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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

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**PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
PUBLIC WORKS**

**DON COLLEGE MULTI PURPOSE  
FACILITY**

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*Brought up by Mr Green and Ordered by the House of Assembly to be printed*

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## MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council

House of Assembly

Mr *Wing* (Chairman)

Mr *Green*

Mr *McKay*

Mr *Hidding*

Mr *Kons*

## 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 proposal to construct a Multi Purpose Facility at the Don College.

## PROPOSAL

The need for the Multi-Purpose Facility has been evident since the college was first established and is supported by a number of studies.

During 1991 to 1993 the Department commissioned Eric Richardson to undertake a detailed survey of spaces and facilities in colleges throughout the State. The May 1993 report for Don College prepared by Eric Richardson notes:

### "Physical Education Teaching

*In 1992 and 1993 there was a requirement for a Human Performance Laboratory and a Gymnasium/Sports Hall facility. No such facility exists at Don, and the lack is seen as significant in view of the 26 to 28 teaching hours per week requiring such facilities. ...It is suggested that the current identified demand in this area is understated and would increase with the provision of such facilities. ...Don has the second lowest percentage subject enrolments in Health, Physical Education and Recreation (HPER) area..."*

At present Physical education is limited to one terrapin building and the outside courts.

The unknown demand due to the lack of a facility is also supported by a recent comparison of enrolment patterns across a number of colleges comparing the 1992 enrolment patterns with 1998 patterns. The Don College is the only facility where enrolments have remained static as a percentage of total College enrolments. This suggests that the lack of a suitable facility at the college is substantially restricting the educational opportunities available to the College community.

The lack of an adequate drama/dance facility was also noted in the 1993 Richardson Report:

*".... Like the situation in HPER, the lack of an appropriate facility for Dance is preventing teaching in this subject area, and thus the real demand is understated. ...while the area of the existing Drama space is greater than the projected requirements, the quality and suitability is poor. Speech and drama currently uses rooms which have been converted from other uses (locker rooms)...In particular, the irregular floor plan, the changes of levels, the small column spacing and the low ceiling height all contribute to the difficulties of the space."*

In 1995 the Department of Education commissioned Ian Prebl and Associates to "*...develop (an) independent assessment of the current and projected enrolments at the Don College to the year 2005 and to assess the adequacy of existing facilities to meet the need of the estimated student population.*"

The report recommended that planning be based on an enrolment of 960 students for the planning period, however 1998 enrolments exceeded 1,000 and are expected to rise further. The enrolments for 1999 are 1,100 full time equivalent students (FTE) and are expected to remain at that level with possibly a slight increase over the coming four years. Predicting College numbers has become more difficult due to the Youth Allowance Scheme.

The Prebl and Associates report recommended the development of a multi-purpose facility as a priority and also noted its broader functions as a student meeting/assembly area, for drama

productions and for teaching recreation and leisure programs. The report noted that

*"...The College is completely lacking in facilities which would allow the College community to join together for activities involving all, or a major section, of that college."*

In 1994-95 the then Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation commissioned Hepper Marriott and Associates to work with the North West Municipalities to develop the "Indoor Recreation Facility Plan for North West Tasmania Municipal Region". The report established that there is a substantial provision of indoor recreation areas in the general area which the college has been using wherever possible. The problems have been the movement and supervision of students off site, the lack of flexibility and difficulty of integrating physical education activities into the general college timetable, and the lack of sizeable space on the college campus for all the other functions that occur in college gymnasiums. For these reasons the proposal has been focused on a general purpose facility which is a closer reflection of the real educational need.

The Multi Purpose Facility will provide:

- a gathering and gymnasium space,
- foyer and display area,
- staff office for 5,
- human performance laboratory,
- speech and drama performance space,
- storage,
- kiosk and
- amenities.

In addition, disabled access to the library, student amenities and a full range of teaching spaces will be provided along with some minor adjustments in the remainder of the campus associated with the above.

