

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2010-2011**

Outcome 1—Early Childhood

DEEWR Question No.EW0127_11

Senator Payne provided in writing.

Question

MEREWETHERHEIGHTSPUBLIC SCHOOL - CHOICE OF SITE

"Why was MerewetherHeightsPublic School chosen as the site for one of 38 new Early Learning Centres to be built to avoid the "double drop-off"? Is it in a pocket of need? How many other centres are in a five kilometre radius? Were vacancy rates at nearby centres taken into account when choosing this site? What are the most up-to-date vacancy rates for all centres within a five-kilometre radius of MerewetherHeightsPublic School? Why was the centre's size increased from 42 places to 68 places? What was the reason for the area of school playground being excised for the centre being increased from 1100 metres-squared, a separate driveway and a centre with 42 places, to an area of 3500 metres-squared and using the school driveway?"

Answer

MerewetherHeightsPublic School was identified in partnership with the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSW DET) as an appropriate site for the Early Learning and Care Centre in Merewether, NSW.

A range of factors were considered when assessing anticipated demand for the Merewether ELCC, such as vacancy data, population projections and local information on child care demand. This assessment showed that there was demand.

There are 14 long day care services in a 5 kilometre radius of MerewetherHeightsPublic School. As at 19 March 2010, 9 of the 14 services in that radius had vacancies.

The proposal from Ms Kay Dhami, who was successful in winning the tender to build and operate the centre, was for a 68 place centre. The documentation supporting the tender indicated that the Department's expectation was that each centre would provide, on average, 50 additional child care places, and that this number could vary depending on the size of the land and the needs of the local community.

NSW DET agreed to make more land available for this development due to the increased number of places and the constraints associated with the topography of the land at MerewetherHeights, which altered the final design details for the centre. The documentation supporting the tender mentioned that that centre should have its own access and car parking area. Provision of separate access to the centre has not

proved practicable due to the slope of the site from Cedar Crescent. The possibility that a separate driveway off Summer Place would take up further additional space from the infants' play area was also a factor influencing the determination by NSW DET that the shared access point on Cedar Crescent would be more suitable for the centre.