



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC WORKS

REECE HIGH SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE AND ESTABLISHMENT COSTS FOR THE REBUILDING OF THE SCHOOL

*Presented to His Excellency the Governor pursuant to the provisions of the
Public Works Committee Act 1914.*

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Mr *Wing* (Chairman)
Mr *Harriss*

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Mr *Green*
Mr *Kons*
Mrs *Napier*

INTRODUCTION

To His Excellency the Honourable Sir Guy Stephen Montague Green, Companion of the Order of Australia, Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Governor in and over the State of Tasmania and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

The Committee has investigated the following proposal: -

Reece High School – Infrastructure and establishment costs for the rebuilding of the school

and now has the honour to present the Report to Your Excellency in accordance with the *Public Works Committee Act 1914*.

This reference sought approval for the replacement of facilities for Reece High School on the site of the school which was destroyed by fire in December 2000.

The project is comprised of:

- The re-instatement and upgrade of site services
- The refurbishment and re-cycling of existing Buildings
- New buildings for all other facilities
- External works and landscaping

PLANNING AND CONSULTATIVE PROCESS

BACKGROUND

On 5 December 2000, Reece High School was substantially damaged by fire resulting from arson. The State Government undertook to redevelop the school to both replace the lost asset and enhance secondary education service delivery in the City of Devonport in the north-west of Tasmania. The planned school enrolment will be 500 full time equivalent (FTE) students with a maximum enrolment capacity of 600 FTE.

HISTORY

Reece High School is located in Middle Road, Devonport and lies within the Education Department Barrington District. The School was developed in the 1950s to service the post World War 2 growth in population in the Devonport

area. The School enrolment at that time and through much of the 1960's exceeded 1000 students.

The School was further developed in the 1970s and 1990s with additional general learning area (GLA) classrooms, library, home economics and additional school administration accommodation. These buildings and site facilities were designed to suit the educational pedagogy applicable at those times.

The School fully enclosed covered area (FECA) before the fire was 8,830m², and the site area is 10.196 hectares. The floor area remaining after the fire is 3,856m².

The 1950's buildings were primarily timber framed with weatherboard external walls and tiled roof. The 1970's buildings are reinforced concrete, brick and steel clad roofs.

Secondary education services were delivered in the Devonport area, up until the fire, at Reece High School and Devonport High School. Much of the current local adult population was educated at either Reece or Devonport High Schools. Accordingly, there is considerable community interest in this project and the impact it will have on the quality and scope of education services delivered. The school enrolment at the time of the fire was 585 FTE students.

Since the fire, Reece High School has been temporarily co-located, as a separate school community, at Devonport High School. This arrangement has involved accommodating classes in a collection of permanent and temporary transportable classroom buildings. Other facilities such as the library, physical education, materials design and technology, home economics areas etc are being shared. Although acceptable in the short term, the Education Department does not plan for this situation to prevail beyond 2002 due to the impact this would have on staff and student morale and the identity of Reece High School as a separate entity.

CURRENT PEDAGOGY AND FUTURE TRENDS

"Reece will foster a love of learning in all students through an integrated, project-based curriculum...it will recognise and aim to fulfil the learning needs of all community members"

Reece School Signature, June 6th 2001

Best Practice Educational and Curriculum Trends

The Education Concept of the new Reece High School continues to be defined through the consultative school system and community processes currently in progress. There are two major educational advantages to be seen in the redeveloped Reece High School: optimal school size and innovative schooling approaches.

Optimal School size – Small schools work

Many international studies during the past ten years indicate the positive effects of small school size on student attitudes and achievement. (See *Eric Digests on Small Schooling* at www.ed.gov.databases/ERIC and *School Size Papers* at <http://www.edfacilities.org/ir/size.cfm>). This is particularly true of the affective and social domains – where smaller schools contribute to a stronger sense of belonging and improved attendance and participation rates – but it is also true of student academic achievement. Small schools are generally more ‘community friendly’ and are far more likely to be regarded as centres of their communities and vice versa (and used accordingly).

Moreover, evidence shows that the perceived cost effectiveness benefits of larger schools are often negligible when factors such as poor attendance and participation rates, reduced achievement, increased violence and vandalism, increased numbers of marginalised students and ongoing social problems as are often found in larger schools are taken into account. Larger schools (in secondary, over 650-700 students) in practice almost always attempt to devolve themselves into smaller units – such as sub schools – in an attempt to achieve what small schools have as part of their special signature. The 1980s-early 1990s trend towards school rationalisation and amalgamation is internationally largely now in reverse – where possible, larger schools are trying to make themselves smaller, whilst small schools are documenting and sharing their special identities and successes. A Reece High School of a managed size of between 450-550 students is an optimal size, and would be the envy of many larger schools around Tasmania, Australia and the world.

Innovative school approaches – A model school that is both world class and community-focussed.

The re-development of Reece High School represents a chance to demonstrate what constitutes effective, appropriate teaching and learning environments in the 21st century – this is particularly timely given that the state education system is undergoing a major curriculum review as part of the *Learning Together* initiative.

A more detailed description of current educational pedagogy and future trends is described in the *Project Consultant Commission Brief* (pp. 5-6). Although the specific educational framework of the new school is continuing to be refined through consultation, the new Reece represents a unique opportunity to enhance educational provision within the Devonport area. The school community is already committed to a facility that: is educationally world-class; has a strong focus on project-based and integrated learning; incorporates a strong emphasis on the strategic use of information and communication technologies; considers innovative school structures to address issues including post year 10 options; encourages community access and the fostering of a culture of lifelong learning; and links strongly with local business and the wider Devonport community. The Reece school community strongly endorses the suggestions included in the document ‘Schools as Centres of Community – A planning and design guide’ (*The Rebuilding of Reece High School – The Community Consultation process*, p. 12) and has begun the

task of developing a facility that is both world-class, sympathetic to the culture and traditions of the 'old' Reece and responsive to the current and emerging needs of the Devonport community.

Community Consultation and Ownership

As indicated in The Rebuilding of Reece High School – A report on the Community Consultation Process (presented to the Minister for Education, April 10, 2001) community interest in the new Reece High School is very high. A factor is certainly that many of the current adult population in Devonport were educated at either of the former Reece High or Devonport High Schools and thus have a personal stake in the future of Reece. More significantly, much community interest has focussed on the impact a redeveloped Reece might have on the quality and scope of education services delivered in the Devonport area. The ideas and opinions expressed through the community consultation process have varied widely but some strong themes have emerged: particularly the need for a more community-oriented facility that represents educational best practice and provides possibilities for maximising educational opportunities and outcomes for the entire region.

At a series of seminars on June 5th and 6th 2001 the Reece school community (groups of teachers, students, parents and community members) explored planning, educational concept and design ideas for the new facility. A special 'signature' for the new school – the Reece Community School – was developed, placing a strong emphasis on realising individual potential through creativity, enterprise and teamwork, and of maximising the links between school and community. Prakash Nair, an internationally recognised leader in the area of school facilities planning and educational technology, led these seminars.

Prakash was impressed with the high level of community interest and involvement at such an early stage of the redevelopment program. In particular, a number of students, all of whom had given up some of their holidays to participate, spoke passionately about their commitment towards the Reece redevelopment project and to the process of building an exciting new school. The community strongly affirmed the planning processes that had been instituted in the Reece redevelopment project to date, and provided further evidence both of the high level of community consultation and ownership of the new Reece High School, and of the energy and excitement of the Devonport community in embracing the new school as a world-class facility and a vital component of enhanced educational service delivery in the Devonport area.

ENROLMENT PREDICTIONS - DEVONPORT AREA HIGH SCHOOLS

INFLUENCES ON HIGH SCHOOL POPULATIONS IN DEVONPORT

GENERAL POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Recent ABS analysis has found that the Devonport area is experiencing minor population decline (0.2% 1999 to 2000). Whilst there are broad demographic changes occurring at a local level that, in combination, will have an impact on long-term population characteristics none of these general population trends are considered to have any significant impact on the requirements for schools in the short to medium term.

These broad demographic trends occurring in the local area are commonly reflected across the Australian population and comprise:

- A gradual growth in the aged population of the area; and
- A gradual decline in the young population of the area.

The decline in the young population of the area has a set of factors that contribute:

- Relatively low fertility rates amongst women of child-bearing age;
- Declining numbers of women of child-bearing age; and
- Interstate migration in the years from 15 to 34.

KEY STUDENT POPULATION ISSUES

There are several issues that do have a significant impact on recent school population trends and are critical in understanding the likely student population over the coming 5-10 years. Statistics do show a recent decline in high school populations, however this is an aberration arising from a previous policy change and are explained below. In addition there are variations in specific school intakes relating to changing student and parent preference for schooling.

- **Two Small High School Cohorts**

Due to a change in early childhood enrolment policies in 1993, there have been two relatively small cohorts moving gradually through the Tasmanian Government school population since that time. In 1999 the first of these small cohorts entered year 7 and in 2000 the second entered year 7. These two small cohorts remain in the secondary years at the moment – the first in year 9 and the second in year 8. The first moves out of year 10 in 2003 and the second moves out in 2004. This means that the enrolment decline showing in the enrolment figures for the schools involved in this project do not currently reflect a normal population effect.

Across the four high schools in the area, in the period from 1998 (when the enrolments were last unaffected by the small cohort) and 2004 (when the enrolments will next be unaffected by the small cohort,) there is expected to

be a net decline of approximately 100 FTE. It is important to note, however, that this decline is effectively accounted for by the expected decline at Ulverstone High, with Reece, Devonport and Latrobe accounting for a total figure similar to the 1998 total for those three schools.

- General Year 6 to Year 7 Retention

The transition from primary school to high school is a point at which parents are required to make decisions regarding the next phase of their children's education. In some families this means making the transition from the Government sector to the Non-Government sector, or vice versa. The retention of students within the Government system in Barrington District is at around 95% and very unlikely to change.

- 2001 Year 6 to Year 7 Retention

The 2001 year 7 intake was the first 'normal' intake following reduced Year 7 cohort intakes in 1999 and 2000. However, rather than returning to 1998 cohort sizes, there appears to have been a redistribution of Year 7 enrolments. Of the four high schools, Devonport High has had the largest increase, attracting almost twice the 1998 Year 7 intake. Reece, Latrobe and Ulverstone, on the other hand, have all experienced declines on their 1998 intakes. The longer term trends in this area are hard to predict.

LIKELY FUTURE HIGH SCHOOL POPULATION PROFILES

The process of predicting school enrolments cannot be a precise science. The range of issues that affect the options that are available to parents and their children, and the capacity or willingness of parents and their children to respond to those issues, means there is always potential for variations in future enrolments. For example, the enrolment prediction mechanism has responded to the Year 7 intake variations that appear to have occurred in 2001, but the extent to which these variations can be expected to continue are unknown. Similarly, the modelling cannot take account of the potential for parents to decide to move their children out of Devonport High and into a newly built Reece High, as there is no means of gauging this likelihood. There are ultimately constraints in any school relating to enrolment capacity at the school.

PREDICTED TRENDS

The attachments identified below reflect the projected enrolment trends for the four high schools under consideration. They reflect trends based on what has transpired in recent years and take account of known enrolments in the primary schools from which future high school enrolments are expected to be drawn.

In broad terms the predictions suggest that for 2002 the total enrolment of the four high schools is likely to remain similar to 2001. For 2003 and 2004, the passing of the two small cohorts should see the total enrolments increase marginally each year. Then, from 2005 it is expected that enrolment levels will then commence to decline, but only very slowly.

