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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

# **Winnaleah District High School Redevelopment**

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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*

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## **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 redevelopment of Winnaleah District High School associated with the merging with Branxholm Primary School.**

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

## **BACKGROUND**

Winnaleah District High School and Branxholm Primary School provide early childhood, primary and secondary education facilities for students resident in the Eastern region of North East Tasmania.

Winnaleah District High School has a current enrolment of approximately 155 full time equivalent (FTE) students from kindergarten to year twelve. Branxholm Primary School currently accommodates 34 full time equivalent students. Although enrolment numbers in both schools has decreased in recent years a demand for a variety of educational services is expected to continue to grow and develop within the region in the foreseeable future.

An external consultant was commissioned in early 2008 to develop a project consultation process with the school communities to predominantly address declining student enrolment at Branxholm Primary School.

The following guiding principles have since evolved and been agreed by respective school management and communities:

- Branxholm Primary School to be formally annexed to Winnaleah District High School at the end of 2008 resulting in the merger of the two schools;
- Branxholm Primary School to cease operating as a primary school as at the end of 2009; and
- K-10 to operate at the Winnaleah District High School Campus

A vision for the future Winnaleah School Campus has also been developed in consultation with representatives of all key stakeholders. The cultural integration of the two school communities is an important underpinning goal of the merger process and will form the basis of a new school identity.

A redevelopment project has been announced by the Minister for Education to assist in the successful merger of the school communities and provide modern facilities for equitable access to education in the North East.

Total funding available for the project is \$3,275,000 to be made available by the Tasmanian Government through the School Futures Fund (\$2,050,000) and Australian Government through the Building Education Revolution (BER) Stimulus Package (\$1,225,000).

## **POLICY AND PLANNING INITIATIVES**

### **Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP)**

The proposal to redevelop facilities associated with the merging of the Winnaleah District High School and the Branxholm Primary School and their school communities responds to the following policy and planning framework through the provision of contemporary teaching and learning facilities.

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 Treasurer approved the current SAMP in July 2007. The plan sets out the Department's goal of optimising built asset resources to support current and future community needs and best practice.

The prime objective of capital investment as outlined in the SAMP is to deliver assets that support and enhance contemporary teaching and learning practices, through the following planning and design elements:

- differentiation of space and functional areas;
- accommodation of all integral functions;
- flexibility;
- shared use of facilities;
- encouragement of partnership arrangements; and
- access to information and communication technology (ICT).

In addition to the SAMP, the Department is guided in the management of assets by key government planning initiatives, which are interpreted and embedded in DoE policy and service delivery approaches. These include:

- "Tasmania Together" which sets out a vision and goals for the Tasmanian community, some of which have a direct impact on the facilities required, to support the delivery of services by the Department of Education. The impact of this on asset planning generally emerges within Departmental planning frameworks;
- The *Tasmanian Curriculum Framework* is a refinement to the previous Essential Learnings 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.

### **Building Schools for the Future**

Initial funding for this project has been made available under the Building Schools for the Future program of the Education Capital Investment Program 2008-09 to 2011-12.

The proposed project has been assessed as meeting the requirements of the "Renewing Structures and Locations of Schools" component of the "Building Schools

for the Future” program enabling funding to support groups of schools wishing to renew their structure or their location within existing school sites in order to improve educational opportunities for local students.

### **Building Education Revolution**

The announcement in February 2009 of the Australian Government’s Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan, Building Education Revolution (BER) provided an opportunity for Winnaleah District High School and Branxholm Primary School to jointly apply for additional funding for the multipurpose hall component of the project under the Primary Schools for the 21st Century Program.

The BER Program has been dedicated to build or renew large scale infrastructure in all primary schools, special schools, and district high schools (primary component), with the priority for works being on libraries, halls, performing arts centres and indoor sporting centres.

### **Building Better Schools**

In addition to the above requirements works undertaken are also to be compatible with the Building Better Schools policy framework which 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;
- 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.

## **EXISTING FACILITIES**

### **Existing Buildings**

#### **Winnaleah District High School**

The facilities at Winnaleah District High School have a total fully enclosed covered area (FECA) of approximately 2,183 m<sup>2</sup> on a flat site of 8.22 hectares, excluding the school farm.

