

ePlanning: Providing Crucial Data Access for the NSW Department of Education



Education

The **NSW Department of Education** is in the process of delivering once-in-a-generation school buildings, major upgrades and maintenance strategies to ensure every school-aged child has access to high-quality education facilities at their local public school. In order to help achieve this goal, the ePlanning Program is facilitating access to new and existing digital data sources that will provide greater visibility of planning matters across NSW.

Investing in NSW's Future

The NSW Government is investing \$7B in this initiative over the next four years. This is the largest investment in public education infrastructure in the history of NSW. It will change the way classrooms are designed, creating open-planned, interactive and multipurpose indoor and outdoor spaces with state-of-the-art technology.

By providing crucial links to digital planning data, the ePlanning Program is connecting the NSW Department of Education with the necessary sources of information on infrastructure planned across the state, such as development applications (DAs) and State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs).

While some of this data is already available, it is time consuming and labour intensive to collect and collate. The ePlanning Program is not only facilitating access to the data in a digital format, it is providing the data in a way that encourages more evidence-based decision-making, empowering the predictive capabilities and modelling outcomes of the Department.

Whole of Government Solutions

It was the Minister for Customer Service, the Hon Victor Dominello MP, who suggested the NSW Department of Education should engage the ePlanning Program on this initiative. The Minister has championed the Program since 2017, seeing the potential for whole-of-government digital solutions to the challenges faced by individual departments.

The ePlanning Program embraced the opportunity to use its knowledge of the growing number of planning datasets to customise a solution. This has started an important conversation that could see further digital collaboration between the two departments.

Rising to the Challenge

When planning for new schools or the expansion of existing schools, School Infrastructure NSW (SINSW) uses long-term population projections provided by DPIE under Common Planning Assumptions (CPA), which takes into account the NSW Government Housing Supply Forecasts.

While this provides a basis for planning in the long term, there are complexities in accurate planning for the short and medium term regarding the timing of housing development and subsequent growth in student numbers. This is particularly challenging in rural and regional NSW where housing supply forecasts are not currently available.

By engaging the ePlanning Program, SINSW is shifting from an ad hoc responsive environment to one that is connected, customised and configured to suit the community expectations of today.

“The data provided by ePlanning enables SINSW to consider where new housing is proposed under subdivision and new dwelling development applications. This gives a view as to potential housing numbers in the short term, with applied assumptions around the timing of construction from the time of development approval.

“In greenfield areas, we can determine whether housing is likely to be delivered in the timeframes that are projected under CPA and account for any significant differences. The real-time nature of the data in ePlanning is an important layer as SINSW determines service need across NSW.”

*Stephanie Scoular
A/Executive Director, Service Planning
NSW Department of Education*