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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

# Somerset School

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*Brought up by Mr Best and ordered by the House of Assembly to be printed.*

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## MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

### Legislative Council

Mr *Harriss* (Chairman)  
Mr *Hall*

### House of Assembly

Mr *Best*  
Mr *Green*  
Mrs *Napier*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	2
BACKGROUND.....	2
SERVICE PLANNING.....	4
PROJECT PROPOSAL .....	5
FUNDING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT .....	11
EVIDENCE .....	13
DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE .....	28
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.....	28

## INTRODUCTION

The Committee has the honour to report to the House of Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914* on the -

- The development of a new Somerset School resulting from the amalgamation of Somerset and West Somerset primary schools

The submission of the Department of Education was as follows:-

## BACKGROUND

Somerset has had two government primary schools since the early 1970s. These schools are located within a kilometre of each other – Somerset Primary at the eastern entrance to the town and West Somerset Primary at the western end.

In recognition of apparent and predicted declining enrolments (250 FTE total by 2011), the Somerset and West Somerset School Communities established the Future Education in Somerset Committee (FESC) to research possibilities for the current and future provision of education in Somerset.

The outcome of the significant work undertaken by that committee was confirmation of community support for one significantly better school for Somerset. A new site option was considered, however, initial assessments of possible locations indicated limited potential. Further dialogue focused on a consideration of one of the existing school sites that could provide for the educational needs of the Somerset community into the future.

An Independent Site Assessment Group (ISAG) was then convened to assess the capacity of each existing school site to be redeveloped for the future facility. The ISAG group concluded that West Somerset was the appropriate site for the facility and this decision was formally announced in February 2009. The Somerset School Building Project Working Group (SSBPWG) has been formed under the auspices of the Somerset School Steering Committee (SSSC) and charged with the task of bringing this project to fruition.

It is worthy of note that the outcomes for this project to date reflects the significant work and goodwill by members of a community committed to the future education of its children.

### **Somerset**

Somerset is located on the Cam River on the north-west coast of the state and has a population of around 3,800. The town boundary encompasses a mixture of suburban, coastal, rural and industrial sectors located along arterial roads.

A small coastal town within a rural hinterland, Somerset offers a unique lifestyle and close proximity to employment and services. Local community services are supplemented by regional facilities in the larger towns of Burnie and Wynyard, both

within a 10 minute drive. Residents have employment links with these two areas as well as the west coast, access to that region via Somerset being the only route until recent times.

The town has developed a deep sense of community that is reflected in the local businesses and service organisations, existing schools, the family generations that retain contact with them and the many sporting and volunteer groups that continually support local activities. Examples of this cohesive community spirit are the recently completed walkway along the foreshore soon to be supplemented with an outdoor exercise facility and a proposed bicycle track to Wynyard – all local resident initiatives. For the last 20 years, the Somerset scouting group has organised the annual Anzac Day proceedings. Fundraising within the town is well supported by all sections of the community.

Despite the influence of changing economic times, Somerset remains a close community and a significant number of residents who had left the area have chosen to return. Many residents walk within the area and interact on a daily basis. People are willing to engage and this community spirit has developed a deep connectedness not often apparent in other like communities.

### **Vision for the School**

The following thoughts were developed by the Building Project Working Group to illustrate a desired vision for the new facility and its community;

- a wow factor – celebrates a new beginning as a united school community;
- full ICT access;
- social and learning spaces – common spaces and small group spaces;
- supportive and safe place for early years and challenging through the years;
- learning/teaching spaces that support best teaching practice;
- environment that challenges later years and fosters independence;
- open, welcoming, easy access;
- future focus - a contemporary educational centre for teaching and learning with a focus on literacy, numeracy and reflective thinking;
- reflect the Somerset context – coastal, village, sporting, cohesive community;
- strong community resource – a community hub that welcomes parent and wider community engagement that reflects the strong heart of the town;
- birth to beyond – not just a school: but the core business is K – 6 education;
- environmentally sustainability design and teaching potential of same;
- a bit of what we have now and potential for the future - a 21<sup>st</sup> century facility that respects the history and traditions of the original school communities;
- transparency of the teaching and learning environment;
- spaces for all modes of learning;
- an organised and professional working environment that supports staff team collaboration and development; and
- a built environment that is able to adapt to evolving trends of information and communications technologies and the high focus on teacher professional learning.

### **Existing Facilities at the West Somerset Site**

The existing school site at West Somerset was developed in the 1970s in response to housing demand from industrial growth on the north-west and west coasts. The campus comprises approximately 2,200 square metres of enclosed floor area on a site of 5.5 Ha.

The school design is representative of an earlier era in education where a standard design template was adopted irrespective of locale. The building stock varies in condition and serviceability.

The project master plan has identified the future potential and value of the existing buildings. The design plans outline how some of the existing structures have been retained and modified for new activities.

There is an Early Childhood Intervention Service (ECIS) located at the West Somerset site. This service supports children in the area and its staff provide support to parents and children at other schools. The ECIS will be relocated to Acton Primary School for 2010. A permanent site for the service is being investigated.

## **SERVICE PLANNING**

### **Building Better Schools**

The Building Better Schools policy framework is aimed at enabling the Department to implement an approach to investing in school infrastructure which is based on a number of core project planning principles, including the following:

- the project should be able to demonstrate improved student outcomes in terms of improved student learning, engagement and wellbeing pathways and transitions;
- there is a fair and equitable distribution of funding for school improvements across all government schools in Tasmania;
- planning for the project must take account of demographic and student enrolment information in terms of enrolment trends and projections (current enrolments for 2009 are Somerset – 163 FTE and West Somerset – 133 FTE);
- the project must be consistent with and be reflected in the school's strategic plan for improving educational outcomes for students;
- the project should demonstrate that the condition of the current facilities is poor, poses an occupational health and safety risk, and/or continued maintenance is not economically viable;
- it must be fit-for-purpose, viable and achievable within a realistic budget and agreed timeframe;
- it must focus on long-term (not just short term) school improvement; and
- unless an urgent redevelopment need emerges, the project should be based on a formal Project Plan (School Upgrade Plan) developed in consultation with Learning Services, staff of the Finance, Facilities and Business Support (FFBS) Branch, the Principal, staff, students and parents of the school, and the broader school community. The project should also have the support of the relevant School Association.

### **Strategic Asset Management Plan**

The Department of Education's Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) provides a strategic framework for the efficient use and management of property and built physical assets consistent with corporate goals and objectives, and in compliance with government directives, financial management strategies and legislative requirements.

The current Strategic Asset Management Plan was approved by the Treasurer in July 2007. The plan sets out the department's goal of optimizing built asset resources to support current and future community needs and best practice, and to enhance contemporary teaching and learning practices.

