NSW Department of Education

Part A

# Design vision and objectives

# Acknowledgement of Country

**We recognise the Ongoing Custodians of the lands and waterways where we work and live. We pay respect to Elders past and present as ongoing teachers of knowledge, songlines and stories.**

**We strive to ensure every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learner in NSW achieves their potential through education.**

*Artist Credit: Suzanna, a former student from Boggabilla Central School. The artwork featured represents the themes of community, school, friendship and family.*

# Disclaimer

The Educational Facilities Standards and Guidelines (EFSG) 2025 form part of the contractual requirements for the design and delivery of school infrastructure projects commissioned by School Infrastructure (SI). Adherence to the EFSG is mandatory and constitutes a legal obligation for all engaged parties.

EFSG 2025 sets out the design intent, spatial and functional requirements, and standardised design components necessary to guide the consistent, equitable, and high-quality development of educational facilities across NSW. While comprehensive in scope, the EFSG is not exhaustive. Project teams must apply professional judgment in addressing specific project needs, site conditions, and applicable statutory and regulatory obligations.

While the most current version of the EFSG is generally the authoritative reference, the applicable version for any given project may be determined by the date on which the project's business case was approved. It is the responsibility of project teams to confirm the relevant version with SI and seek clarification where uncertainty exists.

The EFSG adopts a 'live learning' model, and updates may be issued through future annual releases to reflect evolving priorities, sector feedback, and lessons learned. Components such as the Pattern Book are iterative tools and will continue to be developed over time.

SI accepts no liability for any loss, damage, or claim arising from the misapplication, outdated referencing, or misinterpretation of EFSG content. Users must ensure they are working from the correct version and confirm any ambiguities directly with SI.

## Document control

| Revision number | Date of publication | EFSG version | Description | Updated by | Approved by |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| V&0_2026r0 | 01/07/2025 | EFSG 2025 | Issue for publication | RS, LS, SS | MB |

# Purpose of this document

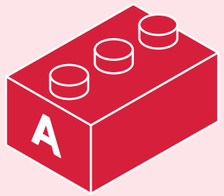
## The Educational Facilities Standards and Guidelines

The Educational Facility Standards and Guidelines (EFSG) contains design and construction standards, that are required for the design and delivery of new school facilities and upgrades.

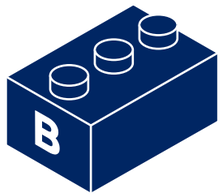
The EFSG sets the design intent and benchmark for all new built environment works for school facilities in NSW. This document is to be read in conjunction with Parts B, C and D of the EFSG.

The EFSG details design and construction standards where they exceed or are in addition to the minimum standards set out in the National Construction Code (NCC). This document does not replace compliance requirements detailed in the National Construction Code, including the Building Code of Australia (BCA), Australian Standards and NATSPEC.

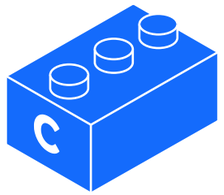

Click on a brick to access that part of the EFSG.



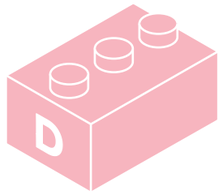

**Design vision and objectives**




**Functional design brief**




**Design components and data sheets**




**Technical standards**




# How to use the EFSG

### Part A – Design vision and objectives

The design vision and objectives document defines high-level design expectations (visions) and measurable goals (objectives) and demonstrates how to achieve alignment with the educational requirements of school settings and the Government Architect's design principles for schools.

The intention of this document is to provide context that informs the wider EFSG design standards, identifying key priorities and criteria to support school design decision-making processes.

### Part B – Functional design brief

Part B provides Schedules of Accommodation for existing and new projects, providing projects with the number and type of facilities required for all settings, including all sizes of new high school, public school, SSP, pre-school and halls. Separate schedules of accommodation are also provided for existing school projects commencing an upgrade.

### Part C – Design components and data sheets

Part C includes a Pattern Book of standardised building components, including school, pre-school, hub and hall layouts.

As a direct response to stakeholder feedback, the Pattern Book is designed to complement the EFSG and clarify the technical standards with spatial layouts, building component details and standardised designs.

Part C provides links to Room Data Sheets for standardised learning spaces across school typologies (GLS's, SLU's, Core Facilities, specialist learning spaces, amenities, storage, services etc.)

Part C provides links to the digital library of Autodesk Revit (.rvt) and OpenBIM IFC format (.ifc) models of building components for standardised learning hubs/ spaces.

### Part D – Technical standards

Part D contains the design and technical requirements for building and maintaining school infrastructure assets.

Part D is a reformatted version of existing EFSG 2.0 technical standards into one single PDF. There has been no content update for EFSG 2025; however, substantial updates are planned, and a new Design and Technical Requirements document is under development. This update will provide better alignment to the wider EFSG and Pattern Book.

### Design topics in development

As content continues to be developed, documents are shared here for consultation and stakeholder engagement, this allows for more innovative thinking to be tested, prior to being incorporated into Parts A, B C and D as endorsed design standards.

Documents contained here have not yet been approved as part of the EFSG. Documents identified as 'in development' should be treated as best practice and guidance. This content is subject to a governance process prior to being formally incorporated into the EFSG.

## Related Documents

This document is to be read in conjunction with:

EFSG Part B: Functional design brief

EFSG Part C: Design components and data sheets

EFSG Part D: Technical standards

Better Placed Design for Schools, Government Architect NSW.

National Construction Code (NCC)

Australian Standards

NATSPEC

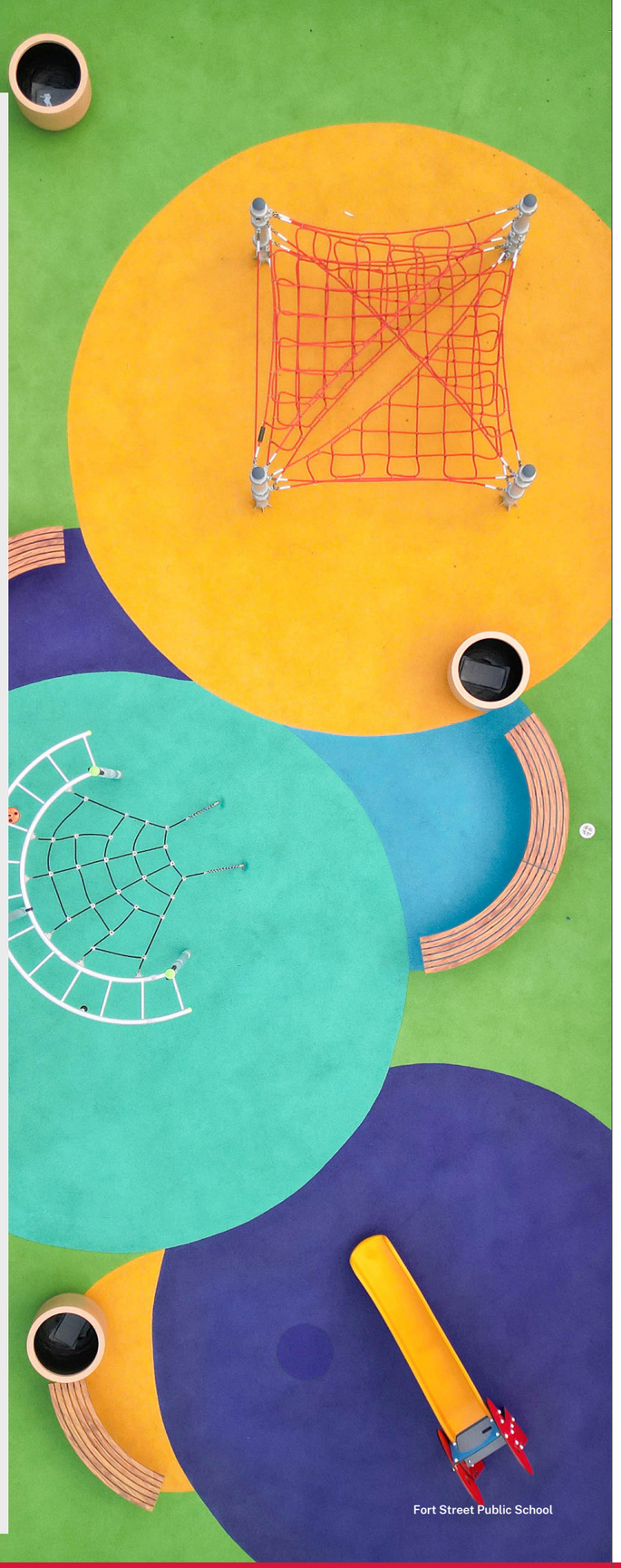
## Who uses the document

This document is available to all users of our schools and is not limited to designers of school facilities.

