



Infrastructure  
Western Australia

# Major Infrastructure Proposal Assessment

Department of Education

Inner City Primary School

Summary Assessment Report

**Infrastructure WA**

Level 41, 108 St Georges Terrace  
Perth Western Australia 6000

Phone: 08 6552 5229

Email: [proposals@infrastructure.wa.gov.au](mailto:proposals@infrastructure.wa.gov.au)

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**Acknowledgment of Country**

Infrastructure WA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders both past and present.

## Purpose

This assessment report has been prepared in carrying out Infrastructure WA's (IWA) legislative function to assess and report to the Premier on major infrastructure proposals. The assessment is of the Project Definition Plan (PDP) for the Department for Education Inner City Primary School (ICPS) proposal. Additional supporting information received from the proponent and consultation with relevant key stakeholders has also been used by IWA to support its analysis.

## IWA observations

There is a clear justification for needing increased primary school facilities to service the inner-city area; with a growing student population and capacity issues at the only existing state primary school (Highgate Primary School) that services the area. Based on provided data there is demonstrated need for WA Government intervention in the short term (0-5 years).

IWA considers that there have been previous decisions of WA Government in relation to this project, namely a commitment to build a new inner city primary school and for it to be sited at the Queens G Queens Garden carpark. Therefore, this assessment is primarily focussed on the options analysis within the parameters of the selected Queens Garden site, the associated delivery aspects of the proposal and areas for future improvement.

IWA considers there is sufficient information for WA Government to progress an investment decision of the ICPS, however, further detail of the costs and benefits of the alternative options should be provided to inform the recommended option.

## Context

### Project background

In April 2023 the State Government committed to building a new primary school to relieve pressure on Highgate Primary School (HPS) and service the inner-city, with funding provided to progress further technical studies at the Queens Gardens car park site. Further funding was provided as part of the 2024-25 State budget for the project definition plan (PDP) phase.

In August 2024 the State announced legislation (Queens Gardens Car Park (Inner City School) Bill 2024) to repeal the Chevron-Hilton Hotel Agreement Act and to provide the necessary land for the ICPS. The PDP has been completed and provided to IWA for assessment ahead of a WA Government investment decision.

## Strategic merit

### Alignment

IWA considers there to be strong strategic alignment with relevant state and local government strategies to provide additional primary school facilities in the inner-city area.

### Problems and opportunities

The problems and constraints associated with the current situation (which IWA considers sufficiently documented in the business case) are summarised as:

- Existing public primary school infrastructure at HPS does not have sufficient accommodation capacity to manage future enrolment growth in the local intake area.
- It is not practicably feasible to develop sufficient capacity by expanding infrastructure on the HPS site to accommodate medium-term enrolment growth.

IWA considers that the problems have been adequately outlined in the PDP and previous documentation.

The primary objectives associated with the ICPS are summarised as:

- deliver a new primary school in East Perth on the Queen's Gardens Car Park site
- support renewal and regeneration of the inner-city area
- provide public education infrastructure and services to support population growth.

## Options assessment

IWA notes the PDP options assessment is limited to opportunities associated with the Queens Garden site rather than a broader review of options that was undertaken in the business case to resolve capacity and growth issues in the inner city, including alternative locations.

As the WA Government has committed to the Queens Garden site, six options at the site were considered as part of the PDP. The recommended option is a staged approach with funding for a 600 student facility, with areas reserved for future expansion to allow for a total of 800 students, long daycare and dental facilities and potentially additional carparking.

While the PDP provides detail of the scope, timing and costs of the options, a more detailed explanation of the various option's costs and benefits should be provided as part of the submission to Government to fully understand the short and longer term implications (financial and social) of the alternative options.

## Societal impacts

### Economic and financial assessment

The total capital cost for the recommended option is estimated to be \$164.95 million. This is considered more expensive than an average primary school project in WA. This increased cost partially due to the inner-city location relative to other, recent, new primary school developments. It is also accepted that there is no direct comparison to other primary schools in the WA context, with the ICPS being WA's first vertical primary school, and also the first new State primary school in the inner city since the early 20th century.

The PDP has used a quantity surveyor to support the report, which is appropriate to provide an estimate of cost, albeit acknowledging there is still design development that will influence the final cost estimate.

The ICPS is expected to provide key learnings in providing future school facilities in the inner-city area, both in capital cost plus ongoing operational cost impacts. The PDP outlines that a lessons learned schedule has been developed for the ICPS project and is intended to be updated as the ICPS Project progresses. IWA considers this to be an important initiative and suggests that as part of post proposal completion reporting, the ongoing costs of the ICPS are reported, in a detailed manner, to inform future proposals.

### Social assessment

IWA considers that an additional primary school to service the inner-city is a positive outcome in providing more convenient access to educational facilities and is necessary to support the area's increasing population. It will also improve conditions at HPS by enabling the removal of the transportable classrooms.

It is also encouraging the ICPS is proposed to be a community hub and for the community to be able to access to facilities outside school hours to derive greater value from the State's investment.