Winnaleah District High School comprises a complex of one to two storey buildings including;

- a main two storey building (Building 1) accommodating the front entry and administration areas, general learning areas (GLA's), specialised learning areas (SLA's) for science, materials, design and technology (MDT), physical education, change rooms, toilets, storage, dance and drama, visual arts, library and ICT learning areas;
- a separate single storey building (Building 3) accommodating a kindergarten, and single GLA and amenities;
- a separate single storey building (Building 2) accommodating home economics, online centre and music;
- a small, separate single storey building (Building 4) used as teaching spaces for special programs; and
- facilities for teaching and support staff located throughout the school, and
- a school farm that operates adjacent to the site with various minor buildings.

#### **Branxholm Primary School**

Branxholm Primary School occupies a site of around 5.52 hectares.

Building structures at Branxholm Primary School include;

- a main building (Building 1) accommodating administration areas, general learning areas (GLA's) and staff amenities on the Ground Floor and student amenities and storerooms on the Lower Ground Floor;
- a single storey classroom terrapin (Building 2); and
- several small storage sheds.

### **Recent History of Expenditure on Capital Works at Winnaleah District High School**

While parts of Winnaleah District High School have been replaced or refurbished over the years, most of the building works undertaken over the life of the facility have only entailed cyclical maintenance, minor refurbishment and fit-out alterations.

Some learning areas in the school remain in substantially original condition and require refurbishment or redevelopment to provide an effective quality learning environment.

Capital works projects undertaken by DoE have included:

- minor works projects including upgrading the Early Learning and Materials Design and Technology areas; and

- small building fabric, services and infrastructure maintenance and replacement projects.

## **PROJECT PROPOSAL**

### **School Curriculum**

Winnaleah District High School is determined to build a culture of continuous school improvement through identifying, formulating and implementing a plan which aims to:

1. Strengthen the School Image
2. Enhance Motivation and Engagement
3. Develop Teacher Leaders

Enabling the new school to be a “School of Choice” in the region is a key outcome of the merger process. New and upgraded facilities at the school will provide a catalyst to change and underpin important school leadership and curriculum advancements.

The school seeks to have equitable facilities to deliver appropriate teaching and learning in contemporary and vibrant spaces for generalist and specialist study.

There is a rural underpinning to the life of the school, with linkages to the school farm forming an important part of school life.

At all times the school endeavours to enable students to reach the highest levels of academic achievement and seeks to provide as many learning options as possible supported by suitable learning environments.

### **Project Objectives**

Notwithstanding the adequacy of overall floor space allocated to general and specialised learning areas at Winnaleah District High School, the learning areas are no longer suitable for effective delivery of the curriculum, due to size, rigid plan configuration and lack of support facilities.

The lack of flexibility in general learning areas in the main school building is an issue as conducting the range of activities relating to core subject areas remains problematic using spaces that do not currently have access to wet areas, smaller withdrawal rooms, or other learning areas for group activities. Access to effective computer resources is also currently limited within this building.

The overall quality and condition of the learning areas is declining due to the ageing of general building finishes and fittings and some of the building fabric and services are nearing the end of their life span and require refurbishment or replacement.

Facilities in Buildings 1 and 2 used for art and music require refurbishment as they are not readily adaptable to the delivery of a contemporary curriculum and are

generally considered to be in less than optimum condition. Ineffective configuration also severely limits the potential for flexibility and adaptability.

In addition, the school has limited space for the effective teaching of dance, drama or indoor physical education and cannot comfortably accommodate whole of school or community gatherings.

From the outcomes of the school merger process, it is proposed to build a new multi-purpose facility and refurbish existing original general learning areas and specialised learning areas to create contemporary learning spaces that will enable the effective delivery of the Tasmanian curriculum. A new multi-purpose hall will provide Winnaleah District High School with a much needed all weather under cover space for students and the local community.

### **School and Community Consultation**

Extensive school and community dialogue has been undertaken to proactively explore the future educational provisioning for the region and in particular, the capacity of the two current schools to accommodate and deliver contemporary educational services. The community has strongly influenced the detail of the final outcome which will ensure a high level of regional ownership in the development of the project.

A project steering group collaborated with key Department of Education stakeholders as well as joint school and community representatives has met to identify strategic options for the ongoing development of facilities at Winnaleah District High School and that scope of works is generally reflected in the vision.

The cultural integration of the two school communities is an important underpinning goal of the merger process that will be reflected in a new school identity. Another key focus of the merger and consultation process is the physical improvements at Winnaleah District High School to the existing administration and school entrance, identified as being in need of reconfiguration and total refurbishment to better reflect an appropriate educational and cultural image.