In relation to individual schools:

- Reece High School, in normal circumstances, would have been expected to continue to experience enrolment decline until 2003. In 2003, with the departure of the first of the two small cohorts, the enrolments would have increased and a further increase would have been experienced in 2004 when the second small cohort departs. Beyond 2004 the school's minor enrolment decline would have been expected to commence again.
- Devonport High School, in normal circumstances, would have been expected to continue to experience significant enrolment growth at least until 2004. In 2005 the prediction model suggests that Devonport High's growth will end, and minor declines will commence. This part of the prediction, however, is based on the expectation that the surge in Year 7 enrolments in 2001 has been an exception that will not be sustained.
- Ulverstone High School is expected to continue its current enrolment decline for a number of years. The passing of the small cohorts may trigger minor increases in 2003 and 2004, but the decline is expected to recommence in 2005.
- Latrobe High School, is expected to see continued decline until the first small cohort departs at the end of 2002 and, after the departure of the second cohort, the enrolments are expected to plateau for the foreseeable future.

PREDICTIONS THAT MIGHT BE USED FOR THE PLANNING OF REECE HIGH SCHOOL

It appears that the most important enrolment set for the purposes of the Reece planning exercise is the combined predictions of the two Devonport High Schools. Overall it is predicted that the combined enrolments of the two schools should be expected to increase at least until 2004. From 2005 some declines are expected, but these are only expected to be very limited.

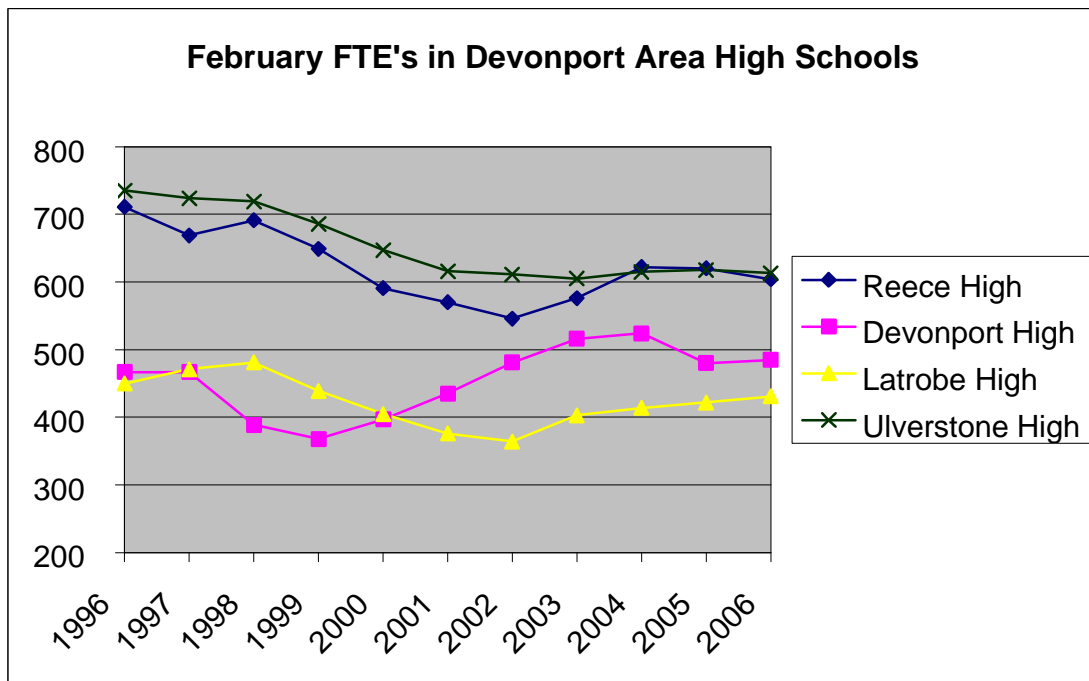
Overall, the net combined enrolment of the two schools appears likely to range between approximately 1050 and 1150 in the next five to six years.

ENROLMENT DATA

HIGH SCHOOL ENROLMENTS

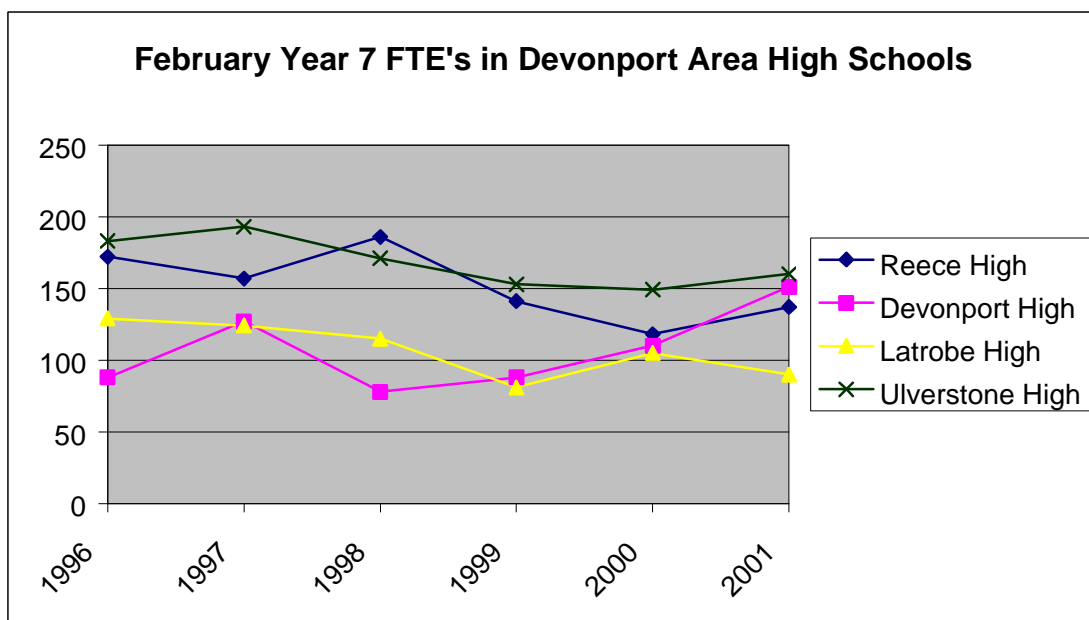
Showing actual and predicted February FTE's for the four individual high schools from 1996 to 2006.

SCHOOL	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Reece High	711	669	691	649	591	570	546	576	622	620	604
Devonport High	467	467	389	368	397	435	481	516	524	480	485
Latrobe High	450	471	481	439	405	376	364	403	414	422	431
Ulverstone High	735	724	719	686	647	616	611	605	615	618	613
Total	2363	2331	2280	2142	2040	1997	2002	2100	2175	2140	2133



Year 7 Enrolments

Showing actual Year 7 enrolments trends since 1997, highlighting the arrival of the small Year 7 cohorts and the significant Year 7 enrolment changes that occurred in 2001, especially in comparison to the 1998 cohort, the last 'normal' Year 7 intake.



SCHOOL COMMUNITY SUBMISSION

The following section (to page 19) of this Report is a verbatim account of the Reece High School community submission.

INTRODUCTION

This submission is presented by the Reece High School community, representing staff, students, the Parents' and Friends Association and the School Council. The proposal calls for rebuilding of the school after the destructive fire of 5 December 2000. While some buildings were undamaged, or only partially damaged by the fire, the majority of the school buildings were totally destroyed. Since February 2001 Reece High has co-located with Devonport High School on the site of the latter school. Refurbishment of some buildings, including the Adult Education building, and the provision of temporary accommodation, have enabled co-location to proceed as a temporary measure. The current facilities, including classrooms and grounds, are cramped and unsuitable for modern teaching methods.

BACKGROUND

The school was opened as the Devonport Secondary Modern school in the 1950's and became Reece High School, a comprehensive 7 – 10 school in 1962. The school draws its enrolment principally from East Devonport, the town area of Devonport approximately south of William Street and Spreyton. Some students also come from Wesley Vale/Port Sorell, Kindred/Sprent and South Spreyton/Sheffield areas. The population of the school in 2000 was 585 students and is forecast to remain between 500 and 600 for the next ten years.

Reece High School enjoys a very positive reputation in the community; founded on a caring, supportive environment for students and a curriculum that caters for a wide range of abilities, and is challenging for students. The school community is proud of our supportive school environment programs, which aims to enable all students to thrive in our inclusive environment. The school has been recognised as being of ideal size to cater for a significant variety of curriculum offerings, and yet maintain the advantage of social and interpersonal relations best nurtured in a smaller school environment.

COMMUNITY ACCESS

The school has traditionally had a high profile in the community, with its facilities available for a wide range of community use. The new school buildings will promote greater use by the local community, particularly in the provision of sporting, cultural and information technological facilities. It will promote the concept of life long learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

We live in a time of rapid change and development of knowledge of effective teaching and learning. The new school buildings need to cater for a huge

increase in the use of technology as a learning tool in the classroom and for a variety of learning styles of students, including large groups (25 – 30), small groups and individual learning. The school wishes to develop a more integrated curriculum in an environment, which fosters ownership of space, and curriculum by the students. It is envisaged that the school will become a centre of excellence in the use of technology in the curriculum.

In the previous three years, through a school/community Partnership Agreement the school has developed strength in literacy, numeracy, technology, vocational education and social interactions in the form of an active anti-bullying and harassment policy.

DESIGN PROPOSAL

The Department of Education proposes to redevelop 'state of the art' facilities as part of a long-term strategy for delivery of Education services in the Devonport District. The proposal calls for replacement accommodation of 6000m² as detailed below.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The redeveloped school shall include the key functional areas detailed below. Other supplementary areas will need to be added but the design should minimise the extent of small-dedicated ancillary areas. Key areas include:

GENERAL LEARNING AREAS

GLA's that provide access for all student use of IT and Internet services either through laptops or PCs. This feature will have a significant impact on the layout of GLA's and particularly the zoning within the space. Models such as technical functions on perimeter walls and communal function in a centre zone AND room within a room (i.e. glass box communal zone within a surrounding perimeter technical zone) are two examples.

Use of Glass & Visual Communication Links: - Adjacent learning areas will be linked by extensive use of glass and interconnecting doors. Where corridors are used to facilitate access and student and staff movement, then glass observation panels and half-glass doors should be incorporated to "open" circulation to classroom environment.

Staff rooms serving these rooms should also be provided with extensive glass to facilitate supervision and observation to and from these spaces.

The final number and design of GLA's will be determined during the detailed briefing phase. However, preliminary feasibility planning has identified a need for grade 7 and 8 teaching suites with 6 dedicated GLA's for each of the two grades of approximately 85m² each that accommodate 20 – 25 students and incorporate similar features to primary classrooms including practical activity spaces and storage. Some GLA's may ultimately be smaller and others larger or able to be combined.