## List of amendments

This list has been developed to assist document users to identify key changes incorporated into the EFSG 2025. This list provides a description of major changes only.

| Document reference | Change and commentary |
|---|---|
| Throughout | EFSG v2.0 Design Framework Documents are now a superseded document and are incorporated into this document (Design Vision and Objectives) |
| Education Principles | These have been replaced by the Government Architect design principles |
| Design Topic - Whole of Life | EFSG v1.0 DG01 Whole of Life is now a superseded document and has been incorporated into this document (Design Vision and Objectives) |



Fort Street Public School



# Contents

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# 1 Introduction

The visions and objectives outlined within this document ensure that NSW school facilities provide our students with high-quality educational environments now and into the future.

Each design topic detailed within this document supports NSW students to achieve their learning outcomes, whilst meeting the functional requirements of educational environments.  These design topics work together to ensure learning environments meet the wide range of user and community needs.

This document has been developed in collaboration with subject matter experts across School Infrastructure. Design visions and objectives have been brought together into one place and aligned to Department of Education policies, including the strategic goals of Our Plan for NSW Public Education,

Case studies, which outline how to apply the vision and objectives, can be found in chapter 3.

**“Our School Infrastructure meets the needs of a growing population and supports improved student outcomes”**

- Our Plan for NSW Public Education.

## Key definitions

- **Design topics:** 15 strategic design topics that align with the principles outlined in the NSW Government Architect’s ‘Design Guide for Schools’ considered when building or upgrading school facilities ensuring fit for purpose teaching and learning environments.
- **Design vision** translates the Department of Education’s strategic requirements into clear, actionable design goals for School Infrastructure projects. The design vision clarifies the Department’s strategic stance on each design topic and provides design inspiration through case studies.
- **Design objectives** support the vision by providing performance benchmarks and guiding design decisions. Design objectives form the fundamental pillar that support EFSG design and technical requirements.

Bellevue Hill Public School

# NSW Public School students - our educational context

The NSW Department of Education (DoE) is committed to the design of schools to meet the immediate needs of our students, whilst providing adaptability to meet future needs and teaching methods. Every school within NSW provides educational and social spaces to deliver educational environments to support the highest quality academic and social outcomes to enable all our students to thrive.

DoE learning environments are designed to offer teachers and students flexibility in the ways they work and learn together. The design of our learning spaces is based on evidence-based research that supports the highest quality academic and social outcomes for students.

Explicit teaching is the DoE's key teaching method – it happens every day in classrooms across NSW. The eight learning modes below are a set of organising principles that describe different ways in which learning occurs and are part of explicit teaching. These modes of learning inform the design of learning spaces and support users interpreting the features of spaces for teaching and learning.

During learning these modes support teachers to provide a variety of learning experiences to meet the individual learning needs of students. This offers a way to connect teacher and student actions so they can better understand and use the design features across the school.

The Department's design of learning spaces offers a wide variety of features, including larger and smaller spaces, indoor and outdoor learning environments, shared areas, and specialist spaces. Teachers and students can use the combined features of the space, technology and each other during instruction and other activities.

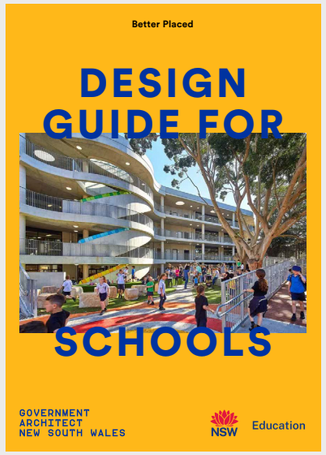
The placement and configuration of furniture is an example of how learning spaces can be readily reconfigured to enable explicit instruction, focused independent work or collaboration. Students benefit from using a variety of learning modes, and teachers help students navigate and use these spaces to meet learning and individual needs.


Eight modes of learning, scaffolding use of space during learning activities, NSW Department of Education.

# Government Architect NSW's design principles

The NSW Government Architect's Design Guide for Schools defines seven design quality principles, expressed as values, to be applied to the design of NSW schools. These principles are embedded within the 15 strategic design topics described within the EFSG Visions and Objectives.

An efficient planning framework is in place to assist in the delivery of infrastructure in NSW. This Transport and Infrastructure State Planning Policy (SEPP), together with the 'Design Guide for Schools' promotes design excellence in school design. The 'Design Guide for Schools' provides a primary reference for designers to ensure that the seven design quality principles are applied throughout the design process. The seven principles are outlined below.




Click to access the Design Guide for Schools

### Responsive to context

Use a connecting with Country process, consider how the surrounding natural and built environments can be preserved and benefit the experience of users, and enhance positive connections with local communities.

### Sustainable, efficient and resilient

Durable and adaptable in an evolving climate – withstanding climate events, heavy use, flexible to respond to future needs, and positively impact on the user's wellbeing. Whole of life considerations must be addressed to reduce maintenance costs, carbon footprint during building and after, and manage the environment such as stormwater and retaining trees and biodiversity.

### Accessible and inclusive

Welcoming and easy to navigate, respond to the varied cultural, age and developmental needs of students and adults on site, enhance belonging, and consideration of including co-location of other education services and community access to shared facilities.

### Healthy and safe

Enhance wellbeing and healthy lifestyles across indoor and outdoor spaces with movement across the site, active play, shade and fresh air. Ensure a safe environment with sight lines and security systems balanced with maintaining a welcoming and accessible school.

### Functional and comfortable

Providing a variety of spaces that are fit for purpose for learning and teaching, as well as enjoyable, comfortable and inclusive. Considerations include future growth of student population, variety of play spaces, and relationships between types of buildings (such as the hall and library) on the school site.

### Flexible and adaptable

Potential future needs and a long-term approach must be addressed by the design so that school spaces are multi-purpose and remain fit for purpose over time as teaching approaches or broader needs (such as community, student cohort or climate impacts) change.

### Visually appealing

Design which reflects a school's important role in the community, is welcoming and pleasing for users. Considerations include having a positive effect on users, the perspective of very young children in spaces, minimising the visual impact of fencing, use of art, and how it fits in with the surrounding landscape.

Refer to Appendix 1 – which illustrates DoE's vision & objectives and their alignment to the Government Architects principles.

# 2

# Design topics

# Standardised design and the pattern book

The application of a standardised design approach ensures that all new NSW school facilities are equitable, consistent in their features, and flexible to support teaching methods. Standardisation refers to using pre-defined planning templates to design school buildings. These designs are created to meet regulatory, functional, and pedagogical requirements efficiently and cost-effectively.

The pattern book, contained within Part C of the EFSG, builds upon the standardised approach to school designs by creating a minimum standard with repeatable design elements and components, which can be applied to new and upgrade schools.

The School Infrastructure Pattern Book builds upon the standardised approach to school designs by creating a minimum standard with repeatable design elements and components, which can be applied to new and upgrade schools.

The development of standardised Learning Hubs reflects research in educational design highlighting the need to provide spaces that are versatile and responsive to the changing dynamics of learning. General Learning hubs are made up of four classrooms (or general learning spaces, GLSs) and two shared spaces (the multipurpose room and the learning commons). The flexibility of GLSs and learning commons with the ability to separate or open up offers the most effective learning environments, adaptability, and allowing for a wide range of teaching and learning experiences within a single hub (Dovey & Fisher, 2014).