## **BUILDING PROPOSAL**

### **Design Brief**

Proposed outcomes for the project are to:

Assess and prioritise potential alternative options for a Multi-Purpose Centre building that is suitable for a broad range of activities including; Performing Arts and Production, Dance and Drama, Physical Education and Community Events with sufficient floor space to facilitate:

- a basketball/netball court;
- appropriate storage;
- a canteen and community use kitchen;



- an external covered area that may connect to the existing building and amenities; and
- access to toilet and change-room facilities.

Assess and identify the optimum solution for the following within the project budget:

- refurbishment and upgrading of the existing hall into two acoustically separated spaces for use as library and visual arts resource areas, with flexibility to be opened into a single space;
- upgrading of the stage area to accommodate other uses;
- refurbish staff offices; and
- undertake a detailed investigation of site services and all building services and networks condition and capacity.

Assess and identify the appropriate solution for a new school building entrance and facade incorporating:

- a welcoming public entry reception and foyer;
- offices for Principal and Executive Officer;
- a general office for two administrative staff with support facilities;
- office space for visiting specialist consultants;
- a meeting area;
- disabled access to main entry; and
- separate student access to the general office.

Address the refurbishment of the existing general learning areas in Building 1 to floor areas of approximately 90 m<sup>2</sup> inclusive of the following:

- wet area benches or activity areas;
- smaller withdrawal spaces for small group work, private work or consultation;
- access to ICT facilities and wireless networking;
- accommodation for staff including senior and special education staff;
- storage for learning areas and staff resources;
- connections between learning areas, and into the main corridor; and
- minor refurbishment of stair wells including locker removal.

Include refurbishment and/or inclusion of a shower in the existing medical inspection suite, to enable better facilities for supported care students.

Incorporate new building and site services for:

- a new grid interactive solar panel array; and
- waste water treatment with potential for reticulated irrigation

Address the relocation of heavy vehicle including bus access to a roadway along the south eastern boundary to the Winnaleah main street. The design shall provide adequate pedestrian access from the bus drop off point to the student entry with appropriate pedestrian crossing at roadways.

Consider refurbishment of various external and site works relative to building modifications and specifically:

- soft landscaping;
- new cricket nets at northern end of oval;
- potential relocation of some playground equipment from Branhholm to Winnaleah (good will sharing with other nearby Primary Schools also an option); and
- renew external surfaces including accessibility, ramping, decking and paving.

### **Project Response – Areas for Redevelopment**

The main building (Building 1) houses most of the primary and secondary learning areas, apart from the Infant School, Music and Home Economics.

It is proposed that Building 1 be renovated to include upgraded general learning areas, refurbished library and visual arts areas. It is also proposed to extend and modify the existing administration areas. In addition it is proposed to construct a new Multi-Purpose Hall and relocate a terrapin classroom.

### **School Planning and Design**

#### **Building 1:**

It is proposed to renovate the existing general learning areas on both levels of the building. New wet activity spaces will be provided on the ground floor featuring connections between classrooms, separated with glazed bi-fold doors. Outdoor access and sheltered decks will enable the ground floor classrooms to have external learning areas.

Upstairs are three existing general learning areas which are to be connected with new openings and bi-fold doors to provide opportunities for collaborative learning and team teaching. The computer lab upstairs is to be converted into a classroom for general use and computer use will be provided to all classrooms via laptop provision from a central resource store on both levels. There will be a new senior staff office constructed on the upper level of Building 1 on the east end, over the administration offices.

The existing hall is to be converted into a Visual Arts Studio and Library/Resource Centre. A new entry from the courtyard side of the building will provide sheltered access to both facilities. A new wall will be constructed to the full height of the hall with a glazed bi-fold door providing the ability to link both spaces. In the Library, the elevated stage is to be demolished to provide level access to all areas. The proscenium arch to the hall stage is to be preserved, with the side stage walls to be demolished to provide a more open feel to this entry. ICT research and browsing will be housed in this location. The existing store at the rear of the hall will be converted into a meeting room.

The main entry and administration is to have new ramped and stair access. The entry is to be extended to allow for a new senior staff office/meeting room off the entry

foyer. Reception is to be reconfigured to provide a separate student enquiry desk and a medical room with toilet facilities. The Principal's office is to be relocated and the school executive officer is to take the principal's former office.

#### **Multi-purpose Hall:**

The new multi-purpose hall is to be located to the south of Building 1 immediately off the car park. It will be large enough to play indoor netball or basketball with a court size of 15 x 28 metres and a 2 metre run off all around. There will also be provision for a stage with a green room, change facilities, toilets, storage, control room and gym. The multi-purpose hall will be a much needed school and community sports and leisure facility. A canteen is also to be provided with the hall.