Specialised Learning Areas

Dedicated SLA's are indicated as follows for specific subject areas:

- Science
 - General science rooms with wet activity, gas and fume cupboard fixtures on perimeter walls and GLA area in the middle of each room.
 - Preparation room able to serve directly to each science teaching area.
 - Store room.
- Home Economics
 - Large semi-commercial kitchen with wet activity, cooking, sink and bench fixtures on perimeter walls and preparation space in the middle of the room.
 - Textile/Dining-GLA room with demonstration facility.
 - Pantry, laundry and store-room.
- Materials Design and Technology (MDT)
 - Existing building refurbished.
 - Large workshop zoned to accommodate woodwork, metalwork, plastics and new technologies such as robotics, cnc lathes etc. The layout of this room must facilitate teacher supervision of student safety.
 - Design Centre GLA that will have visual and direct access links to the workshop but sound isolated to avoid disruption to occupants. Provide materials storage and preparation area that may be supervised and readily accessible for delivery of bulk materials.
 - The feasibility of incorporating the Art teaching facility within the MDT building is to be considered.
- Music, Drama and Dance (MDD)
 - Teaching spaces.
 - Large performance space with high ceiling for stage lighting etc.
 - Individual practice rooms.
 - Group practice room (up to 10 students and staff).
 - Instrument storage.
 - General storage.
- Art
 - Incorporate within the MDT area if feasible.
 - Studio spaces for wet and dry media, pottery etc.
 - Individual recesses for large works in progress.
 - Utility area for wash-down, kiln, etc.
 - Art materials and general storage.
 - Student work in progress storage.
 - External access/courtyard working space
- Physical Education
 - Existing Gymnasium – existing to be refurbished and upgraded.
 - Performance Laboratory and GLA – (weights/rowing machines).
 - Sporting equipment storage.
 - General storage.

Library IT Resource Centre

The Library IT Resource Centre should be located to allow easy access to students as well as to be prominent, inviting and readily accessible to the public. Broadly its function is to provide:

- Storage for a variety of resource materials.
- Access place for electronic data base and resource material.
- Study and work area for individuals, groups and classes.
- Recreational reading.
- Shared spaces with the school and some separate community functions.
- Be more for accessing information than borrowing items.

The facility must incorporate the following:

- Technical services workroom
- Co-ordinator's office
- Adjacent spaces: withdrawal / seminar rooms
- Book-stack areas
- Reading areas
- Study areas
- Resource areas
- Control desk
- Access to toilets

Student Amenities

The accommodation shall allow for distinctive character spaces that foster student socialisation and interaction. Provision for key student areas shall consider the following:

- A central student common room and canteen to accommodate up to 200 students with links to outdoor shaded play and seating areas.
- Potentially smaller common/meeting rooms and nooks off circulation areas for smaller student gatherings. These shall also link to outdoor shaded seating areas and incorporate a sink and tea/coffee facilities for student and community occupants.
- Toilets shall be smaller in size (e.g., 2 to 3 pans, urinals and hand basins) and regularly distributed through the buildings to allow ready access and reduce scope for larger unsupervised groups to gather.
- Showers and changing facilities shall include upgraded existing facilities that provide individual privacy and security.

- Provision of bag storage at each teaching space for the protection of student property. It is envisaged that there will be less dependence on the past and traditional locker room system.

Natural light and ventilation in classrooms is desirable but must be balanced against the increase in thermal load and not compromise OH&S requirements for control of glare (computer screen based environment) and minimisation of exposure to harmful ultraviolet light should be achieved.

School Administration

The school administration area must be easily recognised by and accessible to students, staff, parents and members of the community entering the site.

It must provide a professional 'shop-front' to the community that enhances the more traditional facade. On the other hand it must not alienate the student or parent with special needs and circumstances.

There shall be sufficient floor area and facility to showcase school achievements and student work.

Separate students access shall be provided from the public contact area and also to the reception. The administration area shall incorporate:

- A reception area / foyer.
- General office for up to four staff.
- Boardroom/ meeting/ interview.
- Offices for the Principal, Bursar, two Assistant Principals, Student Counselling, Health and staff.
- Reprographics area and work space.
- IT administration – server/workroom and small office.
- General storage for records, consumables and small wet area adjacent to main office.
- Within the administration area it would be appropriate to provide an office to accommodate tertiary education representation e.g. TAFE/ OPCET/ University.
- An opportunity exists for extending the range of services traditionally offered by a grade 7-10 school by the provision of an office space for use by representatives of Child Health and Family Services division of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Teacher Accommodation and Amenities.

Teacher preparation and office accommodation central to teaching areas shall generally be open plan with small workstations and a shared document layout and resources storage area. These rooms shall be distributed throughout the school buildings but generally aligned with individual discipline SLA's or

GLA's. This will ensure supervision throughout the buildings and access by staff to resources during classes.

Unisex staff toilets shall be located adjacent to these rooms to create a “home environment” that encourages a supportive and team building staff culture.

A common staff lunch/tea room shall be developed in a convenient location on the site, close to a part of Administration area. This should provide a supportive and communal environment for the staff that helps develop morale and inter-discipline interaction. The range of facilities in this room shall be developed in consultation with the staff. Preferably adjacent to the meeting room.

There may be an opportunity to link the staff room with the MDT or Home Economics areas to facilitate greater use of kitchen/tea-coffee making facilities.

Building Configuration

A suggested schedule of teaching spaces reflecting the functional needs is outlined below. This is not prescriptive but is presented as a guide interpreting the above.

General Learning Areas (GLA)

- Six Grade 7 spaces
- Six Grade 8 spaces
- Two grade 9 spaces
- Two Grade 10 spaces

Specific Learning Areas (SLA)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| - Science** | 3 spaces |
| - Home Econ. | 2 spaces |
| - MDT | 3 spaces |
| - Music, Drama
And Dance (MDD) | 3 spaces |

Library

Art	2 spaces
Physical Education	2 spaces
Student Amenities	
School Administration	
Teacher Accommodation and Amenities	

**spaces that must double as GLA's.

Buildings shall be configured to satisfy the criteria detailed in this brief and to facilitate the development of a learning community environment.

The configuration must link new and existing buildings in an innovative fashion, making clever use of site constraints (i.e. State of existing buildings, site gradient) to create a cohesive built environment with equitable and safe access to all areas that satisfies core education objectives.

Circulation, Storage and Plant Rooms

The use of natural light and ventilation shall be optimised and maximised in teaching, enclosed communal and circulation areas for energy efficiency and sense of well being.

Storage and low occupancy functions should be located in-board where the sensible building footprint limits exposure to natural light and outlook.

It is preferable to minimise the enclosed floor area dedicated to circulation. This may result in more external circulation via a covered way “spine” between buildings and minimal enclosed circulation to clusters of rooms in each building. To this end, it is also preferable to consider storage of equipment within learning areas rather than providing dedicated store rooms with under-utilised circulation area and lack of visual supervision. Storage devices such as cubicles with roller shutter doors in workshops or built in cupboards in GLA's, both with appropriate security measures, may allow double use of the floor area required to access stored materials.

Aesthetics

The new and existing facilities must be integrated to create a clear sense of “Campus” without creating an “institutional character”. Materials and scale of buildings shall reflect a semi-residential character with elements such as materials selected for the external fabric, roof shape and building details providing the visual link between individual buildings. As stated in the brief, landscaping shall also be used as a linking element to create a site signature i.e. “garden school”, but appropriately treated so as not to create a “pavilion” building separated from the public side by large landscaping areas. Landscaping should be used to connect to the urban fabric with a clearly defined public/private interface.

Materials – Maintenance

Finishes, fittings and fixtures shall be selected for robustness, durability and aesthetic characteristics that reduce the campus character of the facility. They shall also be easily cleaned and maintained (e.g. repainted or replaced). The variety of multiple building fittings and fixtures such as lights, taps, door hardware etc shall be limited to as few variants as possible to enhance the efficiency of long term building maintenance.

Flexibility and Adaptability

The design of all aspects of this project must facilitate long-term flexibility in terms of reallocation and reconfiguration of the accommodation. The structural design shall include long clear spans between external walls with non-load bearing dry-wall internal partitions to allow future reconfiguration and reticulation of electrical and communications services. Fit-out changes should be readily undertaken without the need for structural alterations. New partitions, ceilings and building services (e.g., ductwork) should provide required levels of acoustic privacy.

Building services should be reticulated in a standardised manner throughout all buildings to allow efficient and inexpensive reconfiguration. Use of secure skirting duct for power and communications cabling and perimeter wall hydraulic services are possible alternatives. Access for maintenance and reconfiguration in ceilings is essential but must not allow unsupervised access that may compromise security and safety.

Supervision and Safety

Visual supervision of specialised areas such as workshops, laboratories, kitchens etc by teaching and support staff is critical to ensuring suitable levels of OH&S and security for students and visitors. Hence it will be necessary to minimise the number of visual obstacles in the accommodation. Layouts should also optimise the potential to supervise a number of areas by as few as one staff member.

Security

Crime Prevention - Through Environmental Design

All buildings, car parks, walkways, bicycle paths and their immediate environs shall be designed to incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) concepts and strategies to achieve a positive working and learning environment whilst reducing the opportunity for crimes against school property, staff and students.

In general terms, CPTED is a process that reduces the incidence and fear of crime through the effective design and use of the built environment. The application of CPTED concepts and strategies in the design of buildings has direct benefit to the campus by reducing losses through theft and vandalism, and enhancing the personal safety of staff and students.

Designers shall familiarise themselves with the application of CPTED concepts and strategies or engage the services of a specialist consultant to ensure that their designs meet the intent of these standards. It is essential that designers clearly define the behavioural objectives for a given space and ensure that the design and use of that space supports those objectives.

Acoustic Treatment

The design of teaching areas of any kind should provide acceptable conditions in relation to noise levels and associated elements such as structures, materials, surface, internal/external shapes which may influence

that teaching area, with spaces being designed with an appropriate level of acoustic treatment.

Circulation

Circulation relates to the way the whole community use and move about the school site. It relates to both public and private transport as well as pedestrian movement both inside and outside the school.

Design is paramount in controlling the flow of a school from the time the first person/vehicle enters the site to the last that leaves at night.

General Objectives

- Create central activity centres with clearly defined areas that allow freedom of movement among structures, with gentle transition from space to space, avoiding long, narrow corridors.
- Create quality social interaction spaces that are not crowded.
- Allow for clear supervision at all times using eye line view points through the use of glass and open ways.
- Develop a friendly entrance, connecting the school with the outside world.
- Create public spaces that foster a sense of community.

Site Planning

- Develop identifiable entry points and student/community circulation paths through the school.
- Separate vehicular and pedestrian/student movement.
- Delineate school and community zones.
- Create identifiable vehicular movement, parking areas and servicing zones.
- Develop primary and secondary pedestrian circulation zones.

Vehicle

- All vehicular movement will be designed to minimise conflict with student and pedestrian movement.
- Bus and parent vehicular set down areas will be limited to stated areas on the site.
- Vehicle parking for staff and visitors will be a separate entity, which will accommodate sixty cars with access direct to the school administrative facilities.
- Community vehicle parking will be contained within its own area, giving direct access to appropriate facilities that will be used by the community at large.

Service

- Service access to the school will be via dedicated service entries in particular to meet the needs of the canteen and subject areas that require supplies of equipment and/or movement of equipment.

Bicycle

- A number of students travel to the Reece site via bicycle and therefore a requirement for suitable bike storage would be required in a vicinity away from pedestrian and vehicular movement.

Pedestrians

- Situated in a central urban area, Reece site is readily accessible by pedestrians from the Western end of Middle Road and Forbes Street.
- The northern boundary is blocked off from access by houses and the southern boundary by the Bass Highway.

EXISTING ACCOMMODATION AND REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

THE SITE AND EXISTING BUILDINGS

As previously described, the Reece High School site occupies an area of some 10.196 hectares in south western Devonport, extending from Middle Road in the west to Forbes Road in the east. The northern boundary adjoins residential development, and the southern boundary adjoins open land extending to the Bass Highway. The eastern half of the site is relatively level and has been previously developed as open playing fields. The western half slopes quite steeply down from Middle Road, falling generally in a north/north easterly direction some 26 metres from the entrance at the southwest corner of the site down to the playing fields' level. The former buildings of Reece High School were developed on this sloping portion of the site in a band extending some 150 metres from Middle road.