Shared learning spaces, including multipurpose spaces and learning commons, offer teachers and students flexibility and choice in where and how they engage in activities. General and Specialist Learning Hubs support varied modes of learning and ensure that students can transition easily between explicit instruction, independent work, collaboration, and reflection.



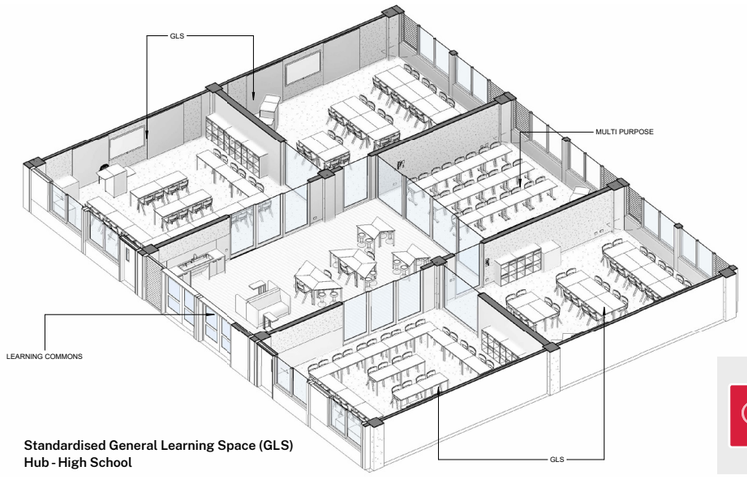


## Vision

**“To build high-quality, adaptable schools quickly and efficiently. Using pre-planned and tested systems, ensuring consistency, quality, and flexibility, enabling schools to meet the evolving needs of students and educators.”**

## Objectives

- **Adopt standardised design for equality**: adopt standardised school designs to ensure that every child in regional New South Wales has the same quality of education as their metropolitan peers.
- **Flexibility and scalability:** provide locally responsive design appropriate for each school community, that can be easily expanded, reconfigured, or adapted for future educational needs, changes in technology, or enrolment changes with minimal cost.
- **Provide locally responsive design:** ensure designs are appropriate to the physical and social environment of the school community.
- **Efficiency in design and construction:** reduce time and costs in planning, design, and construction by reusing pre-approved layouts and specifications
- **Create activated spaces:** enhance learning by designing spaces that support diverse teaching and learning styles and group sizes.
- **Ease of maintenance and operation:** use durable materials and standard systems that reduce maintenance costs and complexity.
- **Consider the whole space:** ensure holistic spatial planning that considers purpose of every area, functional relationships and interconnection of spaces. Ensure designs consider the interrelationship and use of all spaces.
- **Design agile learning environments:** balance dedicated and multipurpose learning spaces and use flexible furniture to enable flexibility and allow intuitive and easy rearrangement for different purposes.




**Standardised General Learning Space (GLS) Hub - High School**

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 2.

# Whole of life

This section sets the foundation for applying and implementing Whole of Life thinking to the design of schools.

Whole of life refers to the total cost and performance of an asset across its entire life span from planning and construction to operation, maintenance, and disposal.

This includes not just direct financial costs but also factors such as quality, durability, fitness for purpose, and value for money. This requires consideration beyond initial delivery costs and extends to include ongoing maintenance, refurbishment and replacement impacts. Schools are effective learning environments when they are durable, easy to maintain and can adapt to changing needs and technologies.

The whole of life approach is aligned with the NSW Treasury - TPP 19-07 Asset Management Policy for the NSW Public Sector and Department of Education – Asset Management Policy

Smalls Road Public School

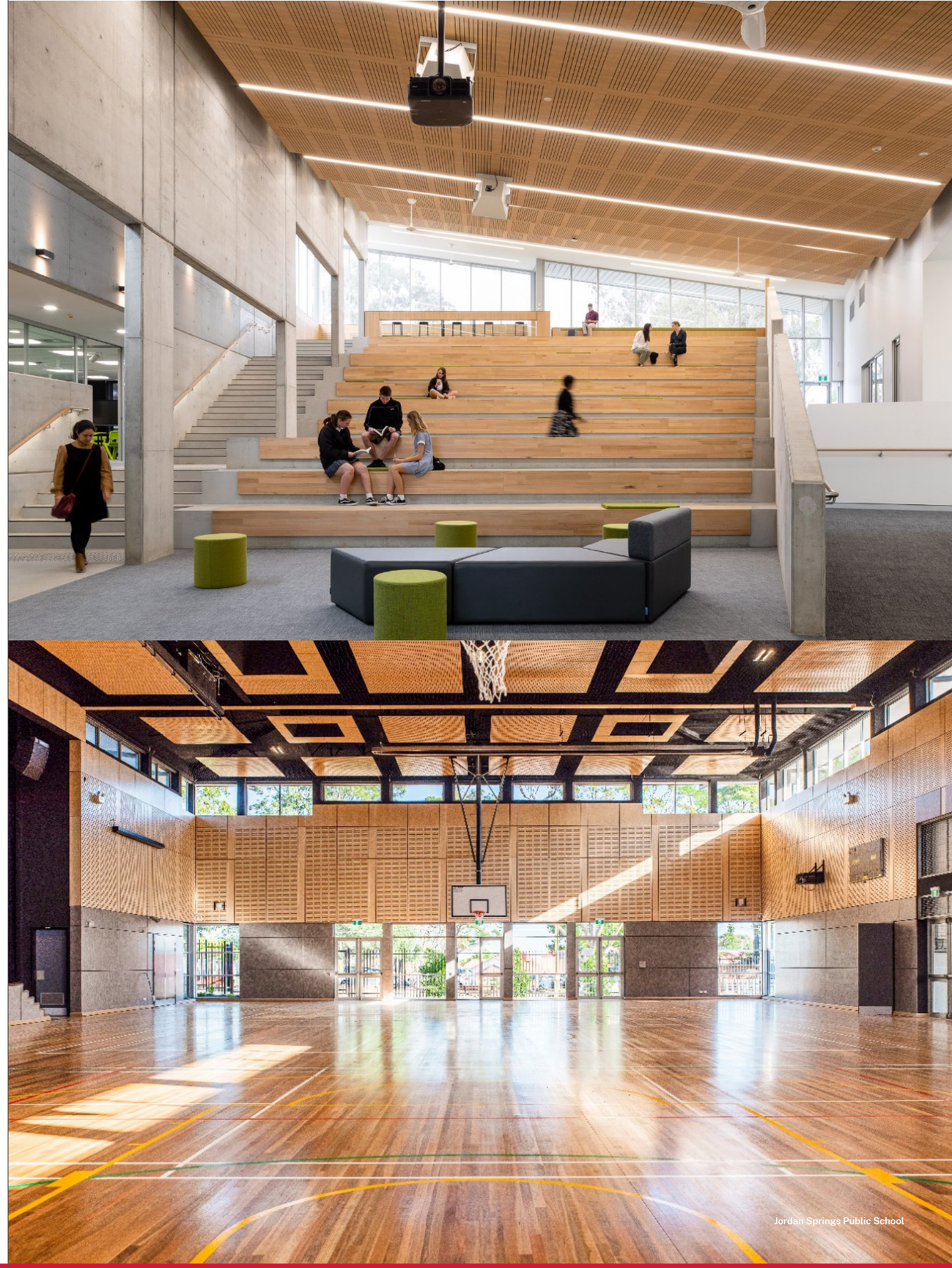
## Vision

**“To plan, design and develop school facilities through a whole of life approach ensuring that school assets and facilities are fit for purpose, maintainable and provide exceptional value for money throughout their lifecycle.”**

## Objectives

- **Adaptable and maintainable:** design school sites to be coherent, adaptable, and maintainable by addressing site-specific conditions, infrastructure access, and local planning requirements.
    - **Long-term maintenance:** designs must allow for safe, efficient maintenance throughout a facility’s life.
    - **Access:** ensure all (future) services and equipment are accessible without disrupting learning.
    - **Multi-service integration and interface:** ensure coordinated planning across all building systems by facilitating early collaboration between disciplines and preventing system choices from adversely impacting one another.

