inner City High School and students from these areas should be included in the catchment.

*Corban, Sydney*

My concerns include:

- The exclusion of Waterloo students due to its zoning
- Even properties right across the road from the school on Cleveland Street are excluded
- There isn't much option for High Schools in the area. The exclusion of surrounding areas that are within close walking distance to the school isn't a good choice.

*Kuan, Surry Hills*

My son who attends Bourke Street Public School is excluded from attending our closest new High School. Alexandria Park High School is already struggling to cater for the residents of Alexandria, Erskineville and Green Square. Local children should be able to access local schools.

*Adam, Waterloo*

That the cut off line for this school is Cleveland Street is mind blowing. Our local kids can see a brand spanking new school that they are unable to attend.

*Andy, Surry Hills*

I'm just a block away from this school and am unhappy that my daughter will not be able to attend. I believe the catchment area should include Waterloo, Redfern and Surry Hills

*Elizabeth, Surry Hills*



My concerns are that the children that live in the area aren't able to access the school that is closest to us – within walking distance!

*Justin, Zetland*

My family and I live in Redfern, so close to the new school that we can see it when we stand on our front porch. You can imagine our surprise and extreme disappointment upon learning that we are not in the catchment area! I find it a bizarre decision to cut out the area immediately on the border of a school. This would seem to fly in the face of all that a local school community should represent. A public high school should promote a sense of belonging and support integration for the children of the local community. This is quite frankly, a hurtful and divisive way of deciding on boundaries.

I do understand that the inner city suburbs need a high school. I also understand that the boundaries have to be drawn somewhere. But to include Woollahra, Edgecliff and Paddington in the catchment and exclude Redfern almost completely would suggest that some intensive lobbying has been going on. One can only conclude that snobbery is a factor since Redfern is home to the Aboriginal community and much community housing. To add insult to injury, a small part of Redfern known by real estate agents as "East Redfern" has been included in the catchment. I find this an even more upsetting and inexplicably divisive decision. I also wonder at the exclusion of all of Chippendale and Darlington.

Prince Alfred Park is the local community park for the people of Surry Hills and Redfern. To wilfully exclude half the children who use the same park from the proposed high school being built in that very park is an indefensible decision in my view.

I urge you to strongly reconsider the boundaries of the catchment in order to find a more equitable and sensible outcome.

*Emma, Redfern*

Redfern has been deprived on a public school for over 10 years, and now we have had a 'local' high school taken away from the community as well! Redfern has such a wonderfully diverse and vibrant community, and it was just a given that the new high school would reflect this. Instead, this school will represent the privileged eastern suburbs.

*Louise, Redfern*

The catchment area doesn't address local proximity – we are within blocks of the school and yet not in the area, like many families. It appears that the catchment has been drawn to exclude the areas of lower socio-economic status, to the benefit of the more affluent areas. Also, it splits existing school communities, like Bourke Street Public School, where half the kids don't fall into this catchment.

*Edwina, Redfern*



I live on Young Street in Redfern, a 5 minute walking distance from the new high school. The idea that the boundary line omits the community that is housed so close is ludicrous at best and discriminatory at worst.

*Amber, Redfern*

The catchment area excludes residences within walking distance of the school. Walking and cycling access to schools is vital. It's important that strong community spirit is retained through having students from the local area attend.

*Lydia, Redfern*

The local children of Redfern, Surry Hills, and Waterloo have been excluded from the catchment area of the new school in their area.

*Richard, Surry Hills*

Prince Alfred Park is our local park. We have agreed to share the park with the school, but even though we are less than 2 minutes' walk from the new school we aren't in the catchment.

*Tamara, Redfern*

This catchment area zoning divides our community. I live in this community and have never felt more accepted or a part of a community, and we are now faced with being torn apart. Friends who have grown up together in their local public school will be forced to go to a school twice the distance of their nearest school. This clearly has not got the community's interest at heart.

*Nathan, Redfern*

We live closer to the proposed school than the old, existing school and yet are not included in this catchment area. Kids from Bourke Street Public School deserve to stay with the same cohort to support community, friendship, and service.

*Leanna, Waterloo*

Our family lives 230 metres from the new Inner City High School but are out of catchment. I am also concerned about access to the site and the inclusion of a large area of the eastern suburbs, meaning an increase in car congestion in the area. The catchment should take into consideration the desirability of kids walking and cycling to school.

*Alison, Redfern*

I am concerned that this new school is 300 metres from my home but I am not included in the catchment. As a single mother who works four days a week, my nearest school is Alexandria Park High School, which is around 1.5-2 kilometres away. I would love to see my daughter be able to attend the high school with her friends in the area and for them not to be divided between Alexandria Park, Newtown and beyond. Please include Redfern in the catchment.

*Rebecca, Redfern*



The splitting of peer groups from Bourke Street Public School will make the transition to high school much harder. The location of the high school should be in the centre of the catchment area. As it currently is it disrupts the flow of the community.