Following the fire and subsequent clean-up, the following development remains:

Building 1A (known as the Library Building) - Extensively fire damaged but basically sound, three level building. Most of the building has a concrete frame and slabs, brick external cladding with aluminium framed windows. There is suspected fire damage to upper floor slab in one location. A further portion of this building complex dates from the 1950's and is of timber framed construction with painted weather board cladding and steel framed windows. It has moderate internal fire damage.

Building 1B (formerly the Art/ Science Building) - Extensively fire damaged with the upper floor demolished. The slab for the upper floor remains, is

structurally adequate but has extensive cracking. The remaining lower level is basically sound with concrete frame and floor slab, brick external cladding and aluminium framed windows.

Building 2 (Materials Design and Technology Building) - No fire damage, but subsequent minor vandal damage and water penetration. This building also dates from the 1950's and is of timber framed construction with painted weatherboard cladding and steel framed windows.

Building 4 (formerly the Home Economics Building) - Extensively fire damaged with the upper floor demolished. The slab for the upper floor remains, is structurally adequate but has some cracking. The remaining lower level is basically sound with concrete frame and floor slab, brick external cladding and aluminium framed windows. There is cracking in the external brickwork, particularly on the western side.

Building 6 (Gymnasium) - No fire damage. Steel framed building with concrete slab, and pre-finished steel sheet cladding. Contains change rooms and toilets also used in conjunction with the playing fields.

Substation Building - Extensively fire damaged concrete framed and brick clad building. Main switch board removed and unserviceable. The building does not comply with current standards for substation enclosure.

Site works and Services - The driveways and car parking on the western side of the site are largely undamaged and serviceable with limited reconstruction. This also applies to the service road to the south of the building complex. The service access track along the north boundary to the Gym, while undamaged by the fire, is unsealed and potentially unserviceable in wet weather.

Landscaping to the west and north of the site is largely intact and of value. It contains some significant mature trees. The hard surfaced playing court areas to the east of the existing building complex are undamaged and serviceable. The majority of paths and paved areas have been extensively damaged and / or demolished.

Existing electrical, communications and hydraulic services to the site have been damaged to varying degrees. Their capacity to serve the redeveloped School varies from adequate to unsatisfactory. Refer to engineering advice later in this submission for greater detail.

MASTER PLANNING AND REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

BROAD SITE PLANNING

The master plan for the re-building of Reece High School has been developed in consultation with all the responsible parties as identified in Section 2. It proposes the re-use and reconstruction of Buildings 1A, 1B, 2 and 6, and construction of new buildings to accommodate the facility requirements not able to be housed in these 3 buildings. It proposes the demolition and replacement of the remaining part of Building 4 and the old weatherboard section of Building 1A, because it would not be cost effective to reconstruct or refurbish them.

The master plan aims to create a new and more coherent form for the school as compared to its former layout. It also aims to consciously grow the new building forms out from the remaining old structures. It does this by proposing two arms of buildings running north/south across the contours at the upper and lower portions of the sloped site, to enclose two primary outdoor activity spaces, which in turn are linked by secondary courtyards either side of the central Information Resource Centre. The southern outdoor space will be primarily hard paved to serve as an active recreation and gathering space, while the northern outdoor space will be part of the existing garden reserve providing a soft landscaped area for more passive recreation and play. Part of the southern outdoor space will act as a primary distribution and activity "street" connecting the western and eastern arms of building via a series of broad terraces steeping down the slope.

The main building complex is to be primarily addressed from the west side from Middle Road by a centrally placed entry, designed to be both easily identified and inviting. This entry will open to the "inner" part of the school and provide access to the all weather pedestrian circulation routes serving all parts of the school.

It is intended that the existing entry driveways and parking areas be retained, providing access and parking for buses, staff and visitors. Emergency and service access will be provided by means of the service access routes in the north and south of the site, plus use of pedestrian routes in emergencies.

BUILDING PROPOSALS

Building Design and Materials

The buildings outlined above are illustrated in more detail in Appendix C, plans being Figures 3 to 11, and elevations being in Figures 12 and 13.

The building forms have evolved with the master planning, development of the building plans, site and brief analysis and discussions held with client and user groups.

These forms are an extension of the volumes required for functions within the building envelopes.

The outer edge of the campus buildings are intended to have a more robust and protective masonry skin, whereas the inner edges of campus buildings will have a more transparent skin with the more extensive use of glazing, in combination with visually lighter masonry elements.

The architectural response provides a contemporary set of buildings which will articulate a new image and signature for the Reece High School whilst also providing links with the past.

The aspect of the importance of community access and linkage will be supported by:

- Strategic location of facilities intended for significant community use
- Zoned security of buildings to allow discrete use of specific facilities after hours.
- Design of specific facilities to allow their use in a variety of configurations to accommodate a range of community activities.

The new buildings are proposed to have reinforced concrete floors and substructure, and steel column frame with timber roof beams. Walls are proposed to be clad externally in a masonry skin with plantation pine timber framed walls internally generally, with additional steel supporting structure where necessary. Windows will be pre-finished aluminium with opening sashes for natural ventilation. The roofs will be "colorbond" finished steel sheet profiled. Internally the wall finishes are proposed to be clear finished plywood below 1200mm for durability with painted plasterboard above 1200mm. All new buildings will be thermally insulated.

Where buildings do not interconnect directly, covered walkways will provide all-weather access for pedestrians. These will include steps and ramps to negotiate the slopes, in compliance with authority requirements for disabled access. There is a need for either a lift to access the various levels of Building 1A/1B, or an extensive ramped walkway. Current planning is for a lift on the basis that it will be equivalent cost benefit to a set of ramps, but would be more equitable for disabled users. See Engineering Services discussion below.

Learning Areas will be designed to support and enhance the changing educational approach and new pedagogy discussed previously. This will be by means of:

- Multi-use facilities, of varying degrees depending on the specialist functional requirements.

- Flexibility in terms of fitments, fixtures, resources, and ancillary spaces available to each learning area.
- The ability to interconnect some spaces and use them a variety of configurations.
- The provision of well resourced and supported Principle Learning Areas for years 7 and 8 to facilitate the "middle school" educational approach.
- The provision of workspaces for years 9 and 10 that can serve a range of activities from individual and group work, to traditional classroom teaching.
- Support for the goal of "ubiquitous computing" by means of cabled and wireless networks where appropriate, including selection of building materials to prevent interference with wireless signals.

External Works

It is proposed that site works be limited to the following:

- Excavation and filling as required to site and found proposed buildings and external spaces.
- Repair and reconstruction of the arrival driveways.
- Paths, ramps and steps to provide access to all parts of the School.
- Paved areas for play and recreation.
- Planted and lawn areas for passive recreation, shade, wind breaks and visual amenity.
- External shade and shelter structures for rain, wind and sunlight protection.
- Drainage pipes and pits for rainwater removal.
- Other hydraulic services as necessary (see Engineering Services Report).

BUDGET

Estimates prepared by the quantity surveying consultants based on the designs and information are summarised as follows:

Construction Costs

1 Building 1a And 1b	20.8	1,533,000
2 Performance-Catering	14.9	1,100,000
3 Info Resource Centre	9.1	670,000
4 Administration	8.5	630,000
5 7-8 PLA 1	6.5	479,000
6 7-8 PLA 2	6.5	479,000
7 7-8 PLA 3	6.2	456,000
8 Project Studios	5.1	375,000
9 Gym-Change Rooms	2.0	225,000
10 Site works	14.5	1,172,000
11 Other Project Costs	6.0	631,000

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION	100.0	7,750,000
Furniture & Equipment		
Item		1,350,000
Professional Fees		
Item		650,000
Art Works		
Item		40,000
TOTAL BUDGET		<u>9,790,000</u>

EVIDENCE

The Committee commenced its inquiry on Wednesday, 15 August 2001. The Committee, accompanied by officers of the Education Department and the consultants, inspected Latrobe High School and received a briefing from the Principal, Mr Rob Hart. Following which, the Committee proceeded to the site of the proposed works and then to Devonport High School and the interim Reece High School, where it was conducted on an inspection by the Principal of Devonport High School, Mr Terry Bryant and the Acting Principal of Reece High School Mr Phil McKenzie. Following the inspections, the Committee commenced hearing evidence. The following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:

- Lyell Catlin – Project Officer, Department of Education
- Eric Richardson – Glenn Smith Associates, Architects
- Mike Wilkinson – Glenn Smith Associates, Architects
- Phil McKenzie – Acting Principal, Reece High School
- Carey McIver – District Superintendent, Barrington
- Tim Gourlay – Manager Facility Services, Department of Education
- Simon Barnsley – Deputy Secretary Corporate Services, Department of Education
- Debbie Rickards – President, Reece High School Council
- Terry Bryant – Principal, Devonport High School
- Rob Hart – Principal, Latrobe High School

Background

The Manager Facility Services, Department of Education, Mr Tim Gourlay outlined to the Committee the background of the project:

Following the disastrous fire of 5 December, the department reacted fairly promptly and swiftly and the first imperative of course was the relocation of the displaced students from Reece High School. The initial efforts and energies and funds were directed towards the immediate site clean-up at the Reece High

School site and the arrangements for relocation of the students and after considering a number of options, a decision was taken that they would be rehoused on the Devonport High site with some supplementary facilities brought into range.

A port folio of works was identified as being necessary to facilitate that co-location and those works were quickly documented and arranged and undertaken in accordance with departmental and government procurement requirements. The co-location has been in operation for the whole of this year to date and is working satisfactorily.

Once a decision and commitment was made to the rebuilding of Reece High School, the Department of Education established a committee known as the Educational Concepts Brief group which was established under the chairmanship of Tim Doe, Deputy Secretary, Schools and Colleges and the main purpose of that group was to review the latest trends in educational facilities planning and educational delivery.

The work of that committee - the committee was formed late in 2000 and met on a number of occasions in early 2001. It was a representative committee - the department, the school and the school community - and it directed its energies, as I indicated, to identifying the best practice in relation to delivery of education and looking at what was happening overseas. A lot of the work of that committee was by research, particularly research through the world wide web - the Internet - and almost an infinite resource was identified there and a lot of material was reviewed in order to bring together a series of recommendations which was fed forward into the project briefing process.

Following the work of that committee, the Minister for Education formed a community consultative group under the chairmanship of the Mayor of Devonport, Mary Binks, and that also was a representative committee and the make-up of that group is identified in the evidence that's tabled. The purpose was to solicit public opinion and to provide opportunity for comment from the community about the proposed rebuild of Reece High School and to take account of the various views of the community about the proposal.

Information was gathered and collected from a variety of sources and through a variety of means and those means included the conduct of a public meeting, an open forum; it included accepting written submissions which were invited through public advertisement; it included a very detailed telephone survey conducted by an independent professional body. Representatives of the committee sat at the Local Government Offices and received direct representations from interested parties and I think

it is fair to say that the whole of the community would have had an opportunity for input through that process.

All of the submissions and the results of the survey and the public meeting were consolidated and condensed into a report which became known as the Community Consultative Committee Report and was presented to the minister, I think, on 10 April this year. In summary, that group, at the end of the report, came up with 12 specific recommendations as to what the rebuilt Reece High School should incorporate in its planning and it also was quite clear that there was unequivocal community support for the proposal to rebuild the school.

So the work of those two antecedent committees was then fed forward into the development of the project brief and whilst we haven't condensed this project commission brief now included in the evidence, I do table a copy and there are spare copies available for anyone who would wish to review it. It is quite a solid document, it includes a lot of information pertinent to design documentation, briefing of school facilities, it also includes a detailed assessment of the Reece High School site and the fire damaged buildings - the remnants of which remain on site and some only partially damaged - it includes a lot of information about educational guideline area standards and it formed the document that went out to consultants by public advertisement and was the basis on which the consultants expressed interest in and put in their submissions for the purpose of providing the consultancy services for the rebuild of Reece High School. That document has been reviewed by independent educational facilities planners and they're claimed as a very professional and complete document.