- **Fit for purpose, quality and robustness:** quality is a critical part of delivering a fit-for-purpose design that performs reliably over time, with all materials, components, and systems selected for durability, suitability to their use, low-maintenance lifecycle, and support learning outcomes.
    - **Durable materials:** prioritise durable materials and equipment, with a focus on ease of operation and maintenance and long-term value for money and whole of life costs.
    - **Life span of components:** all specified materials, equipment, and products must meet warranty requirements and be selected for minimal maintenance, commercial availability, and access to spare parts and service expertise. This ensures long-term reliability, reduces the risk of extended downtime or costly replacements, and avoids reliance on niche or custom products that are difficult to support over time.
    - **Enable community use and extended life:** design for shared or after-hours use by the community to increase building utilisation and social value.
    - **Equal opportunity:** facilitate inclusivity and accessibility ensuring equal opportunities for all students to engage with their learning environments.
    - **Match the ergonomic needs of students across age groups.**
    - **Plan for pedagogical evolution and changing needs**: design for flexibility, adaptability, and ease of reconfiguration (e.g., Changing pedagogy, enrolment numbers or technological evolution). Be flexible and accommodate changes in pedagogy and technology.
    - **Support health, wellbeing, and learning outcomes:** create high-quality learning environments that promote thermal comfort, daylight, acoustics, and indoor air quality over the long term.
- **Value for money:** deliver strong value for money by balancing capital and lifecycle costs with educational outcomes, prioritising long-term performance over initial savings, and avoiding unnecessary complexity or cost reductions that compromise quality and longevity.
    - **Minimise rework:** minimise rework by considering whole-of-life aspects in design and exploring options to avoid future modifications. Maximise useability of internal and external space available to maximise efficiencies.
    - **Reduce operational costs:** maximise usability of the school asset and facilities and reduce ongoing maintenance and operational costs. (Data driven approach)
    - **Sustainability, esd and greenstar:** focus on long-term performance by balancing capital and lifecycle costs with educational and environmental outcomes, avoiding unnecessary complexity, and ensuring sustainability is considered equally alongside value for money across the asset's life.
- **Continuous improvement and innovation:** use post-occupancy evaluations (PoEs) to drive continuous improvement, minimise unnecessary costs, and reduce reactive maintenance.
    - **Innovation:** support evidence-based innovation by adopting only technologies with proven long-term performance and avoiding untested solutions lacking reliable lifecycle data.



Jordan Springs Public School

# Designing with Country

Communities benefit from environments that respect Aboriginal custodianship of Country and which respond to Country in their built environments. Undertaking co-design of school environments with Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders enhances the connection all Australians have with the place, the natural environment, and fosters culturally responsive and inclusive environments.



## Vision

**“To create culturally responsive and inclusive school environments that celebrate Aboriginal custodianship of Country and strengthens relationships between schools and local Aboriginal communities. To ensure co-design is meaningfully undertaken with Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders and that Aboriginal communities always provide informed consent for Designing with Country.”**

## Objectives

- **Connecting with Country:** Create school environments that connect with Country, are respectful, and welcoming to the Aboriginal community.
- **Recognise** the material and spiritual connection of Aboriginal people to the land, waters and sky of Country. Acknowledge that Aboriginal people have the right to be recognised by their local and distinct identities.
- **Commit** to a process of equitable and meaningful co-de sign with Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders to develop school environments that create culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal people, embeds Aboriginal cultural knowledge and truth telling, and celebrate Country for all NSW public schools.
- **Understand** that Designing with Country cannot be commenced without the input of Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders. Understand that Designing with Country cannot be completed until the cultural knowledge holders who have participated in co-design have confirmed and supported the design.
- **Respect** that Aboriginal people have complete ownership of their cultural and intellectual knowledge and have the right to decide how this is shared with others. Understand that Aboriginal cultural knowledge can never be used without the active consent of local Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders.
- **Uphold** the Partnership Agreement with the Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group (AECG) as the Department of Education’s peak Aboriginal community advisory body.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 5.

# Heritage

## Vision

**To celebrate, conserve, protect, use and adapt heritage assets for the benefit of the community and future generations through informed best practice heritage management. Recognising that the heritage values of historical schools is maintained through their continued use as placed of learning by ensuring that our heritage places are fit for purpose for modern pedagogy to maintain this heritage significance into the future.**





## Objectives

- **Understand heritage significance:** understand the history and heritage values of our historic places when adapting them for future use. Be guided by the specific heritage values of that place in the design process.
- **Conserve heritage significance:** ensure new developments are sympathetic to the heritage significance of existing heritage items and sensitive to the streetscape qualities of heritage conservation areas. Ensure significant fabric is conserved and maintained.
- **Active use:** maintain active, continued use for historic schools and buildings and that their prominence and contribution to the school's identity is identified and conserved
- **Maintain character:** maintain and enhance the historical significance, distinctive character and identity of a place, including its specific history, architectural style and contribution to the streetscape.
- **Community identity:** design schools that reflect and communicate the unique historic character and local identity of the neighbourhood, fostering a sense of belonging and community pride.
- **Cautious approach:** take a cautious approach to changing heritage places – do as much as necessary to achieve the project goals but change as little as possible to meet those objectives
- **Celebrate heritage:** celebrate the heritage significance of school sites as an integral part of the school's identity and a testament to local or state history.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 3.

Mosman High School

# Sustainability

Schools are central to our communities, providing unique opportunities for students and their families to engage with their local environment and the need for adaption to changed environmental conditions over time. The design of school facilities balances environmental impacts with a school's operational requirements for its local conditions. Effective school design can actively demonstrate the benefits on environmental, social and wellbeing considerations achieved through good design, including reductions in initial and whole of life resources; cost saving; participation in the circular economy; and climate change adaptation and mitigation.



## Vision

**"To design school facilities that embody sustainability, flexibility, and resilience, integrating these core principles into every facet of educational infrastructure's lifecycle. By focusing on environmentally and socially responsible and adaptable designs, we aim to create spaces that evolve with the educational needs of current and future generations while minimising their environmental impact."**

## Sustainability objectives

- **Resource efficiency:** minimise the use of energy, water, and other natural resources in construction and operation, through a high performance, airtight and thermally efficient envelope, and highly efficient systems and equipment.
- **Climate mitigation:** minimise scope 1, 2, and 3 greenhouse gas emissions through construction material choices, optimisation and standardisation of construction processes, elimination of fossil fuel use, reduced electricity use, installation of renewable electricity generation equipment, reduction of waste to landfill, and installation of facilities to encourage low-emission staff and student commuting.
- **High indoor environmental quality:** design regularly occupied spaces with high thermal performance that promote the use of daylight and natural ventilation and biophilia, and minimising or eliminating indoor pollutants. This minimises the need for artificial lighting and mechanical heating, cooling and ventilation systems and supports occupant wellbeing.
- **Circularity of resources:** support a circular economy by first avoiding resource use where possible, then reducing waste generation by prioritising reuse. Where necessary promote recycling by providing equipment and facilities to implement effective waste management and resource recovery.
- **Smart control of electric equipment:** implement active, demand-response control systems to provide operational flexibility, manage equipment efficiently, save energy, and reduce emissions.
- **Integrated design approach:** utilise systems thinking and whole-of-life considerations to identify synergies between building systems, site, and community, optimising service integration and efficiency over the building's lifespan.
- **Sets high environmental benchmarks:** design and construction, and facilities, are rated to industry recognised, independently verified, high standards of performance

# Resilience and adaptability objectives

- **Community resilience:** design school spaces that can be used by the entire community, increasing efficiency and fostering stronger connections, which enhances overall resilience of the community.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 3.

- **Flexible and durable facilities:** build robust facilities that can easily adapt to changing educational needs and environmental conditions, reducing the need to demolish and rebuild.
- **Preparedness for hazards:** ensure schools are built to withstand natural and urban hazards and shocks and can adapt to long-term climate change stresses and impacts, reducing disruptions and repair costs.



Sustainability

# Inclusive design

Inclusive design enables all staff, students and parents or carers to authentically participate and belong within their school environment. Inclusive design is not limited to the functionality of spaces and the proactive removal of barriers, it ensures dignity, independence and equity for all.