The department is guided in the management of assets by key government planning initiatives which are interpreted and embedded in departmental policy and service delivery approaches. These include:

- Tasmania Together – vision and goals for the Tasmanian Community. The impact of this on asset planning generally emerges within departmental planning frameworks;
- The *Tasmanian Curriculum Framework* for the Kindergarten to Year 10 age group; and
- *Student at the Centre* which is a plan designed to support Tasmanian public schools to further improve both the educational experience and the results of students.

In addition, the Department of Education has an inclusion policy that states “to the fullest extent possible, students with disabilities should be educated in the company of their age peers while also being provided with curriculum and support that effectively meet their needs.”

## **PROJECT PROPOSAL**

### **School & Community Consultation**

The Somerset School Building Project Working Group (SSBPWG) comprises the following members:

- Bruce Cameron, School Support Leader, Learning Services North West;
- Denise Finlay, Principal Somerset Primary School;
- Greg Lovell, Chair, West Somerset School Association;
- Heath Clayton, Project Architect, Artas Architects; and
- Peter Heathcote, Project Officer, Department of Education.

The Building Group convened on a regular basis to assess aspects of the project brief that have been considered by the Steering Committee, School Communities and other interest groups. To date, the project has been supported by consultation with stakeholders at the master plan and developed design plan stages and it is envisaged that as the design is developed further to tender, interest groups will have the opportunity to support the process.

In addition, all milestone stages are tabled with the Somerset School Steering Committee for endorsement. This committee represents a wider project agenda and community representation.

### **Temporary Accommodation**

The project will require the relocation of all students and staff at West Somerset Primary School to Somerset Primary School for all of 2010. Temporary classrooms will be provided without disruption to the continuity of learning programs.

The Early Childhood Intervention Service currently located at West Somerset Primary School will be relocated to Acton Primary School for 2010. A permanent site for this service is being investigated.

### **Design Brief**

In extensive consultation with both school communities, the SSBPWG identified the need to achieve the following project scope:

- a kindergarten to grade 6 campus with a design enrolment of 280 – 300;
- twelve general learning areas complete with access to wet activity, quiet withdrawal spaces and external learning spaces;
- an early childhood centre comprising spaces for extended hours kindergarten, flexible and after school programs. Preferable direct access to a car park to simplify drop off / pick up arrangements for younger children directly into a secure fenced play area that also serves as a casual social space for parents;
- administration inclusive of public access and meeting facilities - this area is the hub of a primary school and requires an appropriate visual and physical presence from the main entry point of the site;
- general purpose hall adaptable to a wide range of activities and gatherings;
- a music suite;
- an appropriate canteen facility;
- staff lounge with meeting facilities;
- staff resource and study areas in close proximity to learning areas;
- appropriate and functional storage, student and staff amenities distributed throughout the site;
- an accessible and safe car and pedestrian traffic system;
- environmentally sustainable design for efficient life cycle operation and as a real life learning tool;
- a building design that promotes a strong sense of identity;
- enhanced comfort levels of temperature and natural light, visual and audio privacy for all when required;
- an open and transparent learning environment that facilitates a variety of learning styles;
- a safe and supportive environment that develops students as caring, responsible, resilient and confident members of the community;
- seamless IT capability and connectedness with other centres of knowledge;
- creative external play and social areas that challenge the senses whilst maintaining safety and efficient supervision; and
- connectedness between buildings and external passive and active learning areas.

## **Design Response**

The design response is directly related to the underpinning strategies initiated by the Somerset School Building Project Working Group under the auspices of the Somerset School Steering Committee to provide a significantly better school for the Somerset Community. A continued participatory approach with all stakeholders involved in the project has resulted in a shared vision for a new educational facility that responds to best practice teaching and learning principles, a strong school identity that fosters a safe and supportive environment and the thriving connection with the local community through its support, values and spirit.

The project will provide new and refurbished accommodation for 350 students at the existing West Somerset Primary School. New buildings include three learning pods providing twelve general learning areas complete with access to wet activities, shared studio space and external learning spaces. Existing buildings to be retained and refurbished include Building 2 (single storey), which will accommodate visitor entry and reception, student services, general administration and offices, staff lounge and amenities, learning resources and library, and an early learning centre; and Building 3, the multi-purpose hall (double height space), which will also accommodate a discovery centre, stores and a canteen.

External works include the extension of the existing car parking and drop-off zones, safe student access into the facility, outdoor learning spaces including student social zone, covered walkways and extension to the active playground.

## **Design Proposal**

### **Amenity and Scale**

The Student Services Building provides a formal entry for visitors and the school community, and links directly from parking and drop-off zones. The building remains only single storey but provides street presence with the increased height of the entry canopy which creates a vibrant and directional marker.

The student common centre, or town square, is the social hub of the school and is located centrally in a north-east orientation with access to light and protection from wind. This space has direct links to the learning resource room and the general learning areas. It provides the connection between indoor and outdoor learning and has access to both student services and the multi-purpose hall/discovery centre.

The town square provides both hard and soft landscaping elements able to support creative settings for innovative teaching and outdoor learning, outdoor communal dining with link to the canteen as well as a place for gathering and playing in large and small group spaces.

Articulation of the larger built façade is broken down into smaller elements providing a sense of human scale and proportion. Materials have been chosen for an ease of maintenance, longevity and sustainability. Building heights and floor areas are appropriate to the function and fit of an educational facility as determined by Department of Education and school community.

### **Identity**



A new identity is achieved by the significant changes to both the built and natural environment that is able to celebrate and support a new beginning as a united school community. The town square and learning resources are arranged as the central space for student activity. The location of the learning pods have a direct link to this social hub and provides an environment that is safe, supportive and co-operative that reflects the idea of a village community. The finishes and colours of the building materials reflect and accentuate the school colours. This enhances a sense of pride and ownership, connecting students to the built environment. In consultation with the school, elements from each school will be located within or adjacent to the social hub.

### Master Planning Solution

The master planning provides a student social area that is safe, secure and allows managed supervision throughout the site. The learning pods spread out from the social hub with the learning resource centre acting as the village centre. The social hub, covered walkway and landscaping elements encourage students to engage in their environment in a caring, responsible and inclusive way. The covered walkway is organic and shell-like and connects each learning pod through the social hub and directly into the learning resource centre and multi-purpose hall. External spaces provide play and social areas that challenge the senses whilst maintaining safety and efficient supervision. The variety of spaces can provide small and large group play. Both internal and external spaces provide settings that can be claimed and developed for a diverse range of opportunities in teaching and learning.

### Building Design

**Learning Pods:** Each learning pod provides four connected general learning areas. Each learning area accommodates the flexibility for team teaching, small group learning, shared studio and break out space, wet area activities, project-based activities and individual work areas. Each learning area has an individual teacher resource room and independent work area. The learning area is connected to full ICT access, interactive white boards and areas for display. The space is appropriately sized, provides access to light, views, natural ventilation, as well as visual and acoustic privacy.