The appointment of the consultants followed shortly thereafter and that was a thorough and open process, too, in line with again government procurement guidelines and Glenn Smith and Associates were nominated and appointed as the consultant for the project.

At about the same time as the appointment of the consultants, an opportunity - well, I should say I guess that coming through the work of the antecedent committees there were some common threads and the most common of which that there should be a thorough and consultative process underpinning the planning for the proposed rebuild that any new facility on site should represent best practice and state of the art education; there should be strong involvement of the community, both the immediate school community and the community at large in the planning and consultative process and that the range of facilities provided should extend beyond the traditional secondary seven to ten bracket, and in fact should consider providing life-long learning and educational services to the broader community.

As I was indicating, at about the same time coincidental opportunity arrived to access an internationally recognised expert on education. A gentleman based in New York, called Prakash Niar, and his writings and philosophies and experience came to the attention of the Department of Education through its early research on the Internet as to latest trends in educational facility design. The department invited this gentleman to Tasmania, he happened to be coming to another conference on the mainland at that time, he accepted the invitation and the work that he did in Tasmania formed the basis of a real initiative to put in place and implement the best practice internationally in terms of facility design and educational curriculum and pedagogy.

The Barrington District Superintendent, Mr Cary McIvor gave further detail on the educational planning and community consultation process:

Prakash and I were here on 5 and 6 June and all principals across the north west region were invited to that day and a half workshop, as indeed were members of the Community Consultative Committee, staff, students and parents of Reece High School in particular. Without going through blow by blow what occurred in that day and a half, a couple of salient messages were presented.

The first message was simply this, that before we set about designing an educational facility we need to go back and revisit what is the purpose of the facility that you are trying to create. So really the essence of the 90 per cent of the time that he was with us, was what is the educational rationale for a rebuilt Reece High School. So through a series of processes, staff, students, and in the evening, parents, were asked to engage in what it was that they wanted a new Reece High School to provide the educational community in this region.

And it was in the last 10 per cent of the time that he was with us that we actually started to talk about, given that you have articulated a purpose, which will come up in the presentation later, given that that is what you want to do, then what sort of facilities will best enable you to deliver that purpose. So it was a really refreshing approach to facilities design because traditionally what we have done, and it's not unique to our department, but we have built the facility and then tried to accommodate what we want to do within that facility.

The Reece High rebuild has given us the opportunity to articulate the educational purposes that we wish to achieve with a design that complements that purpose. That was the first salient message that Prakash gave us. The second message, and Tim has already alluded to the consultative process that was put in place over the period to date, Prakash affirmed, and indeed

complimented, the consultative processes that were already extant at that time in enabling the wider community of Devonport to have their views on what should happen arising out of the tragedy last December, heard and addressed. They are the two salient messages that came out of that presentation.

The Project Officer, Department of Education, Mr Lyle Catlin, outlined the educational features incorporated in the proposed plans for Reece High on the foundations that were laid by the two regional committees and the workshopping that was undertaken with the international expert, Prakash Niar:

... we have a vision for the school that was worked through with a small group of people at the Prakash Niar presentation. This is a vision that they came to for the Reece High School. 'Reece will foster a love of learning in all students through an integrated project-based curriculum. It will recognise and aim to fulfil the learning needs of all community members.'

It is important that a school in fact has a signature of its own. Reece is exactly what that says. It does have a love of learning and it does foster the component of integrated project-based curriculum. They are working towards that even now. If I could take the moment also to move on just a little, they also encompass the idea of a community school and came up with a mission statement. They made the statement, realising individual potential through creativity, enterprise, communication and teamwork. I make the point that I have put up there community school but I want you to hear and understand that that is not the name they are. At the moment they are Reece High School but they have always been a community school and that's an integral part of their organisation.

They embrace the idea of a full-service school. That means that they service their community far and wide, over and above just reading, writing and arithmetic. That's an important part of the school itself. If I can also take you now to the booklet because even though we have said that it is read, I would take you to page 1 of the report at the back - just after page 36 in the first section - Schools are Centres of Community, a Planning and Design Guide.

The first statement on that page, page 1 of that says: 'The learning environment we construct, renovate and replace today provide real and valuable opportunities to enact our vision for learning in the 21st century. It is vital that the processes for sharing, defining and affirming this vision are inclusive, open and dynamic, involving all education stakeholders and the community.'

If I could take you also to the second paragraph on that page which is an important component of it: 'Teaching and learning and community life itself is greatly enhanced in environments where

life-long learning is a community value, where everyone is a learner and when the school facility is central to the life and learning of the community and the community is central to the life of the school.'

I just make the point that community school vision up there embraces that emphatically. If I could take you back also to page 8 of the book where it says Current Pedagogy and Future Trends, first paragraph, it says: 'Best practice educational and curriculum trends,' I would like to read that to you just to refresh your memory: 'The education concept of the new Reece school continues to be defined through the consultative school system and community processes currently in progress. There are major educational advantages to be seen in the redeveloped Reece High School. One is optimum school size and a second one is innovative school approaches.'

Reece High School is embracing those educational processes. They are looking at the innovative to make it really effective for their community and I make the point that it certainly doesn't take away from the other schools in the area. They are making their own niche for this community that they serve.

I would like to now spend a couple of minutes of talking through the master plan solutions. The site presents opportunities that allow best use of existing buildings and contours, slopes and views, which the architects will later on bring out. We will also see up on the board, when we get to them, a pavilion-style lot of buildings and they are an integral part of the style that the school will be using for teaching. They will use the maximum natural light available and ventilation, offering good circulation of the buildings. This site, as we are starting afresh, offers the perfect opportunity to marry buildings with curriculum pedagogy. Not too often in Tasmania have we the opportunity to stir the very foundations of education and buildings consecutively, one after the other, to produce quality education and we have that opportunity here today.

The school, as far as education goes, incorporating the notion of integrated studies in the curriculum. Many schools in Tasmania are embracing that in today's educational model. For instance we have some new emerging components of curriculum that are being worked on some 21 schools around the State now and Reece have the opportunity to be a part of that and what Prakash Niar did by coming over here is he really reinforced to Tasmanian educators that we are about education for the 21st century. He didn't bring a lot of new material to us but he did reinforce that we are on the right track and I think that that is an important component of his visit.

The new Reece High School will be the perfect platform for improved pastoral care and contemporary pedagogy and integrated curriculum. Facilities will be quality buildings that will allow teaching and learning to occur specifically with the capacity to work with individuals.

Already the school has established links with other schools, both here and on the mainland, that are looking at middle school concepts and integrated studies and project work. They have the opportunity to build specific areas for enterprise work, project-based curriculum and really develop out that love of learning that we want in all of our children.

Outstanding features to support educational outcomes within the plan that we have put to you today include the resource centre, which incorporates facilities for IT both on-line and off-line, vocational education and facilities for studies and reading in that area.

We have also developed it with the capacity to have project rooms with a notion that it will be a classless school, that is, it has the capacity for individuals to embrace education for the sake of education and not be just a part of a class. There is also the notion that we can have there individual work stations that we are exploring as a part of the Prakash Niar investigations.

I put to you today that education at the Reece School will be unique for this area. Again, I reiterate it does not take away from the other schools in the area. They will be unique to themselves and they will develop their own signatures, their own philosophy but Reece will significantly be a school for their own community.

Demand

The Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services, Department of Education, Mr Simon Barnsley, made the following submission to the Committee in relation to the demand factors considered by the Department:

... Generally from a population point of view, the first section highlights that Devonport has experienced very minor population decline of recent times and in general there are population trends that are happening across localities, across States and across nations of a similar trend. That is the growth in the older population and a greater decline in young populations - and we have highlighted the factors that affect the issues of relatively low fertility rates amongst women of child-bearing age, the declining numbers of women of child-bearing age and, in the case of Tasmania, an interstate migration in fact in the 15 to 34 age group. So there are some broad population parameters there but when I

come to the specifics, you will see that they are not profound in the total school population.

There are a couple of key student population issues that really do need to be brought about so that when we look at the statistics they are understood. The key of these, and it's affecting all high schools in the State at the moment, are what I've referred to as the two small high school cohorts. In 1993, we changed the enrolment arrangements - and I'll look at Carey McIvor and check my facts - but previously not all students, I think, completed prep. The effect was that one age group went to kinder, then prep, and others within the year if they turned a certain age after 30 June, they went directly from kinder to grade 1. So not all students completed a prep year. In 1993, we introduced a scheme where all students do kinder and all students do prep and all students do grade 1. The effect of that is we had two half cohorts but it wasn't quite as simple as that. What happened is we reduced the cohorts for the year of the change so from then on we had two reduced population groups proceeding through the school system and it has happened that, when it comes to figures, you will see the effect of those. They moved into the high schools - last year was the first year of the small cohorts ... and then we got a second small cohort into the high schools so we had an artificial suppression of the high school population. They are in there at the moment, so all high schools are down in numbers. What's happening now is that they're in the system in years 8 and 9 and the year 7s are returning to normal levels and then in the following year obviously you'll get 7s and 8s at normal level and 7, 8, 9, 10. So that small cohort effect has temporarily reduced the high school population relative to what it would normally be so when we look at the figures we'll see in about 2003-04 onwards, high school numbers rise.

The second issue is that of years 6 to 7 retention, that obviously year 6 is the point at which some parents make a decision whether to stay within the government system or move to the non-government system. Barrington has a very high rate of retention, around about 95 per cent, and we don't see that changing. The 2001 year 6 to 7 retention, when we come to look at the figures, it's interesting to note that there is a changing pattern amongst the high schools and we observe this across schools across the State that parental preferences for schools enrolment do vary, so one can have the same population but the mix amongst schools will differ. Those are some general population trends.

We then raised the issue of likely future high school population profiles and of course with all of our modelling, because we have enrolment details for all schools in the State, our modelling is based upon picking up the kinder, prep and years 1 to 6, so when we get to high school we have a good long look ahead because

we know the kinder, prep, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 - and they march in lock-step fashion through the system - so you can, with some comfort, project what the high schools look like. The only factor that can change that is interstate migration, and that isn't coming through as a strong factor or, secondly, what I call 'intrastate migration' - regional effects - where we see people moving from different areas. As I understand it, for example, there's a move of people off the west coast to reside in the Burnie area and the workers then travel back to shifts, so there are those intrastate effects. Once again, I don't see in the figures that we're seeing large intrastate effects in Devonport, Devonport appears to be fairly stable, but that can influence within kinder, within the high school projections, but we have a level of comfort that the medium-term outlook is fairly stable based on the enrolment numbers we have.

I might move to predicted trends - and I'm here at the bottom of page 12. We've commented briefly - and we've chosen to run the enrolment projections here on Reece, Devonport, Ulverstone and Latrobe. Obviously when you radiate out, you then have Penguin, Sheffield and Deloraine but within those four high schools you capture very much the population. There's not a lot of interaction between those high schools and those radiating out of Sheffield, Penguin, Deloraine ... Ulverstone, I would have kept in the group.