Budawang SSP

## Vision

**“To design and build schools that enable inclusivity, equity and dignity, supporting the operationalisation of inclusive practices, creating a strong sense of belonging.”**

## Objectives

- **New and upgraded infrastructure is fit for purpose:** infrastructure supports the rights of students with disabilities to enrol and participate in NSW schools on the same basis as students without disabilities
- **Reduced reliance on integration funding over time:** the provision of more inclusive infrastructure over time will reduce the need for integration projects to address infrastructure limitations in the future as buildings age, by considering longevity and potential future needs of occupants.
- **Everyone feels they belong within their local school community:** students feel confident, safe and emotionally connected to their built environment and are not impeded or excluded by the infrastructure.
- **Students with disability are best able to meet their full potential:** infrastructure provision enables equity, dignity and maximises potential for independence for all users, providing occupants with the infrastructure supports needed to participate in learning equally.
- **School Infrastructure work as effective and meaningful allies:** responsibility for increasing awareness of bias and implementing inclusive design is shared by all employees and demonstrated through building well considered, functional, innovative and inclusive infrastructure.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 4.

# Supported learning settings for students with disability

Supported learning settings offer students with diverse, and complex needs a learning environment with smaller class sizes, personalised support, and a more flexible approach to learning. These settings are in mainstream schools and schools for specific purposes. The design of these settings means students' learning is supported by infrastructure, equipment, technology, and specialist staff ensuring appropriate learning adjustments and targeted support occurs for successful transition to post-school further study and employment.



## Vision

**"To design and build supported learning settings where all students have access to the full curriculum and thrive in a fit for purpose environment, whilst forming meaningful connections to peers and community as life-long learners."**

## Supported learning classes objectives

- **Design reinforces students are full participating members of the student cohort:** Design supports meaningful participation and connection to mainstream settings, to support a sense of belonging and, foster inclusion
- **Design to reflect mainstream settings:** Supporting transition to and from supported learning classes to mainstream, providing familiarity and equity in provision
- **Support equitable, dignified and safe transitions to, from and on site:** Provide choice and flexibility in master planning and design to accommodate a variety of needs and preferences
- **Provide opportunity for integrated play and social activity:** Encourage development of social skills and interaction with peers where appropriate, to develop a sense of belonging, whilst supporting the diverse needs of students
- **Provide convenient, independent and dignified access to a choice of sanitary facilities:** considering needs of a wide range of occupants to ensure safe access to appropriate sanitary facilities are not a barrier to school attendance.
- **Provide passive and active supervision to maximise student independence whilst maintaining safety:** Key lines of sight enable staff to supervise

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 4.

# Schools for specific purposes (SSP) objectives

- **Demonstrate inclusive design practices at all stages:** All needs and strengths are included and welcomed. Infrastructure should support change, choice and progress and enable authentic and meaningful participation in learning. The design should enable unconditional positive regard, trusting that students can develop new skills, whether they be academic or regulation, to increase their agency.
- **Focus on achieving outcomes:** Learning growth, wellbeing, and independence are fostered in all school spaces. SSP design should provide students with access to curriculum that meets their needs, independence goals, educational outcomes, and aspirations.
- **Reflect any other school:** Eliminate isolated and unique design, demonstrate likeness to other schools. SSPs should look and feel like a mainstream school, so that students can participate in their education on the same basis as all NSW students, whilst still offering student specialist support to support successful learning.
- **Reflect the cohort:** Adapt to the needs and strengths of the student group and allow for change. SSPs need to balance the diverse needs of the cohort, as those needs change over time, with a variety of types of learning and regulation spaces, guiding students to readiness to learn.
- **Embed safety in design:** Provide key safety in learning spaces to all students and staff that balances user requirements and operations. SSPs should be designed carefully to reduce high risk student behaviours and the impact of lockdowns on learning, whilst drawing on trauma-informed practices and design.
- **Promote staff wellbeing:** Design enables staff to effectively undertake their work, and provides supportive spaces to allow staff to rest and recover, and positively promote wellbeing. SSP design should proactively contribute to staff wellbeing ensuring staff feel welcome, safe and valued through the provision of adequate and fit for purpose facilities.

Tirriwirri SSP

# Site planning and building design

Schools bring benefits to whole communities, providing a welcoming social anchor within a neighbourhood. The planning and design of school buildings and outdoor spaces should consider the surrounding context, the topography and environmental features of the site and how families access the school site, during and after school, to ensure that the school is welcoming and appropriate to its surrounding built environment.

## Vision

**“Schools bring benefits to whole communities, providing a welcoming social anchor within a neighbourhood. The planning and design of school buildings and outdoor spaces should consider the surrounding context, the topography and environmental features of the site and how families access the school site, during and after school, to ensure that the school is welcoming and appropriate to its surrounding built environment.”**

Homebush West Public School

## Site planning objectives

- **Create welcoming school environments:** design schools with welcoming and generous entrances that foster a sense of belonging and community connection, featuring clear street addresses, distinctive character, and inviting frontages to create a positive learning atmosphere.
- **Integrate with surroundings:** sympathetically integrate schools into the neighbourhood, leveraging existing landscape features and microclimate to maximise natural amenities and provide shading to play space and communal areas.
- **Contribute to streetscape:** enhance the public realm by improving streetscape and character and celebrate heritage and local history where applicable.
- **Ensure safe access:** provide safe and direct walking and cycling routes, clear wayfinding, and well-located entry points with safe access for vehicles and pedestrians.
- **Promote open spaces:** use planting, landscape elements, and fencing to create open spaces that contribute to the public domain and provide easily supervised areas for all age groups.
- **Support community use:** design flexible school facilities that are accessible for community use outside of school hours, supporting collaboration and shared infrastructure initiatives with local partners.
- **Minimise neighbour impact:** reduce the impact on neighbouring properties by considering overshadowing, scale, overlooking and built form character.
- **Foster community and student well-being:** create opportunities for social interaction within new school developments.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 1.

## Built form and scale objectives

- **Visual quality and coherence:** ensure that new developments contribute positively to the visual quality of the built environment, with a focus on architectural merit and aesthetic coherence.
- **Harmonisation with surroundings:** design buildings that harmonise with their surroundings, considering scale, massing, and materials that respect and enhance the local context.
- **Conserve heritage significance:** ensure new developments are sympathetic to the heritage significance of existing heritage items and sensitive to the streetscape qualities of heritage conservation areas. Ensure significant fabric is conserved and maintained.
- **Maintain character:** maintain and enhance the historical significance, distinctive character and identity of a place, including its specific history, architectural style and contribution to the streetscape.
- **Child centred design:** design building forms and spaces that prioritise children's needs by designing for their scale, movement, sensory experience and well-being.

Jordan Springs Public School

# Landscape and open space

Outdoor play and access to landscaped area provides social and educational benefits. Effective landscape design provides a variety of safe and inclusive outdoor spaces that support student learning, play, social, connection to their peers, with nature and to Country.

Bangalow Public School





## Vision

**To create high-quality open spaces in NSW public schools that serve as vibrant community hubs, fostering learning, sustainability, and a strong connection to Country and local communities. We aim for these spaces to support harmonious coexistence with the environment and provide safe, engaging play spaces that promote physical development and recreation for students and the broader community.**

## Landscape quality objectives

- **Integration of design:** incorporate landscape design into school developments to enhance on-site amenities, contribute positively to the streetscape, and mitigate negative impacts on neighbouring sites.
- **Site conditions:** utilise natural site elements such as existing trees, topography, orientation, and climate to inform the spatial organisation of buildings, particularly for future school expansion and demountable staging.
- **Culturally responsive design:** create landscape designs that allows for flexible gathering spaces, reflect the cultural values and needs of the community.
- **High-standard design:** promote an exceptional standard of landscape design across all school sites.
- **Environmental preservation:** preserve and enhance natural habitats, biodiversity, and ecosystem services through efforts such as retention of mature vegetation where possible, habitat restoration, green infrastructure, and wildlife corridors.
- **Planting and fencing:** encourage planting and fencing that opens up existing vistas and views, contributing to the public domain.

