

Green Light For School Redevelopment by Jane Rowley



Artists' interpretations of completed renovation / Photo Department of Education

After six years of discussions and negotiations, the Department of Education has committed to an upgrade of Artarmon Public School (APS). Building works will begin in 2016 with the project to be completed in April 2018. To be executed in stages, the upgrade is designed to relieve the present overcrowding and reclaim much needed playground space.

Enrolments at the school have grown by more than 30 per cent in the past five years with student numbers currently at 1,081; close to the maximum of 1,200. The rapid growth has meant the installation of demountable and prefabricated classrooms, robbing the site of playground space and requiring the installation of services on an ad hoc basis. APS Principal Louise Green and the Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) have lobbied hard for the changes and are delighted with the plans.

"Really, in Department of Education terms, this is our last shot for probably another eighty or ninety years - so you've got to take the best advantage you can of it," said Louise.

"We're very conscious of the fact that we're not only building for now; we're building for another seven generations."

Stage one of the redevelopment will see the removal of the demountable classrooms that line the Barton Road

boundary and the construction of a new three-storey classroom block. The building will house 21 classrooms and a larger library. According to Louise: the new library will be a "beautiful space" with plenty of glass, and will open out into the playground. The current library will be refurbished and become a music performance space with a classroom at one end. Louise is delighted that APS's strong tradition of excellence in music has been rewarded.

"A music space is a very big coup for our school and a recognition of the strength of our music program."

Because of the construction, some students will be relocated to a temporary campus to be built on vacant land, off the cul-de-sac at the end of Barton Road. This site will house nine classrooms, a toilet block, a staff room and playground space, and will be ready for the start of school in 2016. The Barton Road campus will also have a fulltime assistant principal and office staff. The decision on which students are housed on the Barton Road campus will be made in Term Four of this year so that students, parents and staff have plenty of time to become orientated with the new arrangements.

Louise admits not everyone will be comfortable with the disruption. "Change is a very difficult thing for some people," she says. "It's a tough couple of years we're going to have

to get through but it will make a tremendous difference to the school, and I think at the end it will be well and truly worth it."

Currently the school is divided into two campuses, McMillan Road and Abbott Road. They are separated by Abbott Lane, which was resumed and made part of the school grounds in August 2011. Stage Two of the redevelopment will see the school hall demolished and re-built on the Abbott Road campus in place of the demountable 'village.'

"The two campuses will finally be merged together. You'll enter the hall off the laneway and then the hill below will be tiered into playground space," explains Louise.

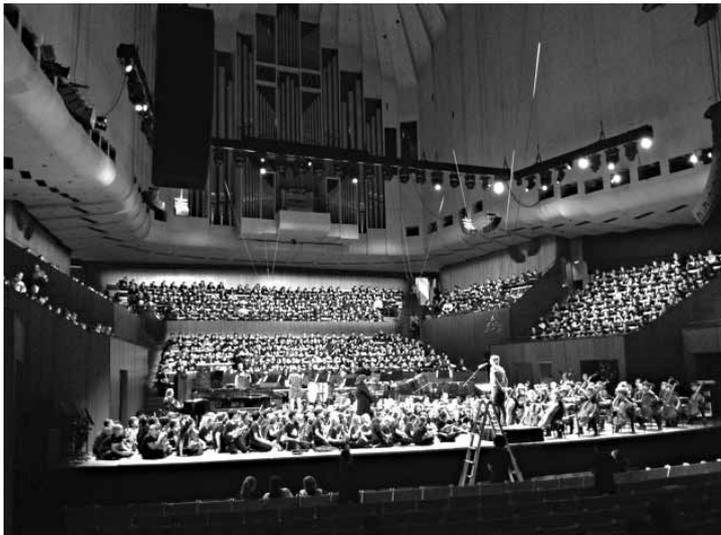
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Left: Members of senior string ensemble performing at Opera House, The Festival of Instrumental Music / Photo J.Rowley



Right top: PSSA State Knockout Tennis / Photo J.Rowley



Right bottom: APS Girls Dance Troupe / Photo J.Rowley

Pedestrians and the local community will still be able to move between Barton Road and McMillan Road on a new public path, to be built alongside Hampden Lane. This is in response to requests from residents in the area who wished to maintain a convenient passage to the Artarmon shops and train station.

According to a Department of Education spokesperson, community consultation will continue to be an important aspect of the project as it moves through each stage.

“Information booths will keep the community up to date on the upgrade project. Survey forms are available at these information booths, allowing the community to provide their feedback,” said the spokesperson.

Residents will also be able to register their interest in attending a community consultation session, which will be held prior to the Department of Education lodging a development application with Willoughby City Council.

For some years, the facilities at APS have not matched the high calibre achievements of its students. Recently members of the senior strings ensemble performed at the Opera House, the jazz band won competition gold, the tennis team made the State competition for the second year in a row, and an APS student is one of the finalists in the State Multicultural Speaking Competition. The redevelopment will ensure that following generations of APS students can pursue the school motto and ‘learn to live’ in an

environment fit for the future.

The concept plans for the redevelopment can be viewed on the Artarmon Public School website. In addition they can also be seen at information booths to be set up by NSW Public Works at the following locations.

- 15th September 2015, 3pm to 6pm, at Artarmon Public School;
- 6th October 2015, 3pm to 6pm, at Artarmon Railway Station, Hampden Rd.;
- 20th October 2015, 3pm to 6pm, Artarmon Public School;
- 10th November 2015, 3pm to 6pm, Barton Rd. West;
- 24th November 2015, 3pm to 6pm, Artarmon Railway Station, Hampden Rd.



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