

# Learning Area Provision

## POSITION PAPER

March 2020



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Queensland Association of State School Principals

### Context

The Department of Education's Strategic Plan 2019-2023 states that 'we are constantly adapting as technology changes how we learn, work and live'. The Strategic Plan has as one of its strategies the investment in contemporary infrastructure and information technologies for future-focused learning, teaching and working.

The Department's previous Strategic Plan (2017-2020) stated that we need to 'transform the way we do business'. It further states we need to 'Deliver contemporary and fit for purpose infrastructure and integrated information and communication technology solutions to maximise learning outcomes for each community'.

The Advancing Education Action Plan further states that 'building better facilities and providing the resources our schools need to deliver an outstanding education are critical to the future success of young Queenslanders'.

Current department policy considers existing teaching and learning spaces in primary schools as General Learning Areas (GLAs) suitable to accommodate enrolment growth. With an ever-increasing range of new and specialised learning areas, primary schools need the flexibility to purpose learning spaces more broadly than as just general learning areas.

Unlike secondary schools, primary schools are not provided with specialised learning areas for subject specific areas. In addition, increasingly primary schools are being asked to adopt new and innovative practices in STEM, digital technologies and design. Schools have been asked to consider expanding Languages across the year levels from Prep to Year 6 and to embrace the performing and creative arts along with improving outcomes for students in science. Primary schools need more flexibility with learning spaces so they can be re-designated with confidence into a learning area space and not be subject to enrolment growth demands.

The following is an excerpt from the Queensland Government's policy on Infrastructure investment planning:

'These new approaches to planning, funding and delivery of infrastructure aim to ensure decisions relating to infrastructure investment are robust, transparent and defensible. A new Prioritisation and Governance Framework is being implemented to ensure investment in infrastructure is:

- linked to improving educational outcomes
- based on an understanding of school needs
- based on a transparent and open decision-making process.'

## Deliverables

QASSP's position is that primary schools' infrastructure provision should be on the basis of 90% occupancy rather than the current 100% occupancy. This would mean that for every 10 primary classes, an additional undesignated space was available. This would allow for certain rooms to be able to be designated as for example, a science room, a computer laboratory, a music room or other curriculum spaces as suited to school priorities.

## Overarching Principles

The development of a strategy to deliver non-specific learning spaces in schools should take account of the following principles:

**Transparency** | There needs to be an allocative model developed that is an enrolment based sliding scale providing square metres of space per child for undesignated learning space that clearly shows how this allocation is made.

**Local Decision-making** | Decisions determining the use of undesignated learning spaces in primary school need to be made at a local level to ensure these spaces support the strategic direction of the school. Non-specific space/s may include:

- Language Centres
- Music and Instrumental Facilities
- STEM or STEAM Maker Spaces or Fab Labs
- Performing Arts Centres
- Visual Arts Studios
- Teaching Kitchens
- Computer Labs
- Learning Hubs or Support Teacher Spaces
- Visiting and school-based specialist accommodation e.g. Guidance Officers, Visiting Advisory Teachers/Music specialists etc.

**School Priorities** | The complexity of the primary school curriculum, the increase in learning tools and emerging pedagogies demand a different response to learning spaces. It's not just about the fancy furniture. Association of Learning Environments Australasia chairwoman, Deb O'Reilly says 'It is about the pedagogy, working in teams to encourage debate and developing soft skills to ensure students are adaptable'. The 21st century classroom is driven by collaborative learning, working in teams to find solutions. As Michelle Bruniges puts it, 'Pedagogy in the 21st century has to put the emphasis on the 4Cs – collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and communication'.

**Targeted** | Specific learning spaces such as Special Education Facilities, School Resource Centres, Staff Room and Halls should not be included in undesignated learning space allocations.

**Flexibility** | Future proofing high-quality built environment fit for purpose

## **Allocative Model for Infrastructure to Schools**

QASSP believes that the allocative model must be sufficiently flexible to take into account the differentiated circumstance of schools. This would include, but not be limited to:

- Geographic isolation that results in additional cost burdens (transport, availability of trades, accommodation, water and electricity features etcetera).
- Construction – nature of materials used that may be high maintenance or hazardous.
- Age and condition.
- Legislated costs – maintenance and inspection of items such as air conditioners, elevators, fire and emergency equipment, electrical inspections and the like.

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