

Yanchep parents demand school \$10m to fix school that is 'falling apart'

By political reporter Andrew O'Connor

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Angry parents have hijacked the announcement of a new school in Perth's northern suburbs to call for immediate upgrades at Yanchep District High School.

Education Minister Peter Collier was at the school to announce a new \$57 million high school would be built in the area, and open by 2019.

But local parents said they needed \$10 million previously promised to fix the existing school's poor facilities.

Parents said the promise was of little help to current students in sub-standard, demountable classrooms.

Mother Kim Garbutt has two sons at the school, and said population growth made a new high school inevitable, but the Government should also be fixing the existing school.

"So he's only offering us something that we would have already got. What we need funding (for) now is the school," she said.

"Now he knows the school needs funding because he offered us \$10 million, three years ago, two years ago, and took it away. What we need is that money back now to fix the school now."

Choice between upgrade or new school: Minister

Mr Collier said coping with continued high population growth in the northern suburbs and the movement of more children into public schools was a major challenge.

"We looked at the options over the last two years, in terms of providing a \$10 million to \$20 million upgrade of Yanchep District High School or building a brand new school," he said.

"We chose the latter and we think that is money well spent."

But Ms Garbutt said she believed it should not be an either/or choice and that the Government should be doing both.

"The demountables are 20 years old," she said.

"The flyscreens aren't fixed. The whole school needs a complete refurb - new classrooms, new chairs, tables, funding for the library and books. The school is falling apart.

"What about the kids that are coming through, even after four years ... they're not giving us a date to fix this school.

"They say in four years we're going to get a school over there. But what date are they going to fix this school?"



PHOTO: Parent Kim Garbutt says the existing school is falling apart. (ABC News: Andrew O'Connor)

MAP: Yanchep 6035



PHOTO: Education Minister Peter Collier (third from left) flanked by Member for Butler John Quigley, Yanchep DHS principal Alan Curtis and MLC Peter Katsambanis. (ABC News: Andrew O'Connor)

Money not wasted with population growth

Ms Garbutt said money spent on Yanchep's existing school would not be wasted because when the new senior high school was finished, the district high school would revert to a primary school.

"With 16,000 new homes being built in the area in the next three or four years, it's highly likely when that new school opens, we'll have double the number of primary school students here, so it's not wasted money," he said.

The parents asked the Minister to tour the school with the media to see for himself the problems their children were facing. He declined.

But he said he would revisit the school to see what could be done to address the issues in the period before the new high school opened.

"It's a valid point and the animosity, dare I say it, the angst that exists from parents with students at the school is quite profound," he said.

"I've undertaken to come back and have a look at the school which I intend to do.

"I'll ask the department to have a look at specific areas of need with perhaps the intention of rectifying them in the short to medium term."

Topics: public-schools, schools, education, state-parliament, states-and-territories, government-and-politics, yanchep-6035, perth-6000, wa

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