**Early Childhood Centre:** The general learning areas provide a shared teaching space, large wet activity area, toilets and connected outdoor play area. Each learning area has a resource/store room and independent teacher work bench. The wet area has a staff bench with sink and oven in Kinder 1 and sink and full-sized refrigerator in Kinder 2. It has direct access to a car park to simplify drop-off and pick-up arrangements for younger children and provides a secure fenced play area that also serves as a casual social space for parents. The outdoor play area is supported by a dedicated store. The centre is an independent facility but still retains close visual links to the every day activities of the main school. It has easy access to the multi-purpose hall and discovery centre.

**Student Services, General Administration, Offices and Learning Resources:** This area accommodates entry, visitor waiting, reception and general administration and store room with direct access to a large meeting room. The meeting room is also linked to the staff lounge by a divisible wall. This allows flexible space to accommodate staff development and larger meetings and forums. Students can easily access the staff lounge, senior staff and specialist consulting offices and dedicated ITC room from the

social play hub. The resource centre caters for both students and staff. It provides a new library/reference area, IT connection, casual seating, flexible learning area, technician's work area, a large teacher resource area and a store room. This building also provides staff toilets, laundry and cleaner's store and a universal access toilet with change and shower facility.

**Multi-Purpose Hall and Discovery Centre:** The multi-purpose hall is an adaptable space for sporting activities, performing arts and community events. It has an independent entry to allow after hours access. It also provides three independent store rooms. The discovery centre can support specialised learning in areas of science, construction and technology, food technology, music, drama, production and the arts. This space can also accommodate after-school care with a dedicated store room, music room and tea making/food preparation facility. The canteen is located in this area with direct links to the town square/social hub and outdoor dining. The canteen facility can be to commercial standard that is able to cater for community functions after-hours. There are adjoining toilet facilities.

### Accessibility

The project will meet Australian Design Standards for Access and Mobility (AS1428.1 – 2001) and Department of Education Capital Planning and Development Design Guidelines. Using a participatory and consultative approach throughout the design process will ensure that the built environments are responsive and appropriate to all users' cultural, emotional, spiritual and practical needs.

### Environmental Issues

Key concepts include energy conservation, resource and waste management, recycling, retaining and re-using existing buildings, product total life cycle including its commercial after-life, toxic free materials, specifying renewable resources and using local materials, products and services. Sustainable building design strategies include:

- low emissivity (low-E) coatings for all windows and doors, reducing air to air heat loss, and solar gain that are well sealed;
- maximise reflective and bulk insulation to walls and ceilings;
- concrete slab with perimeter insulation will maximise thermal mass;
- maximise light and provide shade devices specific to diurnal sun paths;
- implement solar hot water heating using a federal funding grant;
- maximise natural ventilation in the buildings using vents in opposite corners;
- install operable vents and highlight windows to remove air pollutants;
- plant densely to the west to protect from winter winds and summer heat;
- collect and harvest water, connecting downpipes to tank storage for re-use;
- provide leaf guards to gutters and first flush diverter or filter to tanks;
- reduce outdoor water use with water efficient landscapes and plants;
- maximise the aesthetic qualities of internal finishes, fixtures, fittings and furnishings for increased user satisfaction and comfort;
- maintain health and productivity through user-centred, ergonomic design;
- select energy-saving devices; and
- use design impact benchmarks and indicators in conjunction with cost estimate models to guide and implement sustainable strategies.

### Landscaping

The proposed landscape treatment at Somerset Primary School is designed to meet functional, aesthetic and environmental criteria.

Design themes respond to the school's location adjacent to the coastline. In terms of landform, low grassy and planted mounds, reflective of low dunes, are used to help define spaces whilst maintaining view-lines critical for supervision of the grounds.

The proposed planting palette draws heavily on indigenous coastal vegetation. Some non-local Australian natives and exotic trees and shrubs are proposed for specific reasons such as deciduous trees to provide summer shade but allow winter sun for solar gain to buildings. All plants are selected for their low water-use and minimal maintenance requirements. Planting is designed to provide structure, seasonal colour and interesting textures with a minimal maintenance requirement. Once established, planting will require minimal or no watering. Some lawn areas in high use areas may require summer irrigation.

Materials and finishes selected for built forms within the landscape also complement the coastal themes. Exposed aggregate concrete paths, low stone sitting walls and boulders complement the planting and further reinforce the definition of spaces within the broader landscape.

Providing all-weather access for the school community throughout the school is a key design consideration. Paths are designed to flow between buildings and other playground features, whilst helping to define spaces. Covered walkways are designed to provide cover for the school community on rainy days, but maintain an openness to allow supervision of students.

### Vehicle Circulation and Parking

The project will meet Australian Design Standards for Parking Facilities (AS/NZS 2890.1- 2004). Vehicles are excluded from pedestrian and student areas other than an emergency perimeter track and general maintenance of the school grounds. Entry and exit can only be accessed one-way ensuring a legible and logical vehicular strategy into the school. Car and bus drop-off zones deliver children to the site without road crossings. Car parking has been extended to support growth of the school community. Parking is located in three distinct areas to simplify requirements and maximise safety for drop-off and pick-up of children. These include:

- staff parking located north of the site adjacent to the learning pods;
- visitor parking that reuses and extends the existing car parking facility; and
- parent and carer parking adjacent to the early learning centre.

### Art for Public Buildings Scheme – Artwork Proposal

An important initiative of the Arts @Work program is the development of regional artists. Accordingly, it is hoped that this project will offer potential for local artists to participate and develop their skills base as a worthy contribution to the Tasmanian Collection. This project will provide an opportunity for the art component to be appreciated by the wider community as they visit and use the school campus.

## FUNDING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

### Project Budget

The following table outlines proposed funding sources for the project.

Source of Funds	Amount (\$)
School Futures Funds – State CIP	\$2,050,000
Building the Education Revolution – Aus Gov	\$3,050,000
Asset Sales	\$1,000,000
<b>Total Sourced Funds</b>	<b>\$6,100,000</b>

### Project Costs

The following table details the estimated costs for each element of the project.

Description	Amount (\$)
Building Works, Site works and Services (see next table)	4,790,000
Contingencies	250,000
Cost Escalation	75,000
Project Design / Management / Authority Fees and Permits	425,000
Furniture and Equipment	350,000
Artworks (Art in Public Buildings Scheme)	80,000
Post occupancy commissioning works	130,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,100,000</b>

### Indicative Cost Elements of Building Works, Site Work and Services

The following table outlines indicative costs of major components applicable to the works.

Description	Amount (\$)
New Buildings	2,662,000
Existing Buildings refurbished	1,485,000
Site Works / Landscaping	543,000
Site Services	100,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,790,000</b>

### **Project Timelines**

The timetable for this project will comprise the following key milestones and timeframes:

Consultant team commissioned	June 2009
Design and preliminary estimates completed	September 2009
Parliamentary Standing Committee Hearing	October 2009
Contract documentation and pre – tender estimates completed	November 2009
Anticipated Tender period and award construction contract	December 2009
Construction commence	January 2010
Construction completion	January 2011
Occupation by school	February 2011
Construction defects liability period	12 months

### **Potential Project Constraints**

Risks or constraints identified in relation to the project timeline and final scope includes the potential of a reduced competitive tender market due to the current buoyant construction industry climate within the state.