A new covered walkway is to link the main school Building 1 with the new hall, providing covered access to the new library and visual arts spaces and canteen.

#### **Student Transport:**

Students rely on three buses arriving together at 3pm each day for transport. A new sheltered drop off and pick up zone on the entry road is proposed as well as a new turning circle to separate vehicular and pedestrian movement which occurs at present.

#### **Environmental Sustainable Design (ESD) Initiatives:**

This project will incorporate the following building elements and services being environmentally sustainable, design initiatives for the redevelopment:

- an array of solar panels to provide a power contribution to the school – 4 KW. Spare power capacity will be fed back into the grid at times of low utilisation such as weekends and holidays;
- water tanks to collect rainwater from the new GP Hall are to be installed. This potable water supply will provide flushing water to toilets and irrigation of the landscape immediately around the school; and
- the sewerage disposal system is being upgraded to a new bio-cycle system, where the waste is treated in the collection tank and is then sprayed on open grassed areas.

The new hall and existing building being renovated has several ESD features including:

- main roof overhang to north to protect from summer sun penetration;
- thermal mass of the concrete slab and precast base walls act as heat sinks, during summer and winter, thereby moderating temperature fluctuations inside the hall;
- energy efficient light fittings and controlled switching of lighting;
- use of plantation pine wall framing; and
- use of low emission building boards, adhesives, sealants and paints.

#### **Building Materials**

Building materials to be used in newly constructed areas are:

##### Multi-purpose Hall

- reinforced concrete floor and foundations;
- steel portal frame;

- precast concrete base walls to 2.4 meters high;
- steel clad exterior upper walls (color bond) lined internally with insulation and perforated ply acoustic panels;
- aluminium framed windows to upper wall section on the south and north sides.
- plantation pine timber framed walls;
- insulated ceiling;
- colorbond metal deck roof; and
- rubber cushioned sports floor.

### Project Funding

The following tables outline proposed funding sources for the project;

Financial Year	State Funding (\$)	Other Funding (\$)	Total (\$)
2008/2009	150,000		150,000
2009/2010	1,900,000	1,225,000	3,125,000
Total	2,050,000	1,225,000	3,275,000

Description	Amount (\$)
Consultant's fees	235,000
Construction	2,698,200
Contingency	100,000
Furniture & Equipment	215,000
Artwork	26,800
	3,275,000

### Cost Estimates

The following table outlines indicative cost elements applicable to the works as determined by a qualified quantity surveyor;

Item/Description	Amount (\$) (excluding GST)
Admin. Extension/School Façade & Refurbishment	104,000
New Multi-Purpose Centre	1,431,000
Library/Resources/Visual Arts	384,000
Upgrade of General Learning Areas	288,000
Total Building Costs	2,207,000
Bus Drop Off Area, Car Parking and Other External Services	336,200
Power Improvement / Reduction/Generation	75,000
Sewer Treatment & Re-use Scheme for irrigation	50,000

Terrapin Relocation	30,000
Total External Infrastructure Costs	491,200
Contingencies (design, contract and post occupancy)	100,000
Total Indicative Development Cost Estimate	2,798,200
Furniture & Equipment	215,000
Art in Public Buildings	26,800
Total (excluding consultant's fees)	3,040,000
Consultant's Fees	235,000
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>3,275,000</b>

## **EVIDENCE**

The Committee commenced its inquiry on Tuesday, 12 May last at the Winnaleah District High School. Accompanied by the Officers of the Department of Education and the consultants, the Committee was conducted on a site inspection, following which the Committee recovened in the Community Facility, Recreation Road, Winnaleah. The following witnesses were called, made the Statutory Declaration and examined by the Committee in public:-

- Kelvin Griffiths - Senior Project Officer, Department of Education
- Jane Pickett - Acting Principal, Winnaleah District High School
- Michelle Shaw - Advanced Skills Teacher, Branhholm Primary School
- Lester Rainbow - Chairperson School Association
- Michael Wilkinson - Artas Architects and Planners

The Honourable Member for Apsley, Mrs Rattray-Wagner also appeared before the Committee and gave evidence.