Alexandria Park High School is completely away from work and from my younger children at Bourke Street Public School.

*Matt & Kathy, Waterloo*

The Inner City High School is closer to my home than our in-area high school (Alexandria Park). Also, my daughter's primary school is within the catchment area of the new school my our home is not.

*Samantha, Waterloo*

I live in Great Buckingham Street literally two minutes from this school. There are over 20 school-age kids in my street, and none would be eligible to travel two minutes to this school. They will have to travel up to 40 minutes to the next-closest school. That is ludicrous.

This is a blatant attempt to exclude local housing commission residents. A school should be in the centre of its catchment not on its boundary. This is divining a community. While it's too late for my kids, I am furious on behalf of other parents in the community.

*Alexa, Redfern*

We currently live in Zetland, which once upon a time was a catchment for Bourke Street Public School. Our two boys attend Bourke Street in Year 4 and Kindy. We absolutely love BSPS, there is a strong community between teachers, parents and children. We would love for our boys to naturally move to Inner City High School, with BSPS being a feeder school for Inner City High.

*Lucia, Zetland*

We live approximately 500 metres from the school and to find out that we are not considered to be in the school's catchment zone is beyond our comprehension. To add insult to injury, residents who live one street to the east, which is further away from the school than us, are within the catchment zone.

*Sarah & Frances, Redfern*

Bourke Street Public should be an automatic feeder into the new Inner City High School. Why should my child be split up from their friends?

*Bianca, Zetland*

Redfern should be included in the catchment area.

*Ting, Redfern*

I live within two blocks of the new school and yet face the prospect of having to send my daughter further afield for high school. All schools should occupy the middle, not the far edge, of their boundaries, to benefit the local community.



If you expect local community to give up part of our local park, we should also have the opportunity to access the high school within in its grounds.

*Emily, Redfern*

I live 100 metres from the school and am NOT in the catchment. My son has a learning need and will benefit from the modern delivery of curriculum as planned for Inner City High.

Redfern has already lost a primary school, we can't lose another chance to build a local community by giving our high school to other more distant locations. My children attend Erskineville and are excluded from the local community as out of area children. We want the chance to attend a LOCAL school.

*Nicola, Redfern*

This will be the closest school for kids from Darlington to walk to. Alexandria Park High School is much further to walk. Kids from the proposed catchment in areas like Double Bay would need to be driven which is against the DET's own info about schools being within walking distance. A best practice urban school should be servicing the LOCAL community. It should be accessible, equitable and fair. How about building another school?

*Helen, Darlington*

By placing the southern catchment boundary so close to the school you are splitting the Redfern community in half. We have been living in the area for 15 years building a strong community. To build a multi-million dollar high school across the road from our house that our kids cannot attend is a real kick in the guts. Please consider expanding the boundaries to include all of Redfern and Chippendale.

*Dylan, Redfern*

I was one of the first parents to go to the meeting at Bourke Street Public School about the new high school with Peter Johnston, the late principal, in attendance. It was understood that his students would attend the new Inner City High School.

*Rachel, Zetland*

Children that live in the inner city, less than 1km from the new Inner City High School, are being excluded by the catchment boundaries. The current boundaries are breaking down established communities, both school and general.

This new school is bearing the weight of the outdated model of retaining single sex schools still seen in Sydney's east. Open those schools to be co-ed and pressure would be alleviated.

*Jackie, Waterloo*

Please allow all children that attend public schools in the current proposed catchment to attend this new high school

*Troy, Waterloo*



Children attending local public schools – like Crown Street and Bourke Street – will be left with little to no choice in high schools in the area that are already overcrowded. By including areas such as Paddington and Double Bay where the rate of unemployment is lower but not including locals you are creating an exclusive school. There are many deserving, intelligent children that live in Redfern, Surry Hills, and Waterloo that have lived in this area for many years and have become a part of such a well-deserving community.

*Liana, Waterloo*

The children in this area desperately need a secondary education facility. One is finally available but the children in this area are told they cannot attend? This makes no sense! We live on Phillip Street in Waterloo. We timed it, it's exactly an 8 minute walk from our front door to the school and my children can't attend the new high school? That is completely unfair and discriminatory to the local children and families, especially when residents in areas as far away as Woolloomooloo are in the catchment zone. Not fair at all!

*Sally, Waterloo*

I understand you need to have a catchment area and draw the line at some point. But the Inner City High School should accept all students from the primary schools in the community such as Bourke Street Public School. We love this community, please don't separate us.

*Mayumi, Waterloo*

My concerns include:

- The lack of continuity of catchment areas between primary schools and this high school
- Community division, through primary school communities being broken up for high school, and the local community of Redfern being divided by school catchments
- Accessibility of alternate high schools – living in Redfern and having to go out of the city to take children to school

*Andrew, Redfern*

I have two children, aged 10 and 12. I live about 500 metres from the new school and have been looking forward to it opening. I was stunned to hear that we are not in the catchment, especially because the school we are in the catchment for is at least three times further away! The new school is badly needed, and we want to attend it because it is so close to our house. The current boundaries seem to be a political rather than sensible decision. Please reconsider!