## **COSTING**

The budget allocation is as follows:

Construction Budget	\$1,351,000
All fees, charges and other provisions	\$172,000
Loose Furniture and Equipment	\$135,000
Art Works	\$13,000
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$1,671,000</b>

The proposed works are estimated to cost the following:

Multi-Purpose Facility	\$1,128,500
Access ramps and links	\$107,600
Modification of vacated space	\$20,000
External Works including landscaping	\$65,600
Contingency	\$29,300
<b>Total</b>	

## **EVIDENCE**

The Committee commenced its inquiry on Friday, 5 March 1999. The Committee inspected the site for the proposed Multi-Purpose Facility. Following the inspection, the Committee commenced hearing evidence at the College. The following witnesses gave evidence at the hearing:

- John Lee-Archer, Principal, Don College
- Eric Richardson, Director and Architect, Glenn Smith Associates
- Michael Wilkinson, Director and Architect, Glenn Smith Associates
- Les Burbury, Senior Executive Officer (Property Management), Department of Education
- Bernadette Reece, Manager, Birchall's Bookshop, Don College

### ***Benefits of the proposed facility***

The Principal of the College, Mr John Lee-Archer, placed the proposed development within an historical context. Mr Lee-Archer described the transition of the College from one which was originally about 300 students who were bound for university, to a comprehensive college with well over 1 000 students some of whom undertake purely academic courses and others vocationally oriented education. Mr Lee-Archer submitted further –

*"...associated with that of course has been a cultural change in relation to education and the need for students to continue their education. I know, having been here now for seven years, going on for eight, that this college has been at the forefront of excellence in education in our system, and can hold its head high in terms of outcomes for kids.*

*What was very evident to me when I came here, though, was that there were facilities which we did not have, and historical records show that very clearly, that the place was designed as a three-phase building and only one was ever built, and since the mid-70s there have been successive inquiries and so on into the needs of kids. The needs of kids of course have changed over that time, and I guess for the purpose of this inquiry we really need to be looking at what the needs of kids are today and over the next ten years..."*

Mr Lee-Archer expanded upon the effect the proposed facility would have upon the school community -

*"One of the big values of a college is that it brings kids together and gives them a chance to explore those issues in an environment which is supportive, and also where they are with their peers who can not only provide that support but also provide the role model for those, perhaps, who are really struggling. That is one of the areas where I think this particular project is going to contribute most, because one of the things missing from this place - amongst lots of other things which are listed here as part of our strategic plan - is what I call a 'gathering space', a space which kids can use and which we as teachers can use as part of our program to enable a lot of the activities which kids of this age need in order to help them develop as social beings and so be better contributors to our society..."*

Regarding the role the College has as an educational facility in the areas of performance, celebrating achievement, entertaining, and recreation Mr Lee-Archer submitted –

*"We do extremely well in the academic subjects...but there is more to education than academia...it is this social side of things - the social education stuff - which I think is the key behind this particular project.*

*The sorts of things that are going to be different as a result of this are, as I said, we will have*

*a space. We will have a space where kids can perform. Performance is a very important thing for anybody. When you develop a skill or you have a particular thing that you have learnt, it is nice to be able to share it with people. We have an extensive music program but we have nowhere for kids to perform. ...Spaces for celebrating achievement in general, displaying materials, whether it be art work - and we have a few spots you can put that - whether it be just performance of various kinds. Spaces for entertaining visitors, in terms of speakers. Drama groups that tour the country and are looking for places to come. We cannot accommodate them here with any adequacy at all. Any reason for a gathering of more than 30 people probably is very difficult. That is what it will contribute to this particular community.*

*In terms of recreation, the needs are obvious and I do not think I need to dwell on that. We do have the lowest participation rate in the recreation subjects, although I see the biggest need here is not so much in the subject area but again in the general recreation area for kids. This alienation that I was talking about often arises through kids having nothing to do, and again while you can sit out on the lawn when it is nice, in general we need to provide activities and so on for kids, and this space will enable us to do that, and in that sense enhance what we have."*

### ***Strategic development***

Mr Eric Richardson, Director and Architect, Glenn Smith Associates outlined to the Committee the strategic position of the College in terms of facilities –