Noting the significant length of time to secure a site and growing student population in the inner-city and surrounding suburbs, IWA recommends that the Department of Education commence work to address future primary and secondary school enrolment pressures in these areas, to allow sufficient time to acquire suitable sites and deliver these future schools without compromising outcomes.

### Environmental assessment

The site was cleared and used for residential housing prior to being used for car parking since the 1960s. The vegetation within the site is limited to car park and street tree plantings.

The PDP outlines that several site investigations have been completed as part of the due diligence process.

While there are further investigations that need to be undertaken as the proposal progresses, and therefore potential latent adverse conditions, IWA does not consider there to be any significant environmental constraints for the development of the ICPS.

The supplied documentation within the PDP demonstrates clear sustainability targets have been set, initiatives have been costed and risks that could lead to failure to achieve targets have been identified. The intention to highlight sustainability in procurement is clearly identified. Overall, the supplied documentation provides confidence that a suite of basic sustainability issues around operational energy use and water use have been addressed and there is an intention to strive for better performance in areas such as embodied emissions in construction.

### Recommended Option: Project definition

The recommended option for the ICPS will be up to five storeys and includes a hall, canteen, administration, staff facilities, library, classrooms, roof terrace, playing field, hard courts, parking and associated landscaping (refer Figure One). The limited lot size has necessitated a vertical design which represents a change from traditional primary school buildings in WA and Department of Education has needed to develop a Vertical School brief.

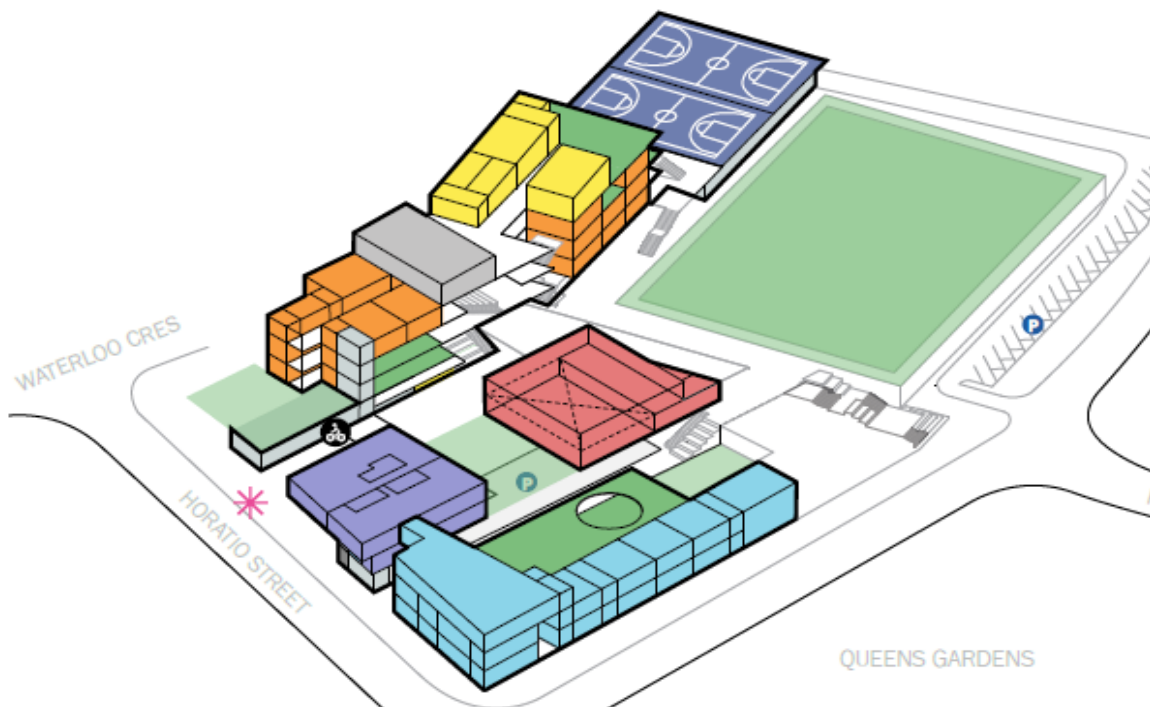


Figure 1 - Indicative School design

Source: ICPS PDP

### Deliverability

The PDP provides a detailed program that indicates the ICPS ready for operation in 2029. IWA considers that the program provides reasonable assurance of meeting the timeframe, however, is not without risk. Key risks include finalising of land assembly, site service relocation works, and successful engagement of a contractor(s) to undertake the necessary works.

Similarly, as has been the case with many larger-scale construction projects, until there have been the contracts awarded for the main works, there will be uncertainty as to the market's ability to meet the identified program and cost expectations.

A risk register is provided for the ICPS that covers many of the identified risks and includes proposed treatments. It is outlined that the risk register is maintained as a live document and subject to fortnightly review, which IWA considers good practice and will be important to respond to the risks.