Any influences to the project timeline or budget evident at tender will be managed within the current project allocation and the Somerset School Building Project Working Group (SSBPWG) has advised a preparedness to amend the project scope in the following areas to achieve budget:

- investigate flexibility within the furniture and equipment allocation to reuse items in the short term;
- delete provision of a second netball court that could be developed in future year's school budgets; and
- amend the design of the Discovery Room to facilitate future construction of this room funded from future CIP or Targeted Minor works programs.

### **Anticipated Project Benefits**

The redevelopment is directed at achieving:

- a primary school of sufficient size to cater for the future educational needs of Somerset and immediate surrounds;
- establishment of a single campus for the town enabling a higher quality facility than the redevelopment of two aged schools;
- economy of scale by centralising teaching and learning facilities;
- value for money as the finite funding resource is shared by a larger portion of the town community;
- a facility that will provide significant flexibility to accommodate future directions in teaching and learning;
- accommodation for further development of school and community based services such as child and family care, occasional day care etc; and
- provision of appropriate car parking and traffic management.

## EVIDENCE

The Committee commenced its inquiry on Monday, 19 October last with an inspection of the site of the proposed works. The Committee then returned to the Burnie Civic Centre whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:-

- Ms Denise Finlay, Principal, Somerset Primary School;
- Mr Greg Lovell, West Somerset Primary School Association;
- Mr Malcolm Wells, General Manager, Learning Services North West, Department of Education;
- Mr Andrew Finch, Director – Finance, Facilities and Business Support, Department of Education; and
- Mr Heath Clayton, Consultant Architect, ARTAS Architects.

### Background

Mr Wells provided the Committee with the following background into the project.

*The formal DOE submission that you have captures the key points in the development of this project, but perhaps in some way only touches on the surface with respect to the significance of what has happened. By way of introduction, I want to say something about that in the sense that there have been two very distinct phases in the Somerset project. The first is really a consequence of leadership at school and community level. The school association chairpersons at that time, Greg Lovell and Cheri Nolan, I think would both openly acknowledge that each association was and is a very powerful group of people and very much focused on their children and they have demonstrated a capacity to think not only about their children now but everybody's children in that community into the future. I want to acknowledge the work by our principals, Andrew Starick, the Principal of West Somerset, and Denise Finlay, the Principal of Somerset Primary School, in working in support of the process as well.*

*As you can imagine, a lot of hard work goes into bringing two communities together and I think what is critical here is that these communities initiated this themselves. A really significant part of this project is that the work that was done at the start came off the back of two communities saying, 'This is what needs to happen in the best interests of our communities and of children in the community'. The key drivers for change were educational. If you look at all the minutes, in the end it came back to what was best for children's education in the community but it also took into account demographic change. You will have seen in our submission the numbers that clearly illustrate that there's an over-provision of public education in the community and the community had the initiative to respond to demographic change. In the submission and in what is planned for, there is a desire to add value to the community, so there is a community-building dimension.*

*The second phase is much more difficult. I think in many ways it captures the essence of it because both communities love their respective schools. We could all agree that one school was the way to go but which site once we knew we weren't going to have a greenfield site available. I think it is really important to*

*think about two communities collaboratively putting in a process, in this case an independent site assessment, stepping back from that and being prepared together to accept the outcome of that independent site assessment, and that is exactly what happened. I think the independent site assessment group's work is in our submission as well. At the end of it we ended up, as you know, with a decision to go to West Somerset as the preferred site. I think it is incredibly significant that at that potential tipping point the project didn't unravel, in fact quite the other way. Once the decision was made, people's energies have now been to invest in making sure that we get the best outcome for the community. I think that is a credit to that group of people I have referred to who have driven the project.*

*Finally, I think it is a bit superficial to come here and say to you that since 2007 it has all been plain sailing. It is pretty challenging work. It has been challenging, both in that first phase and it continues to present challenges when we look at issues around co-location in 2010 so that we can completely redevelop the West Somerset site. That will be challenging for everybody but when you look at the history, the capacity to get where we are now I think indicates that both communities have the capacity to meet those challenges and we will get a very good outcome.*

*I think that we are looking today at two very different projects in the way they have unfolded and for two communities to initiate this and drive it well before school futures issues, demographic issues that were publicly announced or BER funding - they simply said, 'There's something we need to do here' - I think is a really significant dimension of the project.*

Ms Finlay added the following:

*At the start of this century - and it is really scary when you say things like that - there was a realisation in Somerset that something needed to be done, that we had two schools on either end of the town with a great imbalance in student numbers. At that time, Somerset Primary School had 270 students and West Somerset had 146. It was school councils at that time. School councils got together and they requested that the school zones be adjusted to try to even out student populations and also around that time there was a real commitment on both schools to start to explore ways that we could work together in Somerset.*

*As a result of the revised school zones, the Somerset Primary School's student population declined and during 2006 we really had to look at the falling enrolments and the future projections, what educational projections they presented and the challenges. For example, it became hard to do things like find a music teacher to come in one day a week, to find a physical education teacher to come in one day a week. Staffing presented problems. There were problems in having less flexibility with a smaller school budget. There were problems with having one prep teacher. How could we cater for collaborative staff planning when there was just one prep teacher, one grade 4 teacher? All those things started to become more difficult.*

*The community of Somerset has great expectations of educational leaders, of school principals, and it became problematic when principals had to take on greater teaching roles and were not necessarily available to be there when the community expected us to be there.*

*We then got together and then it became school associations. The school associations explored all these issues and after a very positive meeting, they truly decided that one significantly better school was the answer for Somerset and that the opportunity to build the community around that one significantly better school was an opportunity not to be missed. As you know, that was when the school's future fund came out and so we were given that great opportunity.*

*We started the real mandate then, that we wanted the one significantly better school for Somerset, and we also wanted the second thing - we had the chance to unite the town. We started a mantra of one town, one school. That is what we wanted. We did not want split campuses; we wanted one town, one school.*

*We also had the problem of both schools having buildings that were run down and no longer appropriate for contemporary teaching and learning.*

*Malcolm has talked to you about FES and how we formed that FES committee to look at HR issues and side issues, and also at the time we formed the ISAG Committee because we found that, as a group, we really could not make that decision about which site was better. There was not a greenfield site. Both school communities were very strong about thinking that their school site might have been the best site. We could not find that one strong lever to make that decision. The ISAG decision is down in your documents.*

*On 9 October 2008, we held a community forum at the Somerset Surf Club. It was well attended and it was chaired by our Mayor, Kevin Hyland. We presented all the information gained so far and sought community input. We asked for written responses about how people were feeling about the proposal at the end of that meeting and on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very negative and 10 being very positive, from that whole group we received two 5s. The majority were 7s and 8s but there were also quite a lot of 9s and 10s. We also put out those same questions in our newsletters and again received very positive responses and from that we believed that we had a very clear mandate that the community of Somerset really did want the one significantly better school for Somerset and were united around that proposal.*

