NSW Education Department, Code for Australia release highly desired Open Data and Open Source project

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Sydney, 3 May 2017 – Just months after the release of a new tool to help parents look up their neighborhood school and find other public schools around it, the code–and the data–powering that web app are now being made available to the public.

The project, NSW School Finder, was a collaboration between the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) at the NSW Department of Education and civic technology organisation, Code for Australia.

The data, NSW school catchments (also known as intake areas) has been highly sought by parents and app developers. It is being published by the NSW Education Department under the Creative Commons Attribution open data license (CC-BY) on CESE's NSW Education Datahub at https://data.cese.nsw.gov.au/

"Collaborating with Code for Australia was an opportunity to make starting, or changing schools, easier for children and their parents" explained Rustum Abdurahman, Manager of Online Services and Open Data at the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. "We are hopeful the tool also reduces some administrative load in schools; and are excited to see what parents, transparency advocates and developers come up using this data."

"The Code for Australia Fellowship brings in talented designers, developers, and community organisers with an outside, often private sector perspective, and has them working alongside forward thinking, innovative teams within government." said Code for Australia co-founder and managing director Alvaro Maz. "It's about bringing together the best of both worlds to use in-house iterative development and user-centred design to better serve the public in a way that is hard to match through traditional large-spec private sector contract based development."
"When we heard CESE wanted to explore using Open Data and user-centred design to make life easier for parents of well over half a million students in NSW and the staff that work with them, we were definitely very excited".

"Since launching the tool, there's been interest from a number of other states as well. The project was built with NSW in mind, but the really incredible thing is that improvements can be made by anyone–whether that's community members or even other states–and shared by all. That's the beauty of open source." said Maz.

School Finder is a web app allowing users to look up which school serves any given location in New South Wales, from Sydney to Woop Woop, providing key information about schools, and helping parents exploring public schools in New South Wales through a web map interface. It was developed as a partnership between the Department of Education in New South Wales and Code for Australia's fellowship program. School Finder was released online in December, 2016.

Code for Australia is a Melbourne based national civic technology organisation that puts together the two biggest levers for improving people's lives at scale: technology and government. Code for Australia's Fellowship program sends technologists, designers, and community organisers into government departments all across Oz to work on open source and open data projects. Code for Australia also offers an Academy Program for government and private sector employees, which is designed as an intensive action based training program to skill-up faster, break down silos, and reimagine how the private and public sector can collaborate.

The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation collects educational data, provides analyses to improve education programs and efficiency, and builds capacity across the whole education sector so that everyone can make better use of data and evidence. Those keen for more information can visit the Centre online at http://www.cese.nsw.gov.au.

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Notes to Editors

Photos: https://github.com/CodeforAustralia/school-finder/issues/348
Schools catchment open data: https://data.cese.nsw.gov.au (add actual link)
School Finder open source code: https://github.com/CodeforAustralia/school-finder
School Finder app: http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/nswps-finder/index.php

Tags:
Open Source #opensource
Open Data #opendata

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