## **Background**

Mr Griffiths provided the Committee with the following overview of the proposed wroks:-

*Last year our Learning Services North commissioned a review of educational services being provided both at Winnaleah District High School and Branhholm Primary School. As a consequence, an extensive school and community consultation process has been undertaken to explore various options for the provision of educational services by these schools. The consultation process resulted in agreement for both schools to merge at the beginning of this year and for Branhholm Primary School to cease operating as a primary school site at the end of 2009.*

*The proposed redevelopment of Winnaleah District High School will ensure the availability of contemporary specialist and general learning facilities for existing Winnaleah District High School students, as well as those from the Branhholm community. School and local community members will also benefit from having safe car parking and thus drop-off areas and access to a new multi-use complex.*

*Other features of the project will include greatly improved access to ICT, more work areas and conversion of the existing multi-use area to more functional visual arts and library spaces. Conducted front-of-school services will be significantly enhanced with provision of wheelchair access, as well as the refurbished school administration and entry areas. A range of appropriate environmental sustainability design features have been considered during planning and will be incorporated into the works.*

*Initial funding of around \$2 050 000 has been made available by the Tasmanian Government for the project. This sum has been further enhanced by the amount of \$1 225 000 from the Australian Government Building and Educational Revolution stimulus package. Total project funding is now \$3 275 000, which should ensure that the substantial improvement of the facilities of Winnaleah District High School can be achieved.*

*Construction is scheduled to commence in June 2009 with completion expected by the start of the 2010 school year.*

## **Environmental aspects**

Mr Wilkinson made the following submission in relation to the environmental aspects of the project:-

*We talked about several benefits of the project (at the site). One is by way of solar panels to be provided on the roof of the new multipurpose hall - a 4kW power supply, which will be fed back into the grid. Another benefit is the water tanks for rainwater collection on the north-west side of the hall, which are to be installed to provide potable water for flushing toilets and also for irrigation around the school grounds. Further, there is the sewage disposal system, which is being upgraded to a new biocycle system, which will take the sewage from the site and feed it through a number of filtration tanks, treat it and then sprinkle it on some of the open areas beyond the school fence. I would also just like to mention that we are putting in energy-efficient light fittings and controlled switching of lighting using plantation pine wall-framing as well and using low-emission building boards, adhesive ceilings and paints. I also mention that an aspect of the new hall is that we are providing thermal mass in the concrete slab and foundations and the base pre-cast walls, which tend to act as heat sinks. They will have the effect of moderating fluctuations in temperature inside the building during the hot and cold months.*

*... We have explained the building materials and what have you for the new hall and the connecting covered ways. We are providing disability access to the hall and also to the front entry. We are providing a new extension on the front of the building for administration facilities, which are fairly crowded at the moment. We are renovating the upstairs and downstairs classrooms as well and providing a new project room, art area and library in the existing hall.*

The Committee questioned Mr Wilkinson as to the possibility of providing a monitoring system in relation to water and energy use. Mr Wilkinson responded:-

*We are doing that on other projects at the moment, so we can provide some little statements, which can be mounted in various public areas of the building to tell the story about some of the environmental aspects of the design.*

*...I could have a look at that, certainly.*

## Educational Outcomes

The Acting Principal provided the following submission in relation to the impact of the redevelopment on the educational outcomes for the students and for the community and the broader region.

*There is no doubt that very small schools, even with the best teaching, are unable to offer the breadth of curriculum experiences that a bigger school can have, so there are huge benefits for the primary school students coming from Branxholm, where the student numbers are, I think, ... 23 ... There are only two teachers there. They do a fantastic job, but there are only so many ways you can group students of all the different age groups that they have - from kinder through to grade 6 - to accommodate all the aspects of the curriculum. So automatically those students coming across will have access to more flexible groupings and learning areas, and greater social opportunities for the older kids. There are three grade 5 boys and that is not enough to even kick a football end to end. Those sorts of things will be good for those young people coming across.*

*Winnaleah is a very important centre for the remote north-east. One of the biggest factors influencing education and other cultural activities out here is the fact that the communities that we draw from are increasingly remote - I think it is 40km from here to Scottsdale - and our students travel very long distances from the other direction. A couple of them actually have two bus changes in a day, so it is really important that those students aren't disadvantaged by living in a remote area. They need to have access to the same opportunities that students everywhere in Tasmania would have.*

*Even though our school is very well maintained, it is old-fashioned and the facilities are not of sufficient standard for the twenty-first century and forward and it is time that something was done about that. There are opportunities to build partnerships with the community in terms of using the sports facility, the library and computer access. All those things will be important, not just for the primary schools that are amalgamating but also for the secondary students in the whole school and for the broader community. The amalgamation of the primary school also allows for a much brighter future for secondary students in the area because improved facilities will allow them to have greater continuity. We have already had an improvement in our retention from primary to secondary. This year is the first in which no grade 6s left Winnaleah. They all opted to stay and go into the secondary school. We consider that a sign of community optimism and confidence in the way the school is developing. Also, a number of students, one of whom you met today, have returned to Winnaleah High School from Scottsdale High. She felt it was more comfortable and suited her learning and social opportunities. She is school captain here. It is unlikely she would have been school captain in a bigger school, so it is a good idea to have another option for parents. Not many country parents have the choice, unlike city parents. We are very pleased with that.*