*"In identifying the issues of the facilities that are needed at Don College, it is clear that there are a number there which are beyond the scope of the funds available in this project. However, it is seen as an opportunity under this project in providing for the higher order priority needs to provide the basis and some sort of stepping stone from which the college, as years go by and through various sources, can implement these stages.*

*At the moment the buildings shown in blue are the existing ones, plus these terrapins down here; approach from the carparks is this direction towards the front. As you have seen, there is no real sense of (inaudible) identity there. There is a strong band of buildings which block your way and another band behind with a nice courtyard.*

*Provision of a multipurpose facility is clearly seen as the highest priority with the campus and it is proposed to locate that significant piece of building to the north-west of the existing blocks, which provide a physical continuity of buildings which enable this front space to perhaps over the years be improved and developed.*

*So, as shown in our inspection, the site that has been selected for the multipurpose facility is that site because of its extra overall planning benefits it provides and its accessibility by a continuity of that normal circulation route through and around the college, either from the front or through the route round behind there. It is also adjacent to some of the outdoor sporting facilities and it is also able to provide a highly visible address for any visitors who come into the college in that area. It is also a relatively flat piece of the campus compared to others thus reducing costs, et cetera.*

*...The other issues identified in the strategic plan, as proposed under this project, to try to address include improving access to a range of facilities that currently are not accessible by people with disabilities or in wheelchairs. The two original buildings, while being nothing more than three-storey buildings, are built out of thirteen different levels and apparently disabled access is very, very limited.*

*It is proposed to spend some funds, as indicated in the budget at the back, providing disabled access to a significant proportion of the college in the existing buildings. This would be by means of local ramps, walkways, balconies, these sorts of things. It will provide access to all but two significant levels of the entire campus. The detail of those works I can respond to in question if you want to, but suffice to say that it does not provide 100 per cent. The next step would be a lift of such financial order of cost that it could not be fitted in this source of money.*

*The multipurpose facilities, as well as providing for this multi-use space that the principal has spoken at length, also intends to provide teaching spaces for the speech and drama program, to replace the converted locker room they are currently in, and to provide a space for teaching of sciences and the human performances associated with health, physical education and recreation courses. As you saw, those facilities are very limited on the campus at the moment."*

### ***Wider community involvement***

The Committee questioned the witnesses regarding any wider community involvement with the proposed facility. Mr Lee-Archer submitted-

*"... The college is very committed to making facilities available to the community in general, and we do have community use of facilities here. In regard to this facility, we have been to the community a number of times with various groups seeking their support for it, and obviously have given them commitments that it will be available for them to use. We see the biggest use for the community as being, again, in having a useable space*



*for meetings, speakers and so on - not so much a convention space but a relatively small space that has other facilities available for the rest of the college to use, a la these diagrams. I am just thinking of some of the ways you can divide the area up. We intend to fit it out fairly well with appropriate PA systems and so on to allow that sort of thing to happen. That is what we will be using it for too.*

*In terms of recreation space, we know that people have already contacted us wanting to use it; and in terms of the display space we have had requests also for people to use it. There is plenty of community interest, and while primarily we see it as an educational space during the day, most of our programs do finish by 5 o'clock, and so the community would have access to it."*

Mr Richardson added-

*"Two other aspects of it, the school had set up a consultative group for us to obtain our brief and our planning ideas from. That included invitation to and then included representatives of people talking on behalf of the wider community use, so some of those ideas have already been incorporated. Secondly, the siting of the facility. Options for siting are included down here, but siting the facility there with its entry point in this location is directly intended to serve both the school's purpose and ease of access from outside community groups."*

The Committee questioned the witnesses in relation to public use as follows-

**Mr McKAY** - *As far as the actual public use, do you have to have any requirements to have a place of public entertainment licence? Does the department have to meet those restrictions or not?*

**Mr LEE-ARCHER** - *I do not believe so. It is certainly not the case for any other facilities that we make available. We do not have any special coverage that the college takes out. I do not know whether the department does. I really cannot answer that.*

**Mr WILKINSON** - *As far as the building requirements for this particular structure are concerned, I believe it is a class 9B building - which is a public building - so the regulations that have been put in place for this building are based on the building being a public building, a meeting building of a public nature.*

**Mr McKAY** - *When you say 'a public nature', does it meet the provisions of a place of public entertainment? I think Mr Kons would know more about it. Councils or health departments require provisions related to places of public entertainment.*

**Mr RICHARDSON** - That is a separate level of permit. Mike is referring to designing the building so that it meets the building standards for a building accessed by the public. For an event licence, whether it be a liquor licence or what have you, that is a different level of authority entirely and I would have thought that depends very much upon what is being run.