*Philip, Redfern*

It looks like we are getting yet another selective school – selective based on your 'assumed' socio-economic background. All the public housing on Morehead Street which is 5 min walk away is excluded yet the catchment boundary conveniently links south to include more affluent East Redfern. It's discriminating and super obvious. It's





disappointing that a lot of people fought so hard to get a public high school in this area only to have the people that need to exclude.

*Kathleen, Waterloo*

We live on the 'right' side of Cleveland Street for my daughter to attend the new school, but I am stunned that students within easy walking distance of the school have been excluded from the catchment area just for being on the 'wrong' side of Cleveland Street. Surely the catchment area should extend into an easy walking distance the other way or at least half way between the nearest school to the new one. I think it's outrageous to deny students access to their closest public school.

*Nicole, Surry Hills*

Seeing the location for the new high school, I – and many of the parents at my local school – were super disappointed to discover that most of the catchment area does not include us, but does include a park the size of a suburb (or three of my particular suburb) and areas where households often send their children to private schools.

*Katharine, Darlington*

Our eldest son is due to start year 7 in 2021 and we were excited (and counting on) the new high school on the corner of Cleveland and Chalmers Streets to be the 'go to' high school, as we live on Phillip Street Waterloo overlooking Redfern oval. This would mean our son could easily walk to and from school, literally ten minutes from our front door. It would also make school mornings easier in our household, as we have four children in total, and in 2021 we will have one child in high school, two in primary school, and our youngest in daycare – so needless to say drop-offs and pick-ups will be very rushed.

We find the catchment zone very unfair. Our son is a good student and tries hard, has loads of potential and he needs a secondary education just like any other child. Why is he expected to travel further away (and probably by public transport rather than by foot) to attend a high school, when there will be a high school ten minutes' walk away?

*Sally, Redfern*

I live a stone's throw from this school but my kids would not be eligible as we are on the "wrong" side of Cleveland street. We are in the position of being in a catchment for a school a good half an hour's walk away but can't walk two minutes to this one. I'm furious. A school's catchment area should position the school in the middle of the area, not on its boundary.

*Alex, Redfern*

I am a local parent and live on the other end of Chalmers Street to the school. I spoke to someone from the school who said we could apply for an out of area place, but then myself and the whole of Redfern who live closer to the new Inner City High School than Alexandria Park will be applying – this doesn't seem like the best laid plan.

*Natalie, Waterloo*



I had thought this couldn't be true! We live about 100 meters from the school and it looks like our daughter won't be in area.

*Neil, Redfern*

We are in the catchment for the new school, but I am concerned that my children (twin year 8 boys) will NOT be able to go to the new school as they weren't born in the right year. In 2020 the school will take year 7 students only, then the following year it will be year 7 and 8 only, and so on. This is a horrible solution for children who are in the area and will have to keep travelling a longer distance to get to school. Again, I know that we aren't the only ones in the area, but I think this is an enrolment that makes me very suspicious. I was told it was about building the right culture for the school. It comes across as a school solution for the Eastern suburbs (which it isn't). We need more schools.

*Netta, Chippendale*

We have just started a family in Redfern and are 5 minutes' walk from the school. It was our hope that our daughter would attend when she was old enough.

*Mike, Redfern*

I live 100m from the new school, and 10m from catchment boundary, yet my son is not eligible for a place. Children who live 6km from school will have a right to attend. This is a very poor outcome for residents who are local to the school, especially those with a disability for whom travel is a challenge. I am a mother to 2 boys in the public education system - my eldest starts high school in 2020. I attended the consultation in 2014, and I attended the information booth Saturday 5th May. We are currently enrolled at [a local] Public School. While we love the school, the boys both experience a degree of social exclusion as out of area students. I would very much prefer my children live as close as possible to their school. As a single working mother, I would be able to save the cost of nanny who commutes with my children to school currently as the boys would need to cross one road.

*Nicola, Redfern*

Thank you for opposing the Government's unbelievable decision to create a catchment area that excludes local students from our new Inner Sydney School. I am a seventy-one year old who lives in Redfern and have no school age children but I fully supported this project despite the impact it will have on our small area of park land because education takes priority. I see this as educational gerrymandering and class discrimination.

*Adrienne, Redfern*

Can you please advise why when my family lives 300 metres away from the new Inner Sydney High School, my child will be excluded from the new high school? This is grossly unfair as kids from as far away as Darling Point will be able to attend this school. Also, to add insult to injury, kids from the new school will have exclusive



access to part of Prince Alfred Park during school preventing me from using the park when I work from home.

*Cepheus, Redfern*