*Michelle has done research on our projected enrolments and can give you the figures. We have a big kinder this year, with 19 kids, and a similar number next year. That is a bit of an aberration, but after that we go back to 12 or 13 kinder enrolments for the next four or five years, which is an average projection. It is hopeful for good enrolments in our school, especially if we continue to retain our grade 6s into the secondary school. It is not just about amalgamating primary schools, although that was our initial impetus. It is about growing our school so that it caters for the needs of students in the remote north-east on the journey of life-long learning.*

The Committee questioned Ms Pickett as to how it was proposed to reconfigure the library and visual arts areas. Ms Pickett responded:-

*On the current plans the hall is to be changed into a library and art room. We have since had more input from staff members and a conversation with Mike and there was a suggestion that having the art room in the current library would be a better idea because it would have the MDT area, the art area and the science area - all those hands-on, active areas where kids are likely to be moving around the room and making noise. We thought it a better idea to put them all together. We also had the opportunity with the breakout areas for art to be able to move outside. The other reason is that art is a more 'get in and get dirty' subject. It can be noisy, and could be so down in the administrative end of the school. After talking with Mike about it we think the flexibility of the flooring and wet areas in either room is not going to make any difference, so we have the flexibility to change it as required.*

*There was comment that this is all well while we have a visual arts teacher but what if we don't have one for a while. However, the rooms have been designed with that flexibility in mind. Being a remote school, it is often difficult to attract and retain highly skilled teachers. The recruitment in this school recently, which I cannot take any credit for because I am only acting, has been outstanding. We now have a highly qualified maths and science teacher, when for years we had no science specialists at all. We have a young teacher who is able to take visual arts, one who can take MDT, we have our own physical ed specialist. That is partly due to a supportive school environment. We are able to offer good hostel facilities so it is comfortable to live out here in the community, which is important. We hope they will be encouraged to stay longer by our providing better facilities for them to work in. That all contributes to improving student outcomes; there is no doubt about that. It is difficult to hold good teachers in remote areas. All our teachers are good and I have named a couple only because we struggle to retain specialists in the secondary area. We have a fantastic mix of experience and youth on our staff, so we are skilling up young people, who bring enthusiasm and energy when we are flagging a bit at the top.*

## **Social issues**

Ms Shaw made the following submission in relation to the social issues associated with the amalgamation of the two schools:-

*My association with Winnaleah has spanned two-and-a-half decades. I first moved up here in 1986. Whilst I have predominately been working in Winnaleah I have also worked in other schools on the north-east, including Gladstone prior to its closure, and more recently as acting principal of Branhholm. I am still working there as an AST. I have an interest in the history of the Winnaleah school. While my research is not as accurate as an historian's might be, I have a fairly good grasp of what has been happening over the last few decades. While living in the Winnaleah area I have witnessed significant changes to education, including the closure of Gladstone and the amalgamation of Branhholm schools, and also the emergence of the years 11 and 12 program, the VET courses, introduced in Winnaleah in about 1998. They have continued to maintain a really strong number of students, including mature-age students. The emergence of the program allowed adult ed to take place for the first time in the north-east. Previously it did not happen or happened via TAFE or by travelling to and from Launceston. Since then, Scottsdale High School have also introduced a VET program that is going great guns.*



*...The change in student numbers in Winnaleah, as well as the VET program, mean that the school is bursting at the seams. As recently as last year the VET students were sharing a room with music and drama. When they had their days at school all the musical instruments had to be packed away and it clearly was not working. During consultation about the amalgamation of Branxholm and Winnaleah schools it was decided to place the VET students at Branxholm. They attend there two days per week - Monday and Tuesday. Attendance on average is over 10 students, which might seem low at a State level but for this area it is high. The enrolment in the VET section is about 19.*

*While numbers were decreasing in the primary schools they were growing in other areas of education. My research suggests that for the next five years, which is as far as the numbers from Hobart are projected, enrolment at Winnaleah is predicted to be more than 150 students. That is kinder to grade 10; it does not include grades 11 and 12 or equivalent. Projected enrolment for Branxholm, should it remain open, remains in the low 20s if not lower. A combined student population from both schools is predicted to be 164.5 in 2010, and hovering around 167 in 2014.*