## Environmental considerations objectives

- **Heat island effect:** promote impervious surfaces, natural materials and canopy where possible to reduce the heat island effect across school sites.
- **Tree canopy expansion:** increase tree canopy coverage to provide natural shading and cooling for outdoor spaces, and provide environmental benefits
- **High natural capital:** prioritise the planting of endemic plant species and enhancement of natural features, that provide habitats for endemic animals.
- **Deep soil zones:** facilitate tree canopy growth and manage rain and stormwater through deep soil zones, allowing for better water infiltration and overland flow management.
- **Preserve natural habitats:** preserve and enhance natural biodiversity and ecosystem services in and around school developments, using measures such as regenerative landscape design,habitat restoration, green infrastructure, and wildlife corridors.
- **Water sensitive design:** design water systems that follow the topography of the site and explore opportunities to reuse water, reduce flooding and maximise natural irrigation of the school site.

## Outdoor learning and play spaces objectives

- **Natural and joyful play spaces:** create natural, joyful, and inspiring play and recreation areas that are specifically designed to meet the developmental needs of students.
- **Diverse play and learning opportunities:** provide a wide range of play and learning opportunities to cater to different types of play and to engage students of all ages.
- **Safe and inclusive spaces:** ensure that all outdoor spaces are designed to be safe, accessible, and inclusive for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.
- **Supervision-friendly design:** provide open spaces that are easy to supervise and appropriate for use by various age groups, enhancing safety and visibility.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 5.

Lidcombe Public School

Prestons Public School

# Transport, circulation and movement

Connecting a school to the local transport networks ensures safe, efficient and sustainable travel to school and includes all modes of transport including pedestrians, cyclists, public transport options and cars. Movement to and within a school is influenced by external road conditions and site conditions and opportunities to provide welcoming pedestrian entrances connecting a school with its community.


## Vision

**“To create a safe, efficient, and sustainable transport network that prioritises active transport and public transport, enhances community connectivity, and fosters a healthy and accessible environment for all students and staff.”**

## Transport objectives

- **Sustainable and efficient transport:** ensure efficient transport to and from schools, minimising travel time and costs while promoting sustainable modes such as walking, cycling, and public transport.
- **Active transport promotion:** encourage students to use active transport options like walking and cycling to reduce reliance on private vehicles and promote healthy lifestyles.
- **Connectivity and liveability:** improve school design and surrounding infrastructure to enhance connectivity and liveability, supporting safe and convenient access for all users.

## Pedestrian movement objectives

- **Accessibility:** ensure barrier-free access for all users, including those with disabilities, seniors, and families with strollers, by providing adequate pathways, ramps, kerb ramps, and clear signage.
- **Pedestrian safety:** prioritise pedestrian movement and safety over vehicular traffic within the school grounds to encourage active transport options and reduce potential conflICTs.
- **Community impact:** minimise disruption to the surrounding community caused by student arrivals and departures by designing safe and efficient pedestrian routes.

## Parking facilities objectives

- **Encouraging sustainable transport:** limit staff car parking provisions on school sites to promote the use of active transport and public transport options.
- **Site-specific parking solutions:** provide adequate off-street parking based on site-specific characteristics, taking into account proximity to public transport and available active transport infrastructure.

## Vehicular movement objectives

- **Traffic management:** optimise vehicular traffic flow to minimise congestion, delays, and conflicts with pedestrians, especially during peak school hours.
- **Safety measures:** implement vehicle risk mitigation strategies such as separating vehicle and pedestrian zones, reducing vehicle speeds, and addressing potential risks to students walking to school or bus stops.
- **On-site parking:** provide on-site parking for staff should with a view to encourage public transport and carpooling and reduce the reliance on private vehicles.
- **On-site parking:** provide adequate areas on-site to accommodate activities associated with delivery, service and emergency vehicles and facilitate vehicle movement in forward-in and forward-out direction.

## Drop-off and pick-up zones objectives

- **Efficient flow:** design drop-off and pick-up areas on the school side of a street to support smooth traffic flow, reducing congestion and conflicts with pedestrians.
- **Facilities provision:** provide safe drop-off and pick-up facilities for students using private vehicles, aligned with the findings of the transport assessment.

## Bus zones objectives

- **Bus access:** ensure safe and efficient access to bus services for staff, students, and parents at the school frontage, considering the need for bus stop pairs for bi-directional services where applicable.

## Bicycle parking and end of trip facilities objectives

- **Bike and scooter parking:** provide parking for bicycles and scooters in line with the mode share targets in the transport assessment, and in a paved area with weather protection that is adjacent to a bike accessible school entry within the school secure fence line. Spatial allocation and position should include for potential future expansion and flexibility.
- **End of trip facilities:** provide end of trip facilities for staff within school sites in line with the Green Star credit requirements.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 4.

Bellevue Hill Public School

# Sharing school spaces

Sharing our schools enhances wellbeing outcomes to our wider local communities by providing opportunities for positive social and physical interactions through either joint use or shared use of school facilities during and after school hours. Sharing spaces aligns with wider planning policies focussing on providing access to open play space and playing fields.

## Vision

**“To foster vibrant, connected communities through the innovative and shared use of school spaces, enhancing educational outcomes and community wellbeing.”**

## Collaboration opportunities objectives

- **Authentic relationships:** build authentic relationships with community partners to co-design and develop shared facilities that meet the diverse needs of students and the wider community.
- **Higher quality facilities:** provide students with access to higher-quality facilities and a broader range of services and activities through shared agreements.
- **Versatile spaces:** support the development of versatile spaces that can be adapted to meet the evolving needs of both the school and the community, enhancing resilience and future-proofing infrastructure.

## Integrated community access objectives

- **Community connections:** enhance community connections by integrating school spaces with local amenities, such as recreation, health services, higher education, and transport.
- **Multipurpose spaces:** design multipurpose spaces that support both school and community activities, promoting greater community engagement and use outside school hours.
- **School as public places:** celebrate Country and diversity by creating a public place with versatile school facilities that can be shared with the community, catering to activities beyond school hours.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 1.

# Borders and boundaries

School design considers its local context and uses a variety of physical elements to provide define school boundaries to create a safe and secure operational school environment. By applying strategies including building as boundary, fences and landscape features, a school is able to welcome the community whilst balancing the safety of students and create a sense of belonging within its community context.

Liverpool West Public School



## Vision

**To create school boundaries that ensure safety, foster community, promote equity, and celebrate inclusivity, serving as catalysts for academic excellence and social cohesion within the educational landscape.**

## Objectives

- **Safety:** Ensure the physical and emotional security of everyone in the school community by implementing rigorous security measures and emergency protocols to create a safe learning environment.
- **Protection:** Safeguard school resources — buildings, technology, instructional materials, and personal property — from theft, vandalism, and other security threats. Encourage planting and fencing that protect open spaces and preserve significant views and vistas within the local environment.
- **Safeguard:** Students, Staff and the school community — from threats and protecting wellbeing. Encourage planting and fencing to offer protection to all people onsite, directing them to appropriate areas within the school.
- **Community:** Design school boundaries as connectors that foster collaboration and a sense of belonging among students, families, and educators. Support developments contributing positively to the streetscape and character of the area.
- **Equity:** Ensure equal access to resources by designing school boundaries that address disparities, supporting every student in achieving academic and personal success.
- **Inclusivity:** Celebrate diversity by designing boundaries that recognise and respect the unique identities of all individuals. Create an inclusive environment where school boundaries serve as bridges, connecting diverse communities and fostering a sense of belonging.
- **Quality:** Adopt a comprehensive approach to boundary design that upholds high standards in safety, security, community engagement, equity, and inclusivity, ensuring a top-quality educational experience for all.
- **Support:** Provide schools with tailored designs and risk assessments to maintain a safe and protected environment for everyone.

# Technology and communications

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems are designed to support schools by enabling anywhere and anytime access to technological systems, supporting learning, teaching, and school operations. ICT systems are designed to be flexible and future-proofed to accommodate innovation, changing pedagogy and student needs over time.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 2.