**Mr McKAY** - We were talking here about the community having access to it and utilising this space. So you are saying it is not a problem then if you have 1 000 people in this particular facility and it is a public event? There are no problems with that?

**Mr RICHARDSON** - We know the building will comply in terms of access and egress, fire protection, ventilation, things like that. If it is of a specific nature that other authorities require input, like consumption of liquor for instance or something like that, that is up to the users who are either hiring it out or hiring it in.

**Mr McKAY** - Yes, I just want to know that the principal or the school management will not find themselves in a situation where, if they wanted to utilise it for a theatre or a school production, sell tickets to come along to that production, that they will meet the place of public entertainment and will not be in a position where they will find themselves with a problem.

**Mr RICHARDSON** - The Building Code of Australia requires us to meet standards which fulfil those requirements, and they are issues to do with performance of escaping, emergencies and fire and those sorts of things, and by fulfilling that requirement I am sure we are meeting most of those sorts of functional requirements.

### ***Plans and specifications***

The Committee heard Mr Michael Wilkinson, Director and Architect, Glenn Smith Associates in relation to the details of the plan and specifications of the proposed facility.

### ***Toilet facilities***

The proposal as submitted, provided for two identical toilet facilities. The Committee questioned the witnesses in relation to such provision. Mr Richardson submitted-

*"It is intended they be exactly the same so that it enables users of either gender to use either room. If we have a production from a girls school choral society they want to be able to get to both sides and use all the facilities for all the girls, or if it is a couple of netball teams, or a couple of male basketball teams, so the facilities are designed to be interchangeable in that way."*

When questioned as to the adequacy of the number of toilets provided for a facility of this size, Mr Richardson submitted-

*"The overall standard applies to the toilet provision on the campus, as it happens, and there are plenty of other toilets on the campus, not all of which would be made available ... There is an external set very close by, for argument's sake. I do not quite know the answer to that. But the regulation that we met was the provision of toilets for the total campus population. The decision of how many of them go in this building has been a decision related to funding in this job versus the sorts of functions which go on in it, and it is a fine point. The more money you spend on toilets the less room you get for teaching and for multipurpose facilities, and there has been a balance which has provided that solution."*

The Committee questioned the witnesses regarding the non-provision of urinals, the principal concern being the issue of cleaning.

***Mr McKAY** - The issue of the urinals ... is something that, I believe, that the actual managers of the building, being a school, will have a problem with in the future.*

***Mr BURBURY** - It is my understanding - and Eric and Mike will correct me - but I am pretty sure that disabled access can double as a staff toilet to meet that provision? Generating a bit more space for you to work with.*

***Mr WILKINSON** - No, the staff toilets included and all the toilets there are included in the number calculations that we have done to date.*

***Mr BURBURY** - You cannot drop one off necessarily?*

***Mr WILKINSON** - No.*

*Mr BURBURY - But if the disabled toilet can act as a staff toilet as well -*

*Mr RICHARDSON - I hear what you are saying, Les, and you are trying to find some more room so we have room to put the urinal in which is cool.*

*Mr BURBURY - Yes.*

*Mr RICHARDSON - If we can do that, that will be the mechanism but I think probably what the committee needs to hear is that we will - you want us to provide and we will provide urinals."*

### ***Birchall's Bookshop***

The Committee heard the Manager of Birchall's Bookshop, Mrs Bernadette Reece in relation to the role of the bookshop and the effect of the project on its operations. Mrs Reece submitted-