*I was asked to speak about the social impact of working in a small school. It is quite significant, challenging for the teachers and limiting for the students. We have four students in grade 6 and a wish of the community was for the school to remain open this year so those students could complete their primary school education in the school at which they began kinder. That wish was granted but at the end of this year the school will be closed and converted into a campus of Winnaleah, offering facilities for years 11 and 12, mature-age learners and birth to four. It is also anticipated that the community will have greater use of the school for meeting and gatherings.*

*It would be fair to say that imminent closure of Branxholm caused stress in the community. Those who worked in the school or have been associated with it saw the writing on the wall a number of years ago. In about 2000 there were 60-odd students at the school and that has decreased significantly. When I assumed my position there three years ago we had 38 students, so in that short period the school population halved. The Branxholm community are looking positively at retention of the school as an educational facility. Some businesses are looking forward to increased impetus from having mature-aged people attending in their community.*

*The consultation phase was lengthy, in depth and gave everyone who wanted a voice an opportunity to talk about the future of the school and the decisions being made. Brian Wightman - the principal on leave at the moment - and I talked at length about the benefits and deficits of amalgamation. Everything was transparently presented to the community, and public meetings allowed the community to ask questions and have input into whatever decision or direction the schools were taking.*

Mr Rainbow added:-

*Regarding the consultative process, our first question was: where do you start? We should thank Michelle and Brian because it was an extremely difficult subject to broach in two small country towns. We had seen the demise of Gladstone, Pioneer and Derby. The numbers indicated that Branxholm had to go. We made a lot of mistakes in handling Gladstone, and before my time with Derby and other schools. We decided we needed to put it on the table and talk. CB&M were engaged by the Education department to facilitate discussions about whether we could proceed with the merger. The first one was in Branxholm Town Hall. A lot of people were there,*

*probably in the 40s or 50s. There were some really good questions. CB&M has some visions in their background and we also discussed things on a couple of occasions at school association level. We had the backing of both school associations to find out what our communities interests were, their questions, their negatives and positives and whether we could proceed. We came away from Branxholm thinking that was not too bad because it was the losing school if you considered this from a win-lose situation.*

*We then went to Derby and they came with a different lot of questions. All of a sudden another local school, Ringarooma, decided that perhaps they needed to have input as well. The questioning from there became a little bit antagonistic - I presume because they were all protecting their patch. So we moved on from there and had one at Winnaleah and, again, some really good questions came out of that. After the next process we put all those things down together at different association levels and called for a meeting between both school associations, which we held at Winnaleah. While there were some issues that we will continue to work through over the next years to come - they won't all be fixed in a very short time - there was positive feedback. There were more positives than negatives and there are still consultative issues going on now. We are finding it is not so much the people who have been on the journey - and the journey has now been 18 months to two years - it is more the people who move into the area and who have not been included on the way through because they have come in halfway through the two schools merging, and we go backward to come forward all the time.*

*The biggest issue we found in small towns is probably based on sport. That has always been the tough one. The current school at Winnaleah is a district high school and of course it fields netball, footy and cricket teams and so on, and everybody sticks up their hand to protect their patch to the benefit of their communities. That has been a positive that has been worked through. Sure, we will have some interesting times as this all moves even further ahead, but the merger process has been a real eye-opener.*

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to whether the the community is generally satisfied that the proposed improvements will have the desired effect from both the educational and social points of view. Mr Rainbow responded:-

*... the initial aim of the merger was for better educational outcomes - and we have talked about the small number of students and we have talked about the three boys out in the yard being able to have a kick of the footy, and so on - so I would imagine that we have not had too many complaints. As late as a fortnight ago the School Association sat down with the teaching staff and we opened the suggestions box. The box had many and varied questions in it about the merger moving ahead - questions ranging from not wanting a name change through to a request for laptops for teacher aides. There were some interesting dynamics in that. Other people looked at it differently, and talked about the building process, or the values for the students. From a parent's perspective the value of a district high school is that the children in primary school have the ability to do manual arts, science and sport - we have a specialist sports teacher and there is sports science being offered at the school now. There have been very few negative outcomes, and most of those negatives have been things that we can work our way through.*

*...The way that the community can utilise those facilities has been of paramount importance in designing the plans and delivering the outcomes which include the opportunity to use a first-class gymnasium - and we currently have none unless we go to Scottsdale - the library, IT on line et cetera. This will deliver exactly what the*