## Vision

**To provide seamless, adaptable, and future-ready technology that enhances learning and supports school operations. By ensuring easy access to ICT throughout learning spaces, students can learn and connect anytime, anywhere. The technology is designed to evolve, allowing new tools to be added and easily maintained over time.**

## Seamless ICT access and integration objectives

- **Seamless ICT access:** ensure seamless access to information and communication technology (ICT) throughout learning spaces, enabling learning and connection anywhere, anytime.
- **Support school operations:** provide access to building performance data, such as energy and water use, to support the efficient and effective operation and use of school buildings.

## Adaptability of technology objectives

- **Evolving technology use:** technology evolves over time, as does its role in education. ICT should be deployed with flexibility in mind, ensuring that various technologies can be introduced or expanded in school spaces.
- **Future-proofing ICT deployment:** careful consideration should be given to deploying ICT in a way that ensures it operates seamlessly despite future changes in the learning environment, including the introduction of new technologies or expansion of existing ones.

## Serviceability and durability objectives

- **Serviceability:** ICT infrastructure should be designed for easy replacement, repair, removal, and upgrading. This allows for flexibility and future changes, ensuring minimal disruption to the learning environment.
- **Durability:** ICT systems should be installed to minimise exposure to weather, wildlife, or accidental damage, extending their lifespan and reducing maintenance needs.

## Infrastructure as a learning tool objectives

- **Educational value of building design:** utilise data from buildings and operational technology as educational tools, allowing students to learn from their surroundings and better understand the technology and infrastructure in place.

## Resource efficiency objectives

- **Flexible:** design spaces to be flexible, supporting evolving pedagogies and technologies, and adaptable for multiple purposes where practical.
- **Suitable:** to be ergonomically suited to the age of the users

# Safety in design

The robust nature of the school environment as learning and play spaces requires a balance of safety through the design of facilities with risk management to deliver fit for purpose, safe and enjoyable school environments. Embedding safety in the design of schools enhances people's sense of belonging, is inclusive of people with all abilities and enables all school users to feel safe in how they use their schools.



## Vision

**"To create school environments that are safe, accessible, and welcoming to all individuals. A focus on spaces that are equitable and inclusive promote diversity, foster a sense of belonging, and supporting learning and wellbeing. By implementing comprehensive security systems and proactive safety measures, we aim to provide stable, secure and uninterrupted learning environments for students and the school community."**

## Objectives

- **Risk management:** eliminate and minimise risks early and throughout the life of the asset to reduce potential harm and increase efficiency, in line with the 'reasonably practicable' principle to protect people from harm under the NSW work health and safety act 2011.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** effective stakeholder engagement during the project lifecycle that creates opportunities for meaningful consultation and continuous improvement.
- **Safe access:** design buildings and surrounding areas to be accessible and safe for everyone, supporting an inclusive and secure environment.
- **Best practice:** make sure all design and construction work meet legal requirements and safety standards, while balancing functionality, appearance, and cost.
- **Optimise health safety and wellbeing:** implement safety in design strategies that protect the health, safety and wellbeing of all users, promoting high-quality indoor and outdoor environmental quality, whilst enhancing asset usability and performance.
- **Promote wellbeing through design:** create environments that enhance the physical and emotional wellbeing of students and staff by integrating natural light, ventilation, and green spaces, while prioritising landscape design to support outdoor activities and overall wellbeing.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 5.

# Safety and security

Ensuring the safety of all students, staff and visitors to NSW school and the protection of school assets through design and using proactive prevention and effective security systems (digital and physical).

Chatswood High School



## Vision

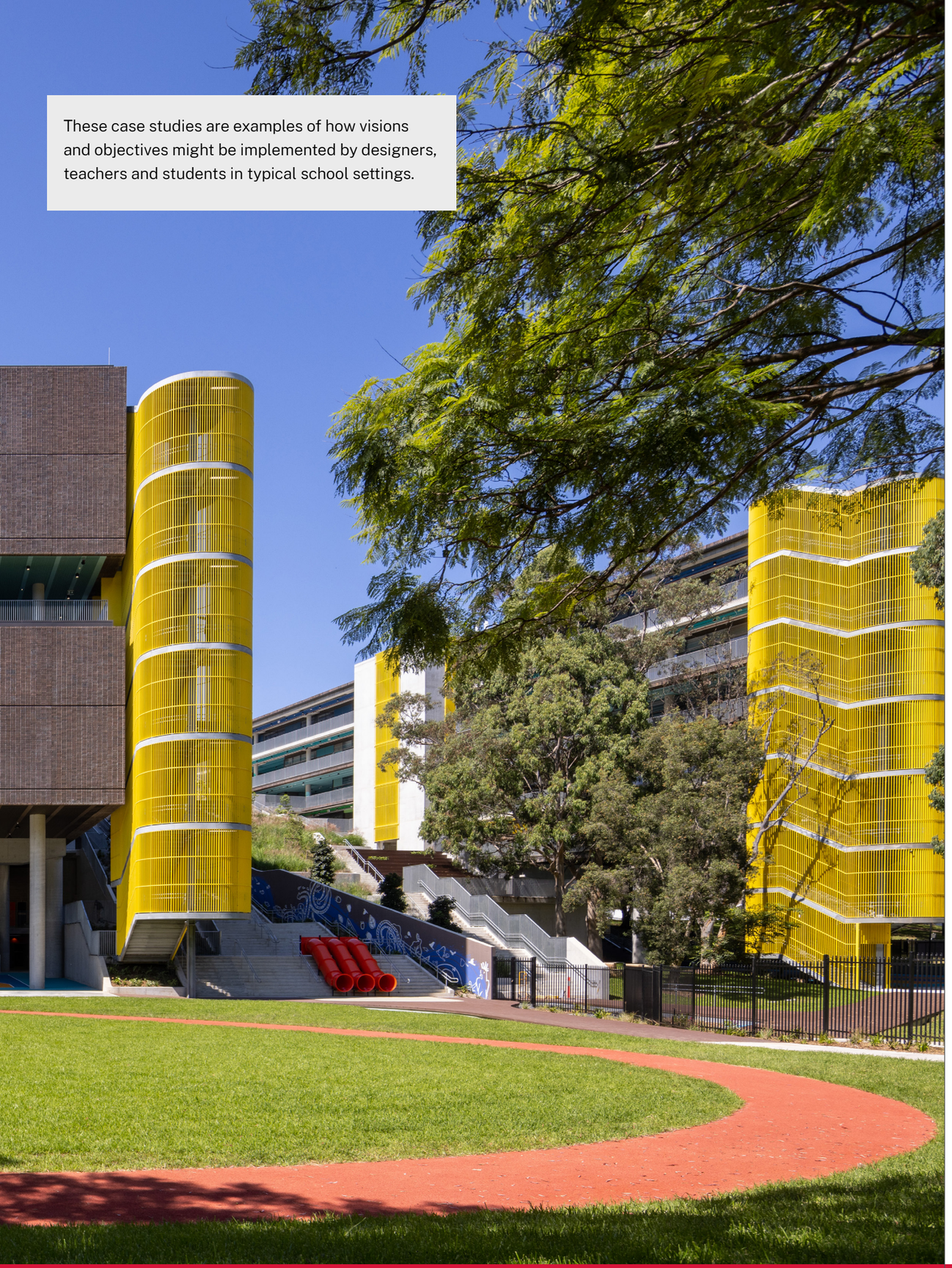
**“To create safe learning environments through comprehensive and holistic school security design solutions, providing proactive threat prevention and emergency preparedness.”**

## Objectives

- **Safety of students, staff, and the community:** ensuring the safety of students, staff, and the community is the primary focus of the department of education (DoE) schools. This includes safeguarding property and assets as a key component of this objective.
- **Maintaining school site integrity:** protect the school site from external threats by clearly defining physical boundaries and property lines. Secure and well-maintained school sites enhance safety and deter unauthorised access.
- **Comprehensive security design:** implement a comprehensive, multilayered security approach for all DoE schools, including physical barriers, intruder alarms, CCTV, and electronic access control. This ensures that if one security measure fails, others are in place to mitigate risks and maintain safety.
- **Proactive threat prevention:** anticipate potential threats and implement measures to prevent them before they occur. Security infrastructure must be adaptable to support current and future needs, allowing for changes with minimal impact on existing services and users.