*We have also kept our communities fully informed and involved with newsletter articles and surveys, and the community does really feel very informed. They are eagerly awaiting each newsletter where we have the new school update on the front page and it has become sought-after reading material each week.*

*One wet day in April this year we signed a memorandum of understanding with the chairpersons, with Greg and Cheri, up at Acton School. From there we asked that the Minister consider the proposal that the two schools would formally amalgamate. Since that time we have formed a Somerset School steering committee comprising both principals, a teacher, four parents, Bruce Cameron,*



*the Manager of School Support and Tracey Bradley, Community Development Manager for Waratah-Wynyard Council and Peter Heathcote is our project officer.*

*Some of our major tasks so far have been to write the design brief, to select an architect - Artas and Heath - to ensure that the community is kept fully informed and involved, develop transition procedures, develop the identity of the new school. As a community, both school communities together, we have decided that Somerset Primary School is the preferred school, which for the school has great historical importance as well.*

*Currently we are working as a group exploring uniform and logo and motto. We have been working with the whole combined staff team, with the emphasis on whole-school approach to the teaching of literacy, numeracy and positive behaviour support.*

*To summarise the design brief, we wanted a really welcoming new school. We wanted it to feel like a new school, not a redeveloped school. We wanted it to have a wow factor and we wanted it to be the coolest place in town. We really want kids and families to feel as if this school is important. For so long, schools have not necessarily been that; they have been a bit shabby but we wanted ours to be really cool.*

*It needs to be really reflective of Somerset, which is a coastal village, with strong community networks, a sense of place and it must reflect and accommodate things like our very strong tradition in sport - we just won the North West Primary School Championships at the weekend and play for the State Championships later this year - and the active nature of the children. It must also be reflective of home environments - for example, fun and comfortable. We know that children learn best when they are comfortable, not sitting up straight in uncomfortable chairs in hot, stuffy classrooms.*

*Connections were really strong for us. We wanted it to be from birth to four to grade 6, that the learning spaces be connected, that the community would feel connected and united around the school, that there should be spaces for gathering, spaces for quiet play, for reading or reflection and that the school would become a community hub.*

*The school would have innovative learning, teaching and play spaces and this would facilitate staff collaboration and a sense of team. Flexibility is a key theme and that all spaces could be used for various activities - for example, inside and outside learning - and that the school would be a safe and secure place and have state-of-the-art ICT.*

*It would be environmentally sustainable and the school and the buildings would be teaching tools in themselves and help educate students to become responsible stewards of our fragile world.*

*The plans, which you have had a chance to look at, are really exciting. I believe they have not just fully met all the details of the very fulsome design brief which*

*the group provided to Heath, but go beyond it to ensure that we are creating a school for twenty-first century learners with the student placed at the very heart of the design. Learners of today prefer active learning and need quick access to information. They are highly interactive and social and have a low tolerance of lecture-style teaching. Students must be comfortable to learn well and this means considering things like ample daylight, fresh air and acoustics. These plans show a deep respect for our students and will build a sense of pride.*

*We have carefully considered the placement of the different age groups. As Heath explained, the first pod as you come in is for the younger children and then we go around. The easy navigation between the different spaces will build confidence and independence.*

*Schools have traditionally been made up of a series of individual rooms designed to hold a group of children and a teacher - private rooms behind closed doors where the teacher works in isolation, one class one room, where the idea of a classroom came from. Designs were lined up in rows facing a teacher. We now need to move away from the notion of one class per room, which is more suited to the industrial model of education but is no longer suited to twenty-first century learners. The flexible learning spaces that are in our design will meet the needs of this new generation. I firmly believe that this design will have a profound and positive effect on teaching and learning and will unite the community around one strong school.*

*The implementation is moving along really well. As Malcolm alluded to, of course there are challenges. It is a significant undertaking to take on, particularly since the building of the new school at West Somerset will now involve the site needing to be a clear site at the end of this year and for building to commence in 2010, so the students and staff are moving from West Somerset onto the Somerset site during 2010. Our goal is that we will be one new school from 2010. That is becoming a reality every day. We have terrapins being constructed on the Somerset site at the moment and the students at Somerset are seeing that. West Somerset students are coming over and visiting the school often and seeing what is happening. We are working on the motto. We have surveyed parents and the most prominent words were 'together' and 'learning'. We think the motto is going to be around something to do with learning together.*

*We are doing transition activity afternoons where the parent groups are working together. The school associations are having regular meetings together. We are starting to set up the teaching groups for 2010 when we are one new school. Currently we have 301 students; next year we will have just under 300. We are really proud of our innovative work and we are confident that what we are setting up will be of great benefit to the present and future children of Somerset.*

Mr Clayton added the following information:-

*Firstly, Artas was fortunate to be selected to be the architects involved with this process. It is a unique opportunity to bring two schools together. It is a little bit different from when you traditionally walk into a school and it's just the*

*development of the school and the betterment of the school. We were working with two different school communities, balancing up the requirements of both.*

*As Denise touched on, there was an extensive design brief put forward to us. It was really a substantial document. Whilst it looks pretty daunting in the first instance, it is a very positive thing because it meant that the users were very focused on what they wanted. It was very good for us because we knew where they wanted to go and how they wanted to get there and what the outcomes were.*

*The design response is directly related to the underpinning strategies initiated by the Somerset School steering committee to provide a significantly better school for the Somerset community. A continued approach with all stakeholders involved in the project has resulted in a shared vision for a new educational facility that responds to best practice and teaching and learning principles.*

*The project will provide new and refurbished accommodation for up to 350 students at the existing West Somerset Primary School site. The new buildings include three learning pods, providing 12 general learning areas, complete with access to wet activities, shared studio space and external learning spaces. The existing buildings to be retained and refurbished include Building 2, which is a single story that will accommodate visitors' entry and reception and the other functions of student services, a library and early learning centre. Building 3, which is the existing multi-purpose hall, is a double-height space and will accommodate a new discovery centre, stores and the canteen. External works include extension to the existing car park, new drop-off zones, safe student access, outdoor learning spaces, student social zones, covered walkways and extension of active playgrounds. The design proposal is for the student services building to provide a formal entry for visitors and the school community and links directly to the parking and drop-off zones. The building retains the single-storey volume but provides street presence with an increased height of the entry canopy and this creates a vibrant and directional marker as the first point of call as you enter the site.*

*The student common centre, or 'town square', is the social hub of the design. It is located centrally in the north-east location with access to light and protection from wind. This space has direct links to the learning and resource room, otherwise known as the library, and other general learning areas. It provides the connection between indoor and outdoor learning and has access to student services, the multipurpose spaces and discovery centre. The town square provides both hard and soft landscaping elements able to support a creative setting for innovative teaching and outdoor learning, outdoor communal dining and links to the canteen, as well as a place for gathering and playing in large and small groups.*

