



Trish Doyle MP

Member for Blue Mountains



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New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly

Springwood High School

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I acknowledge the fabulous P&C of Springwood High School in my electorate of Blue Mountains. Of particular concern is the P&C's application to the New South Wales Government's school infrastructure Cooler Classrooms Program. In the middle of 2018, on behalf of the Springwood High School P&C, I wrote to the then education Minister about the lack of air conditioning in the school and particularly in the classrooms, which makes it very difficult for students and their teachers to attend to learning needs on hot days. The P&C was disappointed to learn that the school was deemed ineligible for the Cooler Classrooms initiative and sought to challenge that decision on the basis of inaccurate data. It developed its own rigorous and accurate dataset by installing heat sensors to record classroom temperatures over a period of six months. The P&C was supported by Western Sydney University, which collected and analysed the data.

At an information night Professor Mark Tjoelker from the Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment presented the data in a report entitled *A Cooler School for Springwood High*. Professor Tjoelker happens to be the parent of a student at that school. I was invited to see the presentation, which was compelling. Teachers, parents and students at the information night talked about the data from one year in which there were 41 days with temperatures over 30 degrees Celsius, but particularly 10 days with temperatures over 40 degrees Celsius. They felt that those figures shed a different light on the situation at the school in relation to the Cooler Schools Program and the need to challenge the school's supposed ineligibility.

Springwood High School did not let the matter rest. The students became active and organised a petition. They lobbied me and other candidates during the election campaign earlier this year. Students, teachers and parents organised themselves, in collaboration with those leading researchers from Western Sydney University who had gathered the data, to talk about what it was like to be in a classroom with an air temperature of 37.7 degrees and how that impacted on teachers and on students' ability to learn. They told us about the buildings at Springwood High School, which are over 50 years old and were not designed with the need for effective and efficient cooling in mind, because our area has a distinct change in our climate and in temperatures.

It has been widely reported in recent months that summer temperatures are rapidly increasing. Conditions are difficult for staff and students, not just in the Blue Mountains, which has had extraordinarily hot summers of late, but in many areas. Classrooms are stifling in summer and are heated with unflued gas heaters in winter. The school community has put forward a very compelling case about unsafe and unhealthy learning and teaching conditions. It has sought from the Minister a commitment to visit the community and the school, to have a wander around, to

read the documentation that accompanied their original application, to look at the quantified analysis of community statements and the case study and to re-evaluate and look after this fabulous school and its community into the next summer.