# 3

# Case studies



These case studies are examples of how visions and objectives might be implemented by designers, teachers and students in typical school settings.

# Case study one

## Hadla's agriculture spring fair

Hadla, a year 3 student, is excitedly preparing for her school's Agriculture Spring Fair. She and her classmates are working with their teacher to set up the school hall and adjacent Covered Outdoor Learning Area (COLA). The fair will showcase a project that connects her class with the local museum, highlighting how school buildings and educational practices have evolved over the school's 100-year history. The students investigated past extracurricular activities, such as public speaking, sporting events, and even chicken breeding, to understand the role the school has played in their community.

At the heart of our School Infrastructure design vision is the belief that every student deserves access to learning environments that support their individual needs and experience of success. This belief is reflected in the experiences of students, such as Hadla in our case study, showing how carefully designed learning spaces can foster academic growth, collaboration, and engagement, while supporting their unique journeys.

Hadla's experience shows:

- Her experience in flexible indoor and outdoor environments collaborating with peers and with community.
- Using the school hall and COLA for the Agriculture Spring Fair shows how school spaces can be shared with the local community.
- Collaboration with the local museum provides hands-on learning that extends beyond the classroom.
- It allows her to have ownership and pride over her work as well as experiencing a strong connection between her and the community.

**This case study illustrates how our designs enable schools to be at the centre of their local communities, with the physical infrastructure of schools bringing people together, supporting Our Plan for NSW Public Education.**

# Case study two

## Eveyln's regional transition

Evelyn is a new student at a regional school, having recently transferred from a metropolitan school. Despite the change in location, Evelyn feels at ease navigating the learning spaces thanks to the standardised design of her new school. She and her classmates are working on a multimedia poetry project. The teachers have allowed students to work across the English learning hub in this lesson. It offers flexible options for group work, individual focus, and multimedia creation. Evelyn can choose to work collaboratively with her peers in the learning commons, a teacher in one of the general learning spaces, or find a quieter space in the multipurpose room when she needs more focus.

The core of our design for School Infrastructure is to be high quality, fit for purpose learning environments. This can be seen in the experience of students like Evelyn where features of the learning space itself prompt and support technology enabled, high-quality learning no matter the location in NSW.

Evelyn's experience shows:

- How different features of a learning environment can support her engaging with various modes of learning, and allows her to either get support from her teacher or learn through independent or collaborative work.
- Her familiarity with adaptable spaces in the standardised learning hub is carried through her schooling experience across different schools.
- The seamless integration of ICT supports her multimedia projects and provides opportunity to learn.

**This case study illustrates how our designs promote seamless access to ICT and support a range of teaching strategies, ensuring schools remain relevant and adaptable as students achieve and prepare for a meaningful future, supporting Our Plan for NSW Public Education.**

# Case study three

## Mateo's exploration in vocational education and training

Mateo, a senior student, begins his lesson in the commercial kitchen gathering data on hygiene practices for Hospitality. Once his group completes their data collection, they move into the learning commons, where they gather around a large table to discuss safe food practices. Natural sunlight pours in through the bay windows of the heritage building, creating a seamless blend of functionality and historic preservation. After the discussion, Mateo and his classmates return to their General Learning Space (GLS), using their laptops to take part in a self-marking revision quiz. The spaces allow student transition from one mode of learning to another, enabling students to engage in practical work, collaboration, and independent learning — all within the same lesson.

At the forefront of our school design vision is the integration of sustainable and adaptable infrastructure that meets the needs of students while promoting environmental stewardship. This can be seen in the experiences of students like Mateo, a senior student engaged in hands-on, collaborative learning in a flexible environment that is both adaptable and promotes both academic growth.

Mateo's experience shows:

- School design supports his use of various learning modes: hands-on, group collaboration in commons, and individual study in GLS.
- Flexible spaces are easily adaptable and durable, grouped to maximise the use of specialist spaces providing resources for students like Mateo to excel.
- Heritage elements connect students with the school's history, while continued use preserves long-term heritage values.
- Supports vocational education, apprenticeships, and HSC pathways, ensuring students graduate ready for success as informed, responsible citizens.

**This case study illustrates how our designs promote equitable access to multi-purpose learning spaces that encourage lifelong learning and work skills development, supporting Our Plan for NSW Public Education.**

# Case study four

## Isla’s tour of the school

Isla, a confident Year 4 student, is leading new students and their families on a tour of her school. As she walks them through the school’s entry access from the street front, she points out the school’s mural near the entrance. The mural is vibrant and celebrates the many nationalities of origin across the school community, setting the tone for the inclusive atmosphere that defines her school. As they head to the library, Isla points out the walking track that winds through their sensory garden that students use during break time or when they need an activity to support a return to readiness to learn.

Creating safe, inclusive, and welcoming spaces is at the core of our vision for School Infrastructure. Through thoughtful design, we ensure that every student feels a sense of belonging and that all members of the school community are valued and supported. This is represented by the experience of students like Isla, a Year 4 student, whose school’s design reflects its commitment to inclusion and community identity.

Isla’s experience shows:

- The community-focused design fosters belonging and connection and she can proudly show off her school through features like the welcoming mural.
- The value placed on diverse experiences and needs through physical aspects of the school design.

These features are a symbol of this school’s culture, reducing disparities in student outcomes by addressing diverse community needs and ensuring all students feel safe, allowing them to thrive.

- Isla and her friends enjoy the welcoming school entrance as well as the active outdoor spaces, such as a walking track and sensory garden, supporting their physical and mental health.

**This case study illustrates how our designs prioritise safe, inclusive spaces that enhance student wellbeing and provide equitable access to high-quality learning environments, supporting Our Plan for NSW Public Education.**



# Case study five

## Mr Vincent’s preschool playground

Mr Vincent supervises his preschool class of 4 year-olds in the playground. The preschool is co-located in a primary school. The space has been carefully crafted to balance open play areas with structured environments, ensuring safety, teacher line of sight while supporting the children’s need for exploration and play based learning. Some children choose to explore the dry creek bed in the nature play area, a space that was designed in collaboration with the local NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc (AECG) to reflect an important local river. Other children are using a play structure as a shop, role playing selling ‘sand pies’ in a shared imaginative game.

Our vision for School Infrastructure is deeply rooted in the belief that culturally responsive design can promote excellence and foster a positive learning environment. This commitment is demonstrated through real-world applications, such as in the experience of staff like Vincent, a preschool educator, who interacts with students in a carefully designed outdoor space that nurtures imagination, cultural connection, and play-based learning.

Mr Vincent’s experience shows:

- Teaching in visually appealing, well-planned space fosters imaginative play, collaboration, and physical activity, promoting whole-child development.
- Co-locating in primary schools provides young students with safe, welcoming, and responsive learning environment. Familiar settings facilitate a smooth transition from preschool to primary school, supporting comprehensive wellbeing practices across the school community.
- Playground design incorporates cultural references such as a natural creek bed, connecting students to Country and fostering community engagement.

**This case study illustrates how our designs enhance learning experiences, build community confidence, and how culturally responsive designs strengthen community ties, supporting Our Plan for NSW Public Education.**

# 4 Appendix

# Appendix 1. Government Architect design principles

| Principles | | Design topics | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Standardised design | Site planning | Sustainability | Whole of life | Inclusive design | Heritage and designing with Country | Sharing school spaces | Landscape and open space | Technology and Communications | Transport, circulation and movement | Borders and boundaries | Safety in design | Security |
| Government Architect's design principles | Responsive to context – including connection to Country, culture and community | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Sustainable, efficient and resilient | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | |
| | Accessible and inclusive – including co-location | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| | Healthy and safe – including security and boundaries | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Functional and comfortable – including indoor and outdoor learning spaces, storage | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | |
| | Flexible and adaptable – including adaptable, future-proof learning spaces | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | |
| | Visually appealing - including aesthetics, street presence, and the character of a school | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ |

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NSW Department of Education

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