*Articulation of the larger built façade is broken down into smaller elements, providing a sense of human scale and proportion. Materials have been chosen for the ease of maintenance, longevity and sustainability. Building heights and floor areas are appropriate for the function and fit an educational facility size determined by the department.*

*One of the key aspects within this process was to create a new identity. When amalgamating the two schools, a new identity was an important factor in our consideration. The new identity is achieved by significant changes to both the built and natural environment that is able to celebrate and support a new beginning as a united school community. The town square and learning resources are arranged around the central space for student activities. The location of the learning pods has a direct link to this social hub and provides an environment that is safe, supportive and co-operative and reflects the idea of the village community, which is a strong underlying factor that was reinforced in the design brief; also, as Denise touched on earlier, to make it a fun space and somewhere the kids want to be and make it, not only when they are at school but also after-hours and on weekends, a place where they can come and gather.*

*The finishes and colours of the building materials are reflective and accentuate the school colours and enhances a sense of pride and ownership, connecting students to the built environment. In consultation with the school, elements from each school will be located within and adjacent to the social hub.*

*The master planning solution that we came up with was to provide a student social space in an area that was not only secure but also had managed supervision - to allow for managed supervision throughout the site. The learning pod is spread out from the social hub with the learning resource centre acting as the village centre. This social hub has covered-ways and landscaping elements to encourage students to engage in their environment in a caring, responsible and inclusive manner. The covered-way is an organic shell-like structure and connects each learning pod through the social hub and directly into each of the learning resource centre and multi-purpose halls.*

*External spaces provide play and social areas that challenge the senses whilst maintaining safety and efficient supervision. The variety of spaces can provide for small and large group play, both internal and external.*

*The proposed landscaping treatments are designed to meet functionality, aesthetics and environmental criteria. The design theme responds to the school's location, adjacent to the coastline. In terms of landform, low grassy and planted mounds, reflective of low dunes, help to define the spaces whilst maintaining view lines critical for supervision of the school grounds...*

*Each learning pod provides for four connected general learning areas. Each learning area accommodates the flexibility for team teaching, small group learning, shared studio and break-out spaces, wet area activity, project-based activities and individual work areas. Each learning area has an individual teacher resource room and an independent work area. The learning area is connected to full ICT access, interactive smart boards and areas for display. The space is appropriately sized and provides access to light, views, natural ventilation as well as visual and acoustic privacy.*

*The early childhood centre is a general learning area provided for a shared teaching space with additionally large wet areas, their own toilets and a connected, secure outdoor play area. Each learning area has its own resource*

area and independent teacher work bench. The wet area has a bench suitable for staff as well as a sink and bench area suitable for students of kinder age. It has been located directly adjacent to one of the new car parks for ease of drop-off and pick-up. It also has one of the fundamental facts that was really stressed upon us, the location. Traditionally, the kindergarten has been the forgotten area of a school and has been located off to the side because we need to protect our kindergarten kids. A real driving point was to make it the hub because for the parents who are involved with the kindergarten area, it is their first introduction to the school and, as you would have seen when we were walking around, we are trying to encourage the parents and the families to be heavily involved with the school. So providing the kindergarten adjacent to the central hub enables the parents to be involved right from day one and then the idea is to continue their involvement right through to the end of grade 6.

The student services building accommodates the entry, visitor waiting, reception and general administration. It has direct access to a large meeting room. The meeting room is also linked to the staff room through a divisible wall, which allows flexibility to accommodate staff development and larger meetings and forums. Students can easily access the staff room, senior staff officers, plus specialist consulting rooms and IT area, directly from the social hub. The resource centre caters for both students and staff. It provides a new library reference area, IT connected, casual seating, flexible learning options and large teacher resources in a central location.

The existing multi-purpose hall is an adaptable space for sporting activities, performing arts and community events. It has its own independent entry located near the new car park for after-hours access. It also provides three independent store-rooms, so that different groups can have access to different areas. A new discovery centre is proposed adjacent to this, which will also open within the existing multi-purpose area. This will be a specialised learning area for science, construction, technology, food technology, music, drama production and the arts. Basically, it is just a flexible learning area. This space can also accommodate after-school care with a dedicated store-room, music room and tea-making facilities.

The canteen is also located adjacent to this building so in wet weather the discovery room can be used to serve the canteen and in fine weather it opens directly onto the social hub. The canteen can also be used as part of the community access to the multi-purpose hall.

The project will be designed to meet Australian Design Standards for access and mobility in all areas... We are looking at using toxic-free materials, specifying renewable resources, as well as using local materials where possible...

We will be utilising solar hot water throughout the site and we are looking to capture the natural air patterns through the building with openings in opposite corners to maximise natural ventilation. We will be installing operable vents and highlight windows to dump hot air and expel any indoor air pollutants. We will be planting dense landscape to the west to protect from the cold winter winds and summer heat.

*We will be collecting and harvesting water from the roof and connecting the downpipes to the existing tank storage and providing new storage. All gutters will be fitted with leaf guards so the water that goes into the tanks is filtered. We will be integrating water efficient landscapes and extending the existing irrigated scheme. We will be selecting other energy-saving devices such as lights and so forth.*

*We have the existing car park that is located on the site and which has caused a few dramas over the years. We are looking at modifying this and providing some new access in and out. There is the existing road with the two entrances in and out of the site.*

Mr Lovell added the following:-

*I have been involved in this process from the very first combined school association meeting where we looked at the future of education in Somerset. All along, one of the biggest issues I have dealt with and had feedback about is the amalgamation process of two separate student bodies and two separate school communities. The big concern was that someone along the way was going to step up and say, 'No, you can't do this; this is not the right thing'. As Malcolm mentioned previously, there was very much a general consensus across both school communities that one new, improved and latest and greatest school is the best goal to aim for, but getting to that point proved to be a little hard.*

*I guess we were over-cautious in some regard to the community feedback and were very concerned that we didn't want all of a sudden a runaway call saying, 'No, you can't do this; you're ruining the history of this school', or, 'We don't want to be involved with that school', or whatever their particular argument was. So we took very gradual and gentle steps and tried to maintain as best we could information going out at each step along the way, which really culminated in the meeting we held at the Somerset Surf Club, which was basically an open forum where I, Malcolm and I think Denise may have presented different aspects of the process at that particular stage. We then set out some questions to try to generate feedback from those people. I was very unsure how positive or negative that feedback would be at that stage, because we were dealing with a lot of people's history and a lot of the community people had gone through those two schools. Every school breeds loyalty in its students and the general community towards that school. In this instance we wanted to break down that loyalty a little bit to enable them to blend together. We were a little unsure but it was a great reassurance to myself and everybody else involved on that particular night that there was overwhelmingly positive feedback that we were going in the right direction for the future of the students in Somerset.*

