# NSW PRIMARY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION Inc.

## NSWPPA Position Paper - School Viability

### Background

In determining the future viability of a school, the NSWPPA supports a transparent, consistent and accountable process.

The rationalisation of schools is inevitable due to demographic change. There will be political and fiscal forces impacting on a school's viability and a range of educational and social issues. The social capital associated with a school and its community needs consideration when determining a school's viability.

This paper acknowledges the work undertaken by the Education Provision Workgroup (2013-2013, comprising representation from NSWPPA, NSWSPC and NSWDEC) and the development of protocols to guide consultation processes when a school's future educational provision is being considered.

### Rationale

Previously tabled SPC and PPA papers by *Chris Bonnor, April 2008, "Schools and Social Capital" (Appendix 1) and Di Reynolds 'Does Size Matter? The Viability of Schools' (Appendix 2),* present a well- researched perspective of the impact of sustaining social capital at a local level. Social capital incorporates all the elements within a community that might include: friendships, professional circles, clubs, neighbourhoods, churches and other networks. Social capital must take high precedence when considering school viability.

### Position

An overarching principle is that a public school is the 'first in and last out' of any area. The following recommendations from the NSWPPA to assist when assessment is required on school viability are:

o **a school profile is developed**. Information must reflect and include:
   o the social, historical, cultural and economic capital provided for a community; and
   o the quality and depth of learning opportunities available to students.

o **appropriate alternatives for students be considered.** Information must reflect and include:

   o the capacity of any alternative to meet the academic and social needs of all students;
   o the opportunity for continuing community connection with the school; and
   o measuring and assessing the impact (eg time, transport) and financial implications on education and whole community that any alternative suggested may impose.

o **community input is obtained.** Information must reflect and include:
   o extensive and thorough community consultation.

o **alternative models are considered.**  Along with other ideas, these *could* include:
   o use of technology effectively (eg Connected Classrooms); and
   o amalgamated school settings  (eg Middle school, Junior School).

*If a school isn't viable, any rationalisation process must include the responsible disposal of the 'asset' with the benefits being retained by the public education system and, where possible, the local community.*