*community wants. So the answer to your question is yes, and the community will look forward to it.*

*... (the consultation process) has been quite extensive. We have been at this now for nearly six months ... things have been refined. Each time we meet the changes become fewer and fewer. It has been a good process.*

Ms Pickett added:-

*We are hoping to build on that too, because the more the community comes into the school and uses the new facilities, the more they become familiar and comfortable with the school and know that their input into what they want out of the school will increase. Every contact that we can make there to build the school will be enhanced by this development.*

### **Utilisation of Branhholm campus**

The Committee noted that the \$3.2 million project cost did not include any allocation for the Branhholm site and that there was an indication that the facility would be used for VET courses. The Committee accordingly questioned the witnesses as to what funding might be available or accessed for the Branhholm campus. Ms Pickett responded:-

*... I have been on leave, so I am not familiar with the intimate details of that funding. However, my understanding is that if we continue to use the Branhholm for our VET program that would be resourced out of the Winnaleah District High School resource package, because it would be another campus. That school won't be resourced in terms of a school the way it is now - with cleaners and all that sort of stuff - so how we use it for that extended learning would be from the Winnaleah resource package. I imagine that it would be catering for those people who are unable to access the trades training centre because of the remoteness. It will be under the auspices of the Polytechnic, I understand.*

Mr Griffiths added:-

*Yes, when the school is vacated as a primary school site at the end of this year, we will ensure that it is still a good-quality building for the use of the local community in Branhholm and elsewhere for the variety of purposes which have been nominated. The building is already in a fairly good condition, but we will provide for some painting or carpeting - whatever is appropriate to ensure that it has an immediate and effective use for its ongoing purposes.*

*(Funding) will need to be sourced from its new users, which will be the Polytechnic, but it won't be through the traditional form of funding.*

Ms Shaw concluded:-

*It is probably important to mention - and Kelvin certainly touched on it - that the Branhholm School is in exceptionally good condition for its age. It has been really well maintained over the years and certainly that was one of the considerations when we looked at this proposal - is it going to cost down the track? Certainly, for the foreseeable future, no large amount of money will need to be spent on the physical environment there at all.*

## **Student travel time**

The Committee questioned the witnesses regarding the travel times being undertaken by students. Ms Shaw responded:-

*I will table .. maps if you will bear with me for a moment. These were sent to me on Friday, and Jane has only just seen them today. It gives you a bit of an idea of the areas that the students are drawn from and visually represents quite a distance. The calculations show that we have one student who is travelling almost 100km a day to access secondary education. We have a huge feeder area - basically it goes from Ansons Bay right through to Icena, Musselroe Bay and Rushy Lagoon.*

*Yes (some are by student choice), and there are certainly adult learners who are accessing VET courses from Winnaleah who travel up from Scottsdale to tap into what is offered up here, even though they have some on their own doorstep.*

Ms Pickett added:-

*There is quite a scattergram there. Those people really need the same educational opportunities as everybody else and Winnaleah is a great place to provide it. This year our options program is rich in art, catering, sports science, music, performing arts, technology, food and agriculture sciences, welding, maths and TCE. We have a lot of students studying extension courses online, things like art, aqua science and writing. The older students are doing TCE maths and English online to get that readiness that they would not otherwise have. Our curriculum offerings are rich and we have put a lot of work into grouping of students, so we are doing our best to cater for individual needs all the time. That extension online program goes down to grade 2 and through to grade 10.*

## **DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE**

The following documents were taken into evidence and considered by the Committee:

- Winnaleah and Branhholm Schools – Building Schools for the Future – Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, 12 May 2009;
- Winnaleah Students by Year Level – Feb 2009 Census – map;
- Branhholm Students by Year Level – Feb 2009 Census – map; and
- Senior Students by Year Level – Feb 2009 Census – map.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The need for the proposed works was clearly established. Such works will address the lack of flexibility and declining quality and condition of general learning areas; inadequate access to effective computer resources; inadequate facilities for art and music; and limited space for the effective teaching of dance, drama or indoor physical education. The proposed works will also accommodate whole of school and community gatherings.

The Committee was of the view that the positive energy dynamics of the new facility might be used as a learning opportunity by the Winnaleah District School if monitoring equipment to measure the savings in energy can be installed.

The Committee was also of the view that consideration be given to the gymnasium storage area being repositioned to provide for potential expansion into a weights and fitness area.

Accordingly, the Committee recommends the project, in accordance with the documentation submitted.

**Parliament House  
HOBART  
25 May 2009**

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