I might then move straight to page 14, where I think we can highlight and bring together in a practical way what we see. We've chosen to look back five years and forward five years. I know in the visit this morning there were some comments on how many did Devonport High School have a long time ago but if we go back ten and fifteen and twenty years we get a totally different look for the State - I mean, it was a very different dynamic for the State at the time. But what I would highlight in these figures is that you can see that if I work on the graph, the first line - the highest line - is that for Ulverstone High School and what you are seeing there is a fall away up to the present but with the projections that we see, based on current primary school enrolments, we see Ulverstone High School as being very stable, just over the 600 mark.

The next on the graph is of course Reece High School and Reece illustrates very clearly that small cohort effect. You can see Reece coming off a figure of 711 in 1996, it falls away and you can see from 2000 it dropped, 2001, 2002, and then 2002, 2003, 2004 it then comes back up again and that dip from when they go from 600 down to about 550 and back up to a touch over 600, is the cohort effect and stable.

The next school that we see is Devonport High School, which starts in 1996 at about 467, it drops away and then comes back up. When we go inside the details of this, this illustrates the effect of changing enrolment patterns due to parental preference. So

there is movement amongst schools of parents choosing how to enrol. Finally, we see Latrobe High School, which started at 450 in 1996 and then it fell away to 2001, 2002 - and once again with the cohort effect it very much mirrors the experience of Reece - we see it coming back up and being fairly stable.

I appreciate there might be some discussion on some of those specifics of those numbers later on but that is the broad trend and those figures are taken directly off our modelling, as I said, and what we do is we have every primary school enrolment, we know the patterns of recruitment from primary to high school so we can map each primary to the respective high school and, for example, like Spreyton Primary where they shared enrolments, you project on the basis of the enrolment history and you can then project through with comfort. So those numbers come straight off primary school enrolments.

Finally, on page 15, we did pull out the year 7 enrolments in each high school which do illustrate the effects of change amongst schools. You can see the Ulverstone High School as being relatively stable, Reece High School showing some fluctuation both up and down, and the Devonport High School pattern you can see that since 1998, the year 7 intake for Devonport each year has risen on the previous year. We could go further into those and the principals of the respective schools are certainly in a position to talk about where their enrolments come from but that is the broad pattern that we see and projecting through to 2006, coming back to page 14, what we are seeing is a total student population that from 1996 to 2006 has fallen away. In the years from 1996 to the present it is a combination of, I think, population change and the cohort effect, and for the future with a fairly stable population, you can see that it comes back up to around about the 2 100, 2 175, 2 140, 2 133.

Reports provided to Secretary of Education Department

The Committee sought evidence as to what reports, if any, were prepared in regard to the proposed rebuilding of the Reece High School. The Committee was particularly interested to know whether alternatives to the rebuilding of the school were considered. Mr Barnsley submitted:

Firstly, in regard to the reports provided to the secretary, the decision to rebuild Reece was made by the Government very soon after the fire. The information that I have just referred to, and the information that's contained within these, the way in which the work proceeded - as Mr Gourlay has indicated - is that, firstly, the focus was on construction of temporary facilities at Devonport High School. That occupied the entire efforts of the agency from the date in December through until the end of January. There was

a broad commitment by government that was made within a couple of days of the fire to rebuild Reece and that was then left at that point whilst the focus was on the redevelopment of Devonport High School. The next stage of that was the appointment of the committee, under the chairmanship of Mary Binks, which conducted a consultation, and information was provided to that group comparable to what we have talked about here ...

In answering the question, there are no reports beyond what you see here in relation to this matter because in the due diligence process what we had was the broad decision by government to rebuild but it was a broad commitment and beyond that we then entered into a consultation phase, which was under the chairmanship of Mary Binks. Coming out of the consultation was a report delivered on 10 April with the set of twelve recommendations that are in the body of the report. Flowing from that we had held off on the development of the next stage of any building process, which is the project consultant commission brief, and as soon as that was completed that gave the shape to this brief, which we compiled and went out. So that the options for the rebuilding of Reece are canvassed through the various design options that we worked through here. This had a set of population projections within it about that issue.

Influence of the consultation process

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to what extent the decision-making process was influenced by the various forms of community consultation, given the commitment of the Government to rebuilding the school only days after the fire. Mr Barnsley responded:

Firstly, in responding to that question, the overwhelming view coming through on community consultation was support for the rebuilding. Notwithstanding the Government's already stated commitment to the rebuild, recommendation 1 emerging from that committee was 'proceed with plans to design and build a new state-of-the-art educational facility on the Middle Road site'. Then it proceeds through to ensure ongoing consultation processes to undertake research and then various views on what the facility should be. So the consultation process, notwithstanding that there were dissenting views and the views that were expressed were along the lines that Mr McIvor alluded to earlier, a strong outcome from the community consultation was support for the Government's commitment toward a rebuilding. At that stage the scope of the school, the design of the school, the funding and all of those issues, I would characterise as the broad commitment to the rebuilding, and it is through the subsequent phases that the detail has come in that we are seeing here today.

Latrobe High School

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to whether the rebuilding of Reece High School would have an adverse effect on either the educational outcomes achieved at Latrobe High School or future enrolments. Mr Catlin responded:

As an educator, Mr Chairman, I believe that it's the programs that will attract kids. There will be a short term, I believe, where people would be attracted to a new building but in the nitty-gritty of it, parents make decisions about programs and placing children in schools because of programs and I believe the other schools can hold their own in this community.

Later, Mr Catlin added:

I have been a teacher for some 30 years and I believe strongly that schools look at their intake of what they have coming through and I believe they will build their programs accordingly to the needs.

... I believe that the department over a period of time upgrade and substantiate schools and program materials so that they can compete on an equal footing level. I believe that. Government have an obligation to make sure that that process is in place and flows through and I am convinced of that ...

I believe that the status quo (i.e. the present enrolment) will stay there overall. There may be some dipping in the first instance but I believe that overall their programs are sustainable.

When questioned as to why any 'dipping' would only be "in the first instance" and not likely to continue for at least the first decade of a new school's existence, Mr Catlin responded:

As all new schools and new facilities then there would be an attraction for a short term but I don't believe it would be long term. I believe that people would see their own local community engaging educational programs for those kids out there.

... I don't believe children will travel past their local school. That's my experience in the past. On most occasions they will go to their local school because travel is an issue for kids.

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to what was the last instance of the construction of a new school in a community and what impact that had had on the existing surrounding schools. Mr Barnsley responded:

... Newstead College ... I think Brooks High School would be another example but I think equally that you could look at Queechy High School and in this area ... Penguin Primary and I think Exeter Primary

The Committee asked whether there was a noted trend away from the established schools in the areas related to those new schools. Mr Barnsley responded:

In the case of Queechy, I don't believe so. Using the Queechy example, Ravenswood High, in fact we had Ravenswood High - a not terribly old school, Mr Chairman, I can't recall the year of Ravenswood High but mid-1970s - their community made a decision that they no longer saw the school to be viable, which was a different situation altogether. But in the case of new schools, I don't believe that Brooks radically shifted the enrolment patterns in Launceston.

Later in the hearing, the Committee heard the following submission from the Principal of Latrobe High School, Mr Rob Hart:

... thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you again about a matter that's causing our school community great concern. As you'd be aware, the decision to rebuild Reece High was made pretty much before the smoke had stopped rising into the air and I and my school community believe that the Government erred significantly in making that decision so quickly. In making that decision there are a couple of major issues which I believe weren't thought through at the time and still haven't been thought through adequately.

I believe specifically that these problems to which I refer are first of all financial responsibility and secondly, equity issues. I think that it's simply financially irresponsible to rebuild Reece High School on its current site and I say that because within the Devonport area - and I'm including Latrobe in that - there is ample teaching space available, there are many resources of buildings that have been upgraded and so on recently that will need to be duplicated and I believe that we simply can't afford that sort of expenditure when it is not necessary.

Speaking of my school specifically, at any time there are between eight and ten classrooms that are empty each lesson. They're heated during the winter, they're cleaned and we spread out into them, however they aren't used specifically and are available to accommodate extra students. I understand that Devonport High School have similar space but I'll allow Terry to speak to that.

I just want to reinforce again that I don't believe extra teaching space is required. I've never been asked about the capacity of

Latrobe High to accommodate extra students and I think that in itself is reflective of the narrow view which has surrounded this matter. As people have said, it is an issue that is I suppose peculiar to some extent to the north-west coast, that we tend to look at the towns as very separate entities and I don't know that we should perpetuate that.

I don't think we should kid ourselves because I believe that the new school if it's built - and I believe that the plans are fabulous and it's a wonderful school; I'd love to be principal of a school with facilities like that - I don't think we should kid ourselves that if it goes ahead it will spell the end for Latrobe High. I was amused in one way I suppose but saddened in another when I was trying to find the graphs with projected numbers and so on in this that you can't see the line for Latrobe High and I would really hope that that isn't indicative of the long-term view.

I'm not just saying I believe Latrobe High won't continue to exist. I believe that parents particularly from Spreyton which is a shared school when faced with a choice, given the committee had an opportunity to look at our facilities today, when given the choice between the facilities we can provide, regardless of the programs we offer, which I believe are of high quality - and I know that the programs of the new Reece High School will be of high quality - but I think the thing that will make the decision for parents is the facilities that are available in combination with those excellent programs.

I don't think it will be a hard choice for the Spreyton parents in particular, likewise Devonport. We do have some students come to us from Devonport and I believe that they'll be faced with a pretty easy decision to make as to where they send their children. I'm not angry about that in any way. If I was a parent with a child in that area - obviously every parent wants the very best for their child and this is a very good school, there's no doubt.

At the moment we would expect to collect about 30 students from Spreyton Primary School next year. At the moment I think we have about 80 students from the Spreyton area. If we don't pick up a year 7 group with 30 Spreyton kids in it and that continues over four years we'll be 120 students down and then we go below that dreaded 300 mark - we would be around 250 and at that stage a secondary school finds it very difficult to offer the full range of courses that they should be offering. Once you have to narrow your curriculum then parents tend to take their children away in droves and it snowballs. I can't see how, short of compelling people to send their kids to Latrobe High from the Spreyton area - and I don't think that can be done either - we can retain that Spreyton enrolment.

The other issue that I wanted to talk about briefly is equity. There's no doubt from reading this, as I said before, it's a wonderful school. My understanding of the State education system is that there should be a fair degree of equity between schools. I think in terms of resources, in terms of teaching skills, in terms of the general programs and so on that schools can offer, there should be equity between government schools. I think building one state-of-the-art school in an area which is within five minutes of bus travel from Latrobe, where our facilities can in no way compete, is going to have a really adverse effect.

The facilities for students will be magnificent and there is no doubt that parents expect the best for their children and as a parent myself I would expect that my children would have access to a similar facility. The fact of the matter is that Latrobe High simply can't compete; Devonport High to a lesser extent, but Terry will talk about that later. Devonport has had a significant amount of money poured into it over the last few years as a result of the collocation and upgrading of the gymnasium and so on in the last few years. Latrobe High is a 1960s school that is really struggling in terms of facilities. There is going to be a huge gap in terms of the resources available to Latrobe High students and to Reece High. In terms of equity, I think we have real problems there.

The other matter I would just like to briefly raise is duplication. I wonder why it's necessary to duplicate libraries, performing arts areas and so on. I think we would be aware there has been a large amount of money spent in the Devonport area recently on those types of facilities and, again, there will be new facilities of that nature in this plan.

There is one last point I wanted to raise and that is when we were talking about the written submissions earlier, Latrobe High did put in a written submission and it represented all our staff and community. It concerns me, and I know it is difficult with statistics and so on, that that written submission is treated in the same way when we're looking at percentages as a written submission from an individual or a telephone submission from someone who's been rung up. Significant thought went into that submission and I think it should be weighted accordingly when it's being considered.