*Short-term potential issues we had to deal with included the combining of the two school bodies and living for the coming 12 months on the one site. For the overall future gain of Somerset and Somerset students, it is a small price to pay for where we will hopefully get to. Generally the feedback from parents, students and general community has been more positive than I thought it might be.*

**Student numbers**

The Committee questioned the witnesses with regard to the number of student enrolments. Mr Wells responded:-

*Some of those variations come from different documents developed at different stages in the process. We looked at numbers in 2007, so I think there might be a table in there that has its origins in that work. We need to be sure of around 300, given that in the Burnie-Somerset area, if there is any capacity in the future for housing growth, there is a bit more potential out on that western side, so we think 300 is where we need to be, at a minimum. There is a bit of increased capacity. Whilst the general classroom model is for around 300, if it got a bit bigger we could handle that. There is the potential for population decline to end up around that 250-270 mark by 2015. There is a judgment call for us to make there, taking into account the demographic data we have, the current student numbers and, if we have a brand-new school, the impact that will have. We have tried to settle on a number around the 300-mark. I acknowledge the variations in the literature and I think they reflect different stages of work that we have done on it. But, in the end, I think the 300 total is around where it will settle. It could be on the low side, it could be on the high side.*

With regard to students from the area enrolling in outside area schools, Mr Lovell added:-

*A small amount [of students from the area enrolling in other schools occurs] and, I guess, from the other schools around the area and to private education as well. One of the strategies was that if this is what we are hoping it is going to be then it may even reverse a little bit of that flow.*

**Community use of school facilities**

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to what consultation had occurred with community groups who use school facilities. Ms Finlay responded:-

*The groups that use our schools after school are already talking about where their things will be stored and things like that. So, yes, they are very keen to be still part of the one school.*

*We have requests for different groups to use our facilities that we are unable to accommodate at the moment due to not having the spaces. So, certainly, they want to be there, they want to be involved. Neighbourhood Watch is keen.*

**Pod and library design**

The Committee questioned the witnesses with regard to the design of the library facilities and learning centre and separate pods. Ms Finlay responded:-

*In the pods themselves there are teacher resource areas so the materials that the kids need, day to day, will be based in the pods. There is also a central place to come to for people to access specialised equipment that might be in the library. It is a really great place for kids to go and interact in a different setting. There*

*will be really lovely comfortable furniture in there so that kids get a sense of going to a special place and having some special activities as well.*

*But there will be places for literacy - if literacy is your main concern - for those resources to be very much in the classrooms when they are needed and the same with ICT. Kids will be able to get the information when they need it in the pods as well, in the general learning areas.*

With regard to teacher librarians and library staff, Ms Finlay added:-

*I think that is quite a separate issue. For example, our paraprofessional - our teacher assistant - who runs our library is a highly skilled person but also our classroom teachers come in and take the library lessons as such. What they are doing during those times is teaching and extending their literacy programs into a different setting.*

### **Schools federation**

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to whether a broader federation combining with Burnie or Wynyard schools would be considered. Mr Wells responded:-

*With national Partnership funding you would be referring to five or six elements and encouraging school federations is one element. It has not been a subject of discussion with respect to this. This is really the merger and the creation of one single school. Whether down the track that school looks to forge the kinds of links with other schools, whether it is in a Wynyard direction or in a Burnie direction, is probably something more for the future. Over the last five or six years, the Somerset schools have been working closely with the Burnie group of schools in a collaborative way across a range of endeavours but I do not think that at this stage there has been any real forward thinking about whether the new single Somerset school would align itself with any particular group of schools at either the eastern end or on the western edge. The actual process of amalgamating and creating one school wouldn't be an avenue to attract national Partnership funding for school federations under the requirements there because that would need to be part of a group of schools. At this point, being part of a federated entity isn't on the agenda. Whether it is after the school is established and an individual entity in itself and starts to form relationships with other schools, that would be something into the future rather than now.*

Ms Finlay added:-

*We have really tried to be very focused on our goals of creating this one new school and building the new culture around that. That has been our really big focus for the last couple of years.*

### **Interim student accommodation**

The Committee questioned the witnesses with regard to the interim student accommodation during the construction works, and whether the cost of this was included in the project budget. Mr Finch responded:-



*We are putting up some demountable classrooms on the site and then using the existing site at Somerset, but at the moment we have it factored into the budget. With the overall budget ... it's not easily identifiable but it is factored into the budget. With the overall budget, like many of these projects, we are still subject to a tender outcome. We will be moving to a tender next month and then we have to reassess the overall situation depending on how we go with the tender outcome. We have done our best to move to an estimate...*

*There are a couple of components to it because we have to move the early childhood intervention service that we saw this morning. That has to move to Acton Primary because it is a temporary location at the moment. As we have said in the report, we need to think more about the permanent location for ECIS but there are a number of other things going on at the moment that do not allow us to decide the permanent location. Probably one key decision is the location of the child/family centre for the Burnie area. That still has to work through a number of community consultation processes, so we have chosen a temporary location at the moment. It is probably going to cost in the order of \$100 000 to move ECIS, and the move to Somerset would probably be in the order of \$150 000. Part of that is the relocation of terrapins, which are quite costly to move and set up, but there really isn't another solution at this point.*

### **Old Somerset site**

The Committee questioned the witnesses with regard to the sale prospects for the old Somerset site. Mr Finch responded:-

*It is zoned as community use at the moment... We did have an official valuation, and that was the valuation as it is currently zoned. Obviously the department wants to move away, sell the site and get the funds as quickly as possible, given that they are part of this budget. That would be up to a prospective buyer. It will be put on the market and the buyer will have to think about zoning, subdivision, and all those issues. The department does not get into that sort of property development process... Its location, right at the end of the town, will be a very attractive site. That is another aspect of the budget. If we get more we will look at more funds being released as part of the budget to cover any cost overruns. That has been a commitment to the community right from the start, that the full proceeds of the asset sale will be put into the project. I think that is important, given the good faith we have operated on with the community, that all those proceeds are put into the project. Of course at this stage we have to work on an estimate for the overall project, but as it moves forward and things get firmed up, we will look at that.*

### **Car parking**

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to the car parking, pick-up and drop-off facilities. Mr Clayton responded:-

*We are in discussions with council at the moment, one of the good things in having Tracey on the steering committee. There is currently a traffic impact assessment being done on the site at the request of the council and we are looking at rationalising the entry. There is new signposting to reinforce the entry and exit, and also dedicated staff parking areas and then a visitor parking area over*

*next to the early childhood centre. We have the existing car parks there which would be used by staff and administration persons but we will try to encourage the visitors to use the new car park that would be adjacent to the early childhood centre so we can reinforce bringing them in and accessing the school through a central point...*

*Where we walked today there is the existing footpath and that will be extended and have bus parking and drop-off areas. When students get dropped off, either by car or bus, they will not have to cross the road, which they currently would have to do. I think we have accommodation for a couple of buses and about four or five cars to drop off at any one time.*

### **Covered walkways**

The Committee questioned the witnesses with regard to the provision of covered walkways. Mr Clayton responded:-

