



Forest Lodge Public School P&C Association
Corner of Ross Street & Bridge Road
Forest Lodge
NSW 2037

6 October 2021

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell, MLC
Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Mitchell,

We are writing to you today representing parents from Forest Lodge Public School. On behalf of the School community, we request that the Department of Education advance its risk mitigation strategy for government primary and secondary schools so that the return to School in October and November can be as safe as possible. We strongly support the return to school and believe that the Department can employ additional protections to mitigate and lessen the COVID-19 risks for our children and children across the state.

The efforts made by the government to require vaccination of teachers and school staff are strongly supported and we appreciate the ventilation audit recently completed as well as the suggestion that 10,000 air purifiers will be purchased.

But it is clear that more can and must be done. Procurement and installation of air purifiers with High-Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters in each classroom and in each student space holds short and long-term benefits for students and staff – not only in terms of reducing COVID-19 transmission but in terms of prevention of other infectious disease outbreaks now and into the future and also mitigating negative impacts of [poor air quality](#).

Asthma is an increasingly common health condition among primary school students (currently affecting about 10% of children). The Department's argument that open windows is the primary solution to improving safety in classrooms ignores the realities of the poor air quality caused by bushfires and other events. We only have to recall the air quality across the state in late 2019 to realise that open windows alone are insufficient to protect our children.

We call on the Department to invest in air purifiers with HEPA filters along with procurement of CO2 monitors for every classroom and for before and after school care buildings in public schools. This is a modest investment (approximately \$50 million) compared to the recently announced business support of \$500 million for the month of November alone and compared to the Department's budget of more than \$24 billion.

We note that the Victorian Government is moving ahead with such an approach and that the NSW Parliament will get appropriate ventilation. Air filters in schools are also being adopted in Canada (where the Province of Ontario has invested \$500m in school ventilation), the US and elsewhere.

This is a responsible and appropriate step that would demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting children, parents, teachers and the wider community.

Yours sincerely

Frier Bentley
President
Forest Lodge P&C

On behalf of Forest Lodge Public School P&C Association Members