Mr Gourlay in response made the following submission:

I would just comment on a couple of things that Mr Hart said at the outset and then clarify some facts. On day 1 of the fire, in this very room in fact, all the principals were brought together - and this includes the principals of the neighbouring high schools and the feeder primary schools - and in a forum to discuss the options that were open to the department, many possibilities were canvassed at that stage. Rob, I remember you speaking at that

meeting. I just wanted to say that there was the opportunity for input by the principals and Rob did articulate at that meeting that Latrobe had capacity to accommodate some students and it was clearly an option at the time for the department to spread the students amongst other schools. A decision was taken during that meeting to endeavour to keep the population of Reece students together and the option of collocation was one of the options floated at that table and there had to be due diligence done to prove that that was a possible option and what the implications of it were. When it was settled and proven that that would be a realistic option the other options became of lesser priority.

Curriculum review

The Committee questioned the witnesses regarding the proposed designation of the new Reece High School as a 'pilot school' in the curriculum review process. Mr McIvor responded:

... one of the initiatives out of Learning Together which is a wholesale review of the curriculum is called the Curriculum Consultation. It's a three-year project in the initial phase and what it involves is twenty pilot schools in the first year and another twenty pilot schools next year which are exploring what it is we ought to be teaching our kids to best prepare them for the future and, importantly, how we ought to go about that and how we ought to assess that learning as it occurs. Last year, for example, there was a statewide consultative process that established the values and purposes that ought to underpin a State education. Those values and purposes have now been captured, if you like, in what are referred to as the new essential learnings. What are the things that we believe kids need to know to be best prepared for the future, to be active participating citizens in that future, and to have the necessary social and cognitive skills to be effective adult members of our community with a zest for lifelong learning?

The twenty project schools have been asked to test that stuff. Okay, we've come up with these essential learnings but how are we going to deliver them, what are they going to look like in a school context and how are we going to assess them? Reece High School is one of those project schools and it's in there because of the opportunity to marry the facility design stuff with that new curriculum stuff. So that's the project Lyle was referring to earlier, the curriculum consultation.

... within the next five or six years all our schools will have adopted the new essential learnings and the way in which those schools address them will have been formed by the piloting work going on this year and next.

Optimum school size

The Committee questioned the witnesses regarding the optimum size of schools. Mr Gourlay responded:

... 'many international studies during the past ten years indicate the positive effects of small school size on student attitudes and achievement. This is particularly true of the effective and social domains where smaller schools contribute to a stronger sense of belonging and improved attendance and participation rates but is also true of student academic achievement. Small schools are generally more community-friendly and are far more likely to be regarded as centres of their communities and vice versa'.

We also know that where large schools exist, locally, nationally and internationally, educators who find themselves in charge of those schools work very hard to break down the mass of students into smaller groups or, if you like, subschools, and there are various devices in terms of school organisation to achieve this. But it's characteristic of any school that's above 500-600 that there will be devices employed and built into the organisational models for those schools which create smaller groups within the school. That might be on a grade basis, a horizontal grouping or a vertical grouping, it could be subschools - a multiplicity of ways of organising that. But the idea is to get smaller groups of students with a set group of staff who get to know the students really well and the programs are directed.

The Committee asked Mr Gourlay as to any connection between the application of the new curriculum and school infrastructure. Mr Gourlay submitted:

The initiatives that we've been identifying, both in terms of curriculum, curriculum content and pedagogy that represent best practice and emerging trends, can be practised in existing schools ... Latrobe High will be equally able to deliver such innovative and exciting programs through its set of facilities, as will the new Reece High. But what we have is this perfect opportunity in an ideal world to blend the latest in curriculum, and Tasmania's at the forefront of development of new and exciting curriculum trends that leave the old traditional subject areas behind and look at the new and emerging fields of education and to marry that and dovetail that with the shape of the buildings. There are significant features being incorporated in the plans, which facilitate delivery of the new curriculum and the latest in pedagogy.

Reece High School Community

The Acting Principal of Reece High School, Mr Phil McKenzie made the following submission in support of the project:

... when the school was burned down on 5 December and the decision was made to relocate or colocate with Devonport High School, one of our concerns was the enrolment of our current students. At that time I think two of our students moved to Latrobe High School, I think one moved to St Brendan Shaw College. I say those figures because I think that stresses first of all the viability of Reece High School as a unit, especially significant coming into the fact that we would have at least two years of cramped conditions. I think, secondly, it probably shows the reluctance of families who are established in the area to move schools.

I believe Reece High School is a highly viable school. I think its continuation, as we said in the consultative process earlier in the year, offers the choice for families and it makes one of three schools, I think, in the Devonport area - Latrobe, Devonport and Reece - that are highly viable and thriving schools. One of the things that makes Reece High School such a strong school is its strong and 40-year-old culture. A couple of the aspects of that, I believe, are the sense of belonging to the school, and that has been strengthened, I guess, by the adversity that the school has faced. Its sense of community and school ethos which, while hard to explain, comes into the feeling that people have about Reece High School which has well and truly been documented and spoken about. Also the programs that are offered at Reece High School make the school highly viable, as again do the programs at Latrobe and Devonport High.

Some of the things that I see about the new school that I wrote about in the submission, the new buildings and probably in many ways a new school arrangement, would be that the teaching and learning environment would offer areas for what we have learned about good learning environment to what we know about how children learn. One of the things we have been careful to put into the plans for the buildings are areas for different learning styles to take place. For example, groups of, say, 25 in the old classroom-type arrangement, smaller groups and areas for individual work. Two of the aspects we are laying greatest emphasis on first of all are integration of curriculum and the curriculum consultation we spoke about earlier on this afternoon.

The facilities in the rebuilding will enhance the ability for curriculum to be integrated for what now constitute various different subjects to develop what strength, what degree of integration of these subjects that we want to put into effect. That can be done easily here through facility provision. The new school too, I think, would offer a state-of-the-art technology school where, through the use

of technology, the ICT - information and communication technology - learning opportunities for students would be enhanced.

I think a couple of closing statements I would make to reinforce what I wrote here are, first of all, I think the new school will reinforce again, like the existing schools do, the concept of lifelong learning as it is spelt out in the latest documents from the department. I think it will be of course a school for the twenty-first century, with the added enhancement of course of new facilities. But the most important thing that I would stress in the rebuilding of the school is that a school is made viable not by just its buildings but by the programs that a school offers and by the relationships that are enhanced and developed within that school - teacher to teacher, teacher to student, student to student - and the relationship the school has with the community. I wrote about community access in my submission there.

The President of the Reece High School Council, Debbie Rickards supported Mr McKenzie's submission:

I think as a parent firstly, when Reece High School burnt down it was quite devastating. As chairperson of the school council I've been involved with the school for seven years off and on through P&F and school council. On 5 December I was called and was right in the forefront the whole time during that stage. I've been involved on the community consultative committee and I've also been on the project steering committee and have had a lot of input through P&F, school councils and also the community at large. I think also being in the position I am as an accountant, I've also had a lot of input from a lot of the community around the Devonport area as well.

I think as all these community things came into place it was great because we felt that the Devonport community wanted to have an involvement in the school. We wanted to see it rebuilt and we were told it was going to be rebuilt to start with so of course a lot of the concern went out of it at that stage because we thought, 'This is great, we're going to have it redone and it's going to be really good'. When the community consultative committee was set up I suppose I was quite shocked at the submissions that were received in relation to the non-building of Reece High School. I found that very hard because I suppose I already had it in my mind that it was going to be rebuilt, like a lot of the parents and I think the community of Devonport.

That sort of threw me back a bit so I probably didn't have as much input as I would have liked to have had in that community consultative group, perhaps because I was trying to keep a very even keel on trying to see both sides of everything, which made it

very difficult. I think I came out of it okay because I felt that I did use my judgement and it wasn't only as a parent of Reece High but as a person within the Devonport community and I thought that consultative committee came out with a very favourable ending to it.

As a parent, I feel I have the right to choose which school my child goes to and I choose my school on what it delivers, how it delivers and what my child is going to get out of that school. I don't base it on what the school looks like, I don't base it on front stuff. My children went to Reece High because it had the best programs for my child at the time and that's what I want for my child.

To be honest, I didn't even look at Latrobe High because it wasn't in my area as such. I felt being in West Devonport I didn't have to acknowledge that my child could go to Latrobe anyway, so it was never in my categories. It was a choice between Devonport and Reece High at that stage. I think the feeling of the community within the Devonport area is possibly that the choices they have, especially on the western side, is Devonport and Reece. East Devonport and Spreyton do have a choice of going to whichever one they like and, as far as I know, I think the majority would probably come through to either Reece or Devonport, but I'm not sure of the figures.

We put a lot of hard work in to where we've got to so far. It's been a struggle and a half but the community behind the school is absolutely amazing. They've put so much in and even the Devonport High community has put so much in to help the collocation of that type of thing as well. I just think the community of Devonport would really benefit from having two high schools within that community and within that city as such.

Devonport High School

The Principal of Devonport High School, Mr Terry Bryant appeared and made the following submission:

I want to pick up a couple of themes. I would like to pick up the theme that Mr Barnsley raised in an earlier comment he made, that of retention of government schools, which in Tasmania generally goes against the national trend and is very encouraging. I think it gives evidence that we do have a strong and viable government system in Tasmania and governments of all persuasions are to be applauded for that. My feeling about one of the reasons why in particular this area has such a strong retention is because of the three high school model that we've had in this particular environment. I think we make each other strong because there is a very fierce but friendly rivalry between the

schools and I think that element of healthy competition between us has been something that has helped the government system that we represent present a very credible alternative to parents in terms of the quality that is on offer.

The second point I'd like to pick up is that Tim Gourlay quoted comments about impact of size of school communities and school learning groups. Certainly one of the biggest challenges for high schools generally at the moment is that of producing a supportive school environment and every evidence suggests in our professional field that we can do that best when we have numbers under 500. That's a fairly arbitrary number but I'm trying to illuminate the point by simply saying a manageable size school is in the order of 500. The quality of relationships that Deb spoke about when she gave us an insight into why she chose a particular school are best enhanced in those sorts of environments. Certainly as a person who exists on a daily basis in the collocated schools, which has a population of 1 000 at the moment, the concept of trying to formulate a supportive school environment for that 1 000 would indeed be very challenging and I would certainly be resorting to the sorts of strategies that Tim illuminated in terms of subschools and those sorts of things.

We are simply offering in this comment the notion that secondary school environments are very challenging. Students have that particular time of their lives where they're making that transition from childhood to young adulthood. One of our responsibilities is to accept that it is one of the last safe places for students to make mistakes and receive appropriate counselling and move on with a clean sheet. The impact of mistakes later on can be quite life-altering, both in terms of personal choices and educational outcomes. I think maintaining schools - and we're certainly the envy of Australia in terms of our general school size in the high school environment. I am the president of the Tasmanian Secondary Principals Association and in that capacity I travel extensively on the mainland. I was recently in Korea at the International Confederation of Principals where the Korean Government mandated on the last day that they were going to reduce their class sizes to 35 and thought that was a wonderful step forward. We wouldn't have classes anything like that in our system.

At that meeting Tim referred to, the day after the fire, I believe that the whole first flagging on the notion of collocation came from me representing our school. We have no fear at all of the advantage that Reece would have down the road with a new building because, again, I pick up Mrs Rickards thoughts about quality of programs, quality of relationships. We would hope that those few comments might help the committee in its deliberations.