*I think it is fair to say that it was a hotly discussed concept through the design process. We had the dilemma between providing an open space, this coastal-type environment, and then shutting it all down by cutting off all the open areas with covered ways. We have come up with a compromise which follows the paths - the dark shaded area - which is covered and links in a semi-circular manner back around to the central pod and then links in. If you look on the elevation, there is the wave-shaped covered way in front of each learning pod that wraps around the other way...*

*They are extensions to the learning areas so they become outdoor learning areas and a covered way. Once again, we have tried to create multi-useable spaces and then we have the one link across to the library resource and to the central pod. It will be covered completely on top and have an open back. We are looking at growing plants or having some sort of landscaping shelter from the south-westerly wind that hits the Somerset site.*

### **Toilet facilities**

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to the configuration of toilet facilities within the proposed works. Mr Clayton responded:-

*That is probably one of the things we are doing a lot at the moment, getting rid of the traditional toilet block. In between each learning pod there is a little toilet block. When I say 'toilet block', it is three independent toilets that can be locked down. It has an open-meshed front... They are accessed through the covered way, so you can get to them under cover. They are opened up at the start of school and then it is just like going into a public toilet which has a door, its own hand basin and toilet. You shut yourself in and then you access out from there...*

*There are also three toilets located off the multi-purpose hall, so that will be nine. There is also the disabled facility behind the library resource area. The kindergarten has its own four toilets dedicated for kindergarten... they have their own because they need to have a supervised toilet area...*

*When the bell goes they go to the toilet. None of the students seems to want to go to the toilet in their own time, so there is the big rush at the end of recess and lunch, so it has been designed to accommodate their coming back into the pods. Also, we have located toilets with the multi-purpose hall so if they are on the oval having a run around they can quite easily come back and use those toilets. If they are in the social hub, they can come in and use those toilets without having to go back in through the classroom spaces.*

Mr Finch added the following:-

*After we put up all the plans - the master plan, the concept plan - parents' feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The two things they presented as concerns were the lack of covered walkways at that stage and wanting small toilet blocks, not a big toilet block but just a few together. The parents were very happy that we have taken on board that feedback and that has all been integrated into the plans. Our communities feel that everything that they have had issues about we have taken to the architect and Heath has been able to incorporate those into the plans. They really feel as if they have had a real contribution to the development of the school plans.*

### **Green star rating**

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to the green star rating of the proposed works. Mr Clayton responded:-

*This one is not a green-star rated building. We are utilising ESD principles to give us best outcomes but this one is not a green-star rated project.*

Mr Finch added the following:-

*Even right through the BER projects, with the briefs we have given architects involved in that, in every project there has been environmental sustainability design principles. We made a policy decision at the start around only pursuing the official Green Building Council of Australia rating on new schools. We will have three new primary schools - two in the south and one here - and Kingston High School. So we will be putting those four schools through the official rating, but for any other project we would not go for an official rating. It is quite a detailed process to get an official rating. It is a process that is still maturing. In fact Kingston will probably be the first school in Australia to be rated as a five-star school. That shows that the process is evolving. It is very detailed and very costly. So we did make that policy decision to only pursue the official rating for the four new schools, rather than schools that had a partial refurbishment and partial new build or significant refurbishment like the ones under the Building the Education Revolution project.*

Mr Clayton added:-

*It is quite a cumbersome process to go through and you have a specialist green-star consultant you have to engage to do the process. That being said, we have a responsibility in our industry to do the best that we can environmentally and sustainably. We bring across a lot of the green-star criteria but we are not*

*applying it in a formal manner which Green Star makes you do. We have two or three lever-arch files worth of material that we have had to keep and record as part of the green-star process. It is evolving. The Green Council still have not given final criteria and how they are going to assess education facilities. It is still evolving. They have to make a ruling because Tasmania is going to have some, so they will have to finally say how they will rate them. Are they individual buildings or is it one whole site? Lots of things are moving, so it is a very complex and detailed process that we go through.*

Mr Finch continued:-

*It is about accumulating points, and you get points for everything. You get points for a bike rack, lighting and heating and so on. If you have a builder who is officially green-star qualified or accredited, you get an extra point for that. But then of course through a tender process you limit your capacity on... how many builders you can get access to. It is just one of those balancing acts, again, right through the whole management and balancing the budget for a project. So that is why we decided to do it just for the new ones.*

### **Readable energy monitors**

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to whether readable energy monitoring would be available for integration into the school curriculum. Mr Clayton responded:-

*We are not looking at putting in a building management system that you would need to do under a green-star requirement. We will look at putting in possible usage meters, which is purely a manual read per building and would be used as a teaching tool more than a building management system. I think Denise touched on the fact that it can be used as a teaching tool...*

*Somerset has been successful in getting a solar grant through the Federal [Government]... As part of that process there is the ability to read the energy generated from those solar panels. I suppose when you are looking at capturing rainwater and then using it, it is very hard to meter between what is town water and what is tank water because you are re-using tank water in the first instance through toilets and things like that. We can use check meters for energy consumption on each building. It basically comes into the building from the main feed and highlights the amount of energy used in that building from a set point.*

### **School history**

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to what efforts were being made to maintain the histories of both schools. Mr Lovell responded:-

*It is very important that we don't lose the history of either school, though obviously the Somerset school has the longer history. We're hoping to take some of the parts of that school - like a set of very old doors that were part of the original Somerset school building - and incorporate those into the new building, as well as some of the other features of that school and maintain a little part of that history. Even though the West Somerset school doesn't have that longevity behind it, it is still important to people who have gone through that school that*

*parts of it are also included in the new design. In reality that West Somerset school will be just as new a school to the current West Somerset students as it will be to the Somerset students at the start of 2011.*

## **DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE**

The following document was taken into evidence and considered by the Committee:

- Somerset School: The Development of a New Somerset School Resulting from the Amalgamation of Somerset and West Somerset Primary Schools Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, October 2009

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The need for the project was clearly established. Both Somerset Primary School and West Somerset Primary School are in need of refurbishment and updating of facilities to better deliver a modern curriculum. One of the issues facing both schools is the decline in student numbers. Schools with populations at 150 or less can find it difficult to maintain the curriculum and social support programs expected of the modern school.

The amalgamation of the Somerset Primary School and West Somerset Primary School will allow the local community to focus all energies, refurbishments and funding on one significantly better school. The project will provide new and refurbished accommodation for up to 350 students at the existing West Somerset Primary School site. The educational benefits for children and the capacity for one school to be a unifying force within the community are among the major drivers for change.

The Committee was of the view that the new facilities should maximise the positive environmental learning opportunities, including equipment to monitor energy savings and efficiencies, which should be installed.

Accordingly, the Committee recommends the project, in accordance with the documentation submitted, at an estimated total cost of \$6,100,000.

**Parliament House  
Hobart  
13 November 2009**

**Hon. A. P. Harriss M.L.C.  
Chairman**