

Education QoN
Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Inquiry into the 2026-27 budget estimates hearings

Response to Question on Notice

Portfolio	Education
Witness	Joanne Wandel/David Howes
Committee member	Aiv Puglielli
Page/s of transcript	Pages 22 to 23

Excerpt from transcript

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, Minister and officials. There are several new listed metro school upgrades in the budget; we have been speaking about some of those today. Kensington Primary School has not been listed within those, but no doubt it will need upgrades over the forward estimates to deal with capacity issues. My question really is for the department Secretary. One of the challenges that is often raised about Kensington and other inner-city schools is that they are land constrained. There is a church hall and park area right next to the primary school that has just recently been put up for sale. Can I ask: why hasn't the department purchased this site? This is something you are able to do, correct?

Tony BATES: Sorry, which site was that, Mr Puglielli?

Aiv PUGLIELLI: This is the site next to Kensington Primary School – the church hall and park area.

Tony BATES: I might just ask the CEO of the VSBA if we can just talk a little bit about that one. I think we have talked about that inner north-west before. We have got new schools that will be built down at Arden. There is capacity at some of the other schools around Kensington. But I might just ask if you can expand a bit on that.

Joanne WANDEL: Thanks, Secretary. Part of the work that the department does is looking at population projections, Victoria in future, enrolment numbers, capacity at particular schools and then surrounding schools as well, and we undertake this analysis on a regular basis to understand trends and forecasts in local service provisioning for schools. The current analysis of the population forecasts in that area around Kensington Primary School indicates that it has sufficient capacity to meet the current and future anticipated demand and so do the schools within the surrounding network. Purchasing land is a significant investment, and as the minister has said, there is \$104 million in this budget to acquire sites for six new schools. But it does require careful consideration to ensure that we are allocating public funds appropriately. We are always monitoring that demand forecast. It is something that we do on a very regular basis, but at this stage the existing forecast demonstrates that that land is not required.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Thank you. Can I clarify that response a little bit. When we are talking about forecasting, that is as at now, that capacity condition?

Joanne WANDEL: The forecast would be looking probably within the next five-plus years, so it would be a long-range forecast.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Oh, the department does not foresee a need for more capacity to be added at Kensington?

Joanne WANDEL: Not at this point in time, based on that forecast.

Education QoN
Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Inquiry into the 2026-27 budget estimates hearings

Response to Question on Notice

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Can I ask, in terms of the process around land sale like this, this type of scenario: what conditions do need to be met for a purchase to happen at that type of scale, to buy a site like the one we are talking about?

Joanne WANDEL: The considerations that we would take into account when we are looking to acquire a site for a new school or an upgrade adjacent to an existing school are those matters that I ran through. We would be looking at the capacity of the existing school and its forecast in terms of enrolment growth. But we would be looking at the broader network and other schools and the flow-on impact of introducing new service provision in those areas as well.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Can I ask, from the forecasting you referred to: how close is Kensington to reaching that capacity? If you are saying they are not at capacity yet, how close are they?

Joanne WANDEL: We might need to take that question on notice.

Answer:

- The department undertakes annual in-depth analyses to understand enrolment trends and forecast local demand in established areas. Where demand is predicted to exceed capacity in the existing school network, the department considers whether additional infrastructure may be required at a government school to support future enrolments.
- A key focus for the department is planning for growth and maximising the use of existing infrastructure. This ensures that all Victorian students have access to their local government school, and that the asset base is utilised efficiently.
- Kensington Primary School had 421 total enrolments at the start of the 2026 school year compared to a school capacity of approximately 500 places, with recent enrolments declining. As a result, the school has not been issued with an Enrolment Management Implementation Plan (EMIP) which are used to support schools experiencing enrolment pressures. The broader primary school network that includes Kensington Primary School is forecast to have sufficient capacity to accommodate students into the foreseeable future.
- Further, a site has been identified in the Arden Structure Plan, which identifies a future P-6 school (subject to future need and funding). Opening of this school, when necessary, would reduce enrolment pressure on Kensington Primary School.