Alternatives to the proposal

Given the evidence presented to the Committee by the Latrobe High School Community and the submission of the Devonport Chamber of Commerce to the 'Binks Committee', the Committee felt bound to investigate whether alternatives to rebuilding Reece High School were considered prior to the decision being made to rebuild, for example by refurbishment of the Devonport and Latrobe High Schools. Accordingly, at a subsequent meeting, the Committee resolved as follows:

- 1. That the Department of Education provide details of any competing development cases, including one which contemplates spreading the 1400 student enrolment over neighbouring schools and any required refurbishment of those schools as a result.*
- 2. That the competing development cases be presented to the Committee by the Secretary of the Department of Education.*

In addition, specific information detailing the enrolment trends for the Devonport, Reece and Latrobe High Schools and their respective feeder primary schools was sought.

On 29 August, the Secretary of the Education Department, Dr Martyn Forrest, appeared before the Committee according to order. Messrs Barnsley and McIvor also reappeared. Dr Forrest made the following submission to the Committee:

The particular information sought by the committee, in my view, from the letter, was the details of any competing development cases, including one that contemplates spreading the 1 400 student enrolment over neighbouring schools in any required refurbishment of these schools, as a result. In responding to you, the department has made a number of assumptions on the basis of the previous evidence and the supplementary information asked, that the neighbouring schools here referred to Devonport and Latrobe.

In the document provided to the committee, we have firstly suggested - and this is important, I think - that we do not believe there are, indeed, any realistic development options other than the one contemplated in the original submission to the Public Works Committee, which is to rebuild Reece on its original campus. Secondly, in response to the committee's request, we've provided a hypothesis and some supporting data and commentary in which all the students presently attending Reece and likely to attend Reece over the next several years are divided between the Devonport and Latrobe High Schools.

We argue there are no realistic development options if all the matters that should be taken into account are, in fact, taken into account. These would include a number of things that I would like to just mention to you. The first is, quite clearly, the obvious issue of capital expenditure but, secondly, there is recurrent expenditure; thirdly, I think is what I would call 'proven means' of achieving educational outcomes, schools are there for a purpose and the purpose is to achieve good educational outcomes for their students and there are ways of doing that that are better than other ways and I think they need considering. The fourth point is, I think, any decision or any discussion on this should consider the views of the Reece High School community; fifthly, I think it should consider the views of the community more generally; sixthly, I believe it should consider the government policy in this matter; and seventhly, I think it needs to consider the balance between the needs of individual students and the needs of all students in this State. Quite often we are faced with a decision that has to balance those priorities. Finally, I think it should consider what I would call 'our experience in achieving a significant change in educational systems'. Change is not often made just by writing something on a page; it usually involves long periods of consultation, communication and negotiation to achieve particular events.

To my mind, these factors aren't exhaustive, but they are matters which have to be taken into account in developing any other development options and they were matters taken into account, by the Government, in deciding to rebuild Reece on the existing site. The matters include a mixture of tangible and intangible factors and certainly require now, and did require then, careful balancing. We have tried to bring out in the paper, especially in relation to the Devonport-Latrobe hypothesis, how some of these factors interplay. I would emphasise at this point too, that the decision the Government made was to rebuild Reece. Other issues, specifically pertaining to questions of size, to design, to focus, were appropriately left for subsequent debate, planning and consultation. I would just like to make the distinction between the two types of decisions.

Had Reece not been the subject of an arson attack, there would have been no question of closing the school and no question of considering possible hypotheses of different school provision in this area. The burning down of the school did present an opportunity to look at alternatives and, indeed, it required such a process, but this process necessarily had to take into account as many of those who have voiced their opinions have not taken into account, a wide range of factors which contribute to the educational outcomes of students and schools.

To my mind schools aren't just buildings, as is often just assumed; they're focal points for communities throughout Tasmania and, equally, students are not a homogenous mass who can merely be distributed where it is most convenient to send them for up to 13 years education. All our experience tells us that there are a wide variety of factors which contribute to successful schools and successful outcomes for students in those schools and that many of these are of relatively intangible nature, and they require careful nurturing and careful management.

In introducing significant educational change in Tasmania we go to very great lengths to ensure that the change is understood and supported by the community. I would point, as an example, to a couple of recent such consultations: one over the review of the inclusion policy where very substantial consultation built over a long period of time, substantial support for that policy, which is nevertheless controversial. I would point also to the curriculum consultation presently under way, which we propose to take between three or four years to actually effect. This is a vital issue; it's an important issue and it's important that everybody - parents, teachers and indeed students - have the capacity to contribute. Our experience is that where that kind of consultation and that kind of negotiation is not done, particularly in respect to an issue as important as the closing of a school and the support and the goodwill of all the key players is not achieved, then the results will likely be disappointing.

To my mind, this is simply too great a risk, in a situation like this, to take with young people's lives; they only go to school once, it's not a dress rehearsal. All the evidence suggests that educational achievement is the most significant arbiter of what I call a 'person's life chances'. We cannot afford, however attractive the window of opportunity, to make decisions about schooling which do not take into account all the factors known to influence the success rates of schools and students. It is for these reasons, not just the financial reasons, that we believe that there are and were no realistic development options other than rebuilding Reece High School.

The Committee sought confirmation from Dr Forrest that each of the issues, mentioned in his submission were taken into consideration prior to the announcement by the Minister for Education that the school would be rebuilt. Dr Forrest responded:

Yes, indeed. The school burned down at one o'clock on the Monday night-Tuesday morning and officers of the department including Mr Barnsley, Mr McIvor and Mr Doe went to the school on Tuesday morning, along with the minister, and there were significant discussions about these matters. These are professional educators and people who had a professional experience in asset building and so on; we have a good

understanding of the buildings available, discussions were held during that day, including the possibility of accommodation at Latrobe, Devonport and Don and of keeping the kids in the primary schools for an additional year or two years and so on, these things were considered.

But to my mind, the more important things were actually an assessment of the intangibles in all of this because you just know on the basis of experience of recently joining schools together in Chigwell to form Mt Faulkner, in Queenstown to form Mountain Heights, in George Town and other places like that, you have to do this with great care over a period of time. To my mind, these were the compelling reasons and they will be backed up by an assessment of people, particularly the people in the asset area, that substantial work would have needed to have been done - say, you took the Devonport-Latrobe hypothesis - at those schools and the capital saving would be nowhere near the difference between zero and the total capital cost of redeveloping Reece. Our estimate is it could have been between \$1 million and \$4 million, but we have to say that that estimate is a very preliminary one because we haven't done the kind of work, but then you add the recurrent costs of transporting and then add in all of the intangibles, and I think this inevitably leads to one conclusion - and, I believe, if you were to ask me today, it would lead to the same conclusion.

The Committee asked the witnesses whether in making the decision to rebuild soon after the fire, was the position of Latrobe High School taken into account and given any real weight. Dr Forrest responded:

... when the officers met on the Tuesday afternoon - I think Mr Barnsley and Mr McIvor were there - they met with the principals of all the surrounding schools, all the feeder primary schools, the college, and presumably other district staff and people like the facility staff from the department and they looked at all the possibilities.

They were looking at it in two ways, as I have indicated in here, initially as how to deal with this problem in the shorter term because it was then 6 December and we had schools opening on 15 February, somewhere around there - I apologise, I don't know the exact date - and we clearly had a very big task to find accommodation for the population of Reece. A number of discussions took place about potential options including all of those schools, particularly those within the Barrington district, and two decisions were made. First, that the shorter-term solution should centre on the Devonport High School because, for a number of reasons, it was a more straightforward option in terms of being in the city. We were able to acquire access to the TAFE Adult Education building and we could lay our hands on a number

of terrapins or movable classrooms from other schools and indeed, a local government in one case, so we knew we could do it there.

There was a prejudice towards doing this because it kept all the kids together; they had been through a fairly traumatic time and their parents had been through a fairly traumatic time with headlines in the paper, if you recall them, and so on, and there is virtue in keeping them together in these circumstances. A whole range of alternatives were considered, including using Don College, the primary schools, and Latrobe, and in the end the decision was made there. But that was an assessment, in a way, about some of the longer-term; the same thinking was necessitated.

... My formal answer to your question would be that consideration was given to Latrobe to other options, even as far as Ulverstone, I think, in the first instance. The question of whether Latrobe has a viable future is, to my mind, a separate question and will not be resolved by any action in Reece. To take the committee's hypothesis further, I think the result of bussing kids from Devonport to Latrobe would be extremely unpopular, would be resisted by parents and we would either have to mandate it with a level of an imperative that we wouldn't employ elsewhere and that, in fact, over a period of time parents would actually stop doing it. What we would then end up with is having, as we've put to you in the model, redeveloped Latrobe and redeveloped Devonport to accommodate these kids and say, roughly, on a 50-50 basis, we will be constantly under pressure to further redevelop Devonport as parents were quite unwilling to send their children to Latrobe and they wanted to keep them in the city. It is a separate question then of, is Latrobe with its present size a viable school, and to my mind it is. We run a great number of schools of that size and that the place to go, given its rural community nature rather than its city nature, would actually be to look at relationships with the primary school in Latrobe and, indeed, with the primary school at Sassafras. If you added those numbers together and looked at a district high school, which is often the solution in Tasmania in small to middle-sized country towns, you would have more than a viable district high school so I think the chances of bringing Latrobe in as a way of succeeding on the Reece question would be very high risk.

The Committee questioned Dr Forrest as to whether any comparison was made with the operating costs per annum of Devonport High as it is now, Latrobe High as it is now and a rebuilt Reece High compared with the annual operating costs if a decision were made not to rebuild Reece High but to accommodate all the students in the area in Devonport High and Latrobe High. Dr Forrest responded:

I don't know that in the course of before the decision was made, but I think that discussion occurred. But, as I would say in response to the question from Mr Harriss earlier on, these kinds of details are known to the staff because the overwhelming driver of the recurring costs of running a school is the number of students. So, so many of the factors are related.

All the factors to do with teaching, all the factors to do with teaching support, administrative staff, all the factors to do with the provision of computers and with school resource package are all student driven. They are the overwhelmingly large proportion of the recurrent cost. If you have that in two schools or three schools, the drivers are fundamentally the same. Yes, I would accept that, depending on their architectural configuration, some schools are more expensive than others but compared to the costs that are driven by enrolments, which in aggregate are the same wherever the kids go, they pale in comparison.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In evaluating the merits of this project, very careful consideration was given by the Committee to the understandable concerns of those associated with Latrobe High School about the likely disparity in physical conditions at a new state of the art Reece High School as compared with the older facilities at Latrobe High School.

The weight of the evidence given to the Committee at Devonport by representatives of the Education Department was that such factors would be countered by the quality of the programs conducted at Latrobe High School, rather than the physical conditions there.

The apprehensions of the Principal of Latrobe High School, Mr Rob Hart, that some students and their families would wish to transfer from Latrobe High School to the far better facilities at a rebuilt Reece High School is understood.

As the Committee was informed that the maximum capacity of a rebuilt Reece High School would be 600 students, with the enrolment at the time of the fire being 570 students, it is felt that this will prevent any mass exodus of students from Latrobe High School to the new Reece High School, despite any widespread desire which Latrobe High School students or their families may have.

The Committee understands that there may well be feelings at Latrobe High School and other schools in and near Devonport that the other schools are disadvantaged by comparison with the facilities to be provided at the new Reece High School. It is to be hoped that this matter will be addressed as effectively as possible.

Having regard to all the circumstances, The Committee is of the view that Reece High School should be rebuilt on the existing site and accordingly, the Committee recommends the project, in accordance with the plans and specifications submitted, at an estimated total cost of \$10,000,000.

**Parliament House
HOBART
5 September 2001**

**Hon. D. G. Wing M.L.C.
Chairman**