*"We provide the books and stationery to the students. We also take care of the students who are on student assistance and issue them with stationery packs. We take care of most of the ordering of the textbooks and stationery for back-to-school sales and that sort of thing. We also provide an ongoing service throughout the year to the students. We are there on a daily basis. We are probably, I suppose, reliant upon support from them throughout the year and it is obviously going to have an effect on us as to where we are relocated ... I would like to just submit that it is fairly important to us to have ready access to the students and the staff members who use the bookshop for ordering textbooks. It is also fairly important for me to have delivery access. I do get large quantities of stock come in on occasions and I do need a delivery access as well. It is probably important for me to be able to continue with as least disruption as possible during the course of the year. It is a busy time of the year for me."*

Mr Richardson responded-

*"There has been a steering committee to which we, as consultants, have been reporting. There is one due later today and we have been asked to report on some options of siting and to that end we have (inaudible) various places. In answer to Mr McKay's question the answer is yes, there is every possibility of a location there (at location 7 on the plan) - and part of it is actually lawn and part of it is currently a relatively level piece of hot mix bitumen. One of the pieces of advice we are going to tender to the department and the school later in the day is that that is a siting option, from our point of view."*

## ***Doorways***

The Committee questioned the witnesses as follows-

***Mr McKAY*** - *The doorway into the drama area. You have double doors into the human performance area, which is 10 metres by 8.5 metres, and you have the drama area, 12 metres by 10 metres. It seems to be a very small doorway to both exit and to enter the building there in the corner of the foyer.*

*The other issue is in the human performance area, into the sports store you only have a very small door as well to actually get large or may be if you needed to put large equipment or something through a standard door.*

***Mr WILKINSON*** - *For the number of people who will be drama space, a metre-wide door there into the drama space would probably be okay, but we could well consider putting double doors in. It would be particularly helpful in relation to moving pieces of equipment in and out -*

***Mr McKAY*** - *Yes.*

***Mr WILKINSON*** - *So consider that done.*

And further-

***Mr KONS*** - *Going back to the doors again, is there a problem with making it a lineal sort of thing. Say, like human performance, you have the door going into the sports store in the middle of that room going into the multipurpose facility where they should be aligned, I feel, one against the other. If you are going from the gym and the students want to go into the multipurpose facility, they should just be able to go through one door and then the other instead of having to go in, turn and go around. That would probably give you more room.*

***Mr WILKINSON*** - *That is from the human performance laboratory to the multipurpose, you are saying?*

**Mr KONS** - Yes.

**Mr WILKINSON** - *It is probably not intended as a thoroughfare through there, although it could be used as such. The initial intention is for a sports store and the doors are offset so that you have some acoustic separation and you do not have sound travelling in a straight line through those doors.*

**Mr RICHARDSON** - *It may also be - detailed planning has not gone out but they have been set out to suit the function and set out of equipment, et cetera, in those rooms, but I think if we can take that on board consistent with those internal function requirements we will try to achieve it.*

**CHAIRMAN** - *Well, that one you would try to achieve the double doors into the drama, can we take it that you will change that?*

**Mr WILKINSON** - Yes."

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The concerns raised by the Committee during the hearing in relation to the provision of urinals and the installation of double doors from the foyer into the 'Drama Room' were addressed with undertakings from the architects to amend the plans to provide for the same. The Committee notes the further undertakings to consider re-aligning the doors of the 'Sports Store' to provide for lineal movement between the 'Human Performance' area and the 'Multi-purpose Facility', and to direct any savings achieved from the project to the provision of covered walkways between the buildings.

The Committee is supportive of the view that that the issue of disabled access in the College be considered of the highest priority in ongoing works, as up to thirteen levels need to be negotiated at the College.

The evidence presented to the Committee clearly demonstrated the need for the provision of a Multi-purpose Facility of this nature for the Don College. Educational outcomes for the students of the College will be greatly enhanced, and the community of the northwest coast generally,

will benefit from the construction of the facility.

Accordingly, the Committee recommends the project, in accordance with the plans and specifications, at an estimated total cost of \$1,670,000.

**Parliament House**  
**Hobart**  
**25 March 1999**

**Hon D. G. WING MLC,**  
**Chairman**