2026 (No. 70)

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Redevelopment of East Derwent Primary School

Presented to the Clerk of the House of Assembly in accordance with House of Assembly Sessional Order 321.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council	House of Assembly
Ms *Rattray (Deputy Chair)*	Ms *Butler (Chair)*
Mr *Hiscutt*	Ms *Burnet*
	Mr *Shelton*

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Committee has the honour to report to the House of Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914* and House of Assembly Sessional Order 321 on the -

Redevelopment of East Derwent Primary School

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 This reference recommended the Committee approve redevelopment works at the Jordan River Learning Federation (JRLF) East Derwent Primary School (EDPS) to remove demountable buildings, provide contemporary learning areas, a new reception and administration area, improved staff areas, additional carparking and improvements to outdoor learning areas.

2.2 The school caters for students residing within the Brighton local government area. The school is part of the JRLF which are the local public schools that work together for enhanced educational outcomes for the community. The JRLF also includes the Gagebrook and Herdsmans Cove Primary Schools and the JRLF Senior School.

2.3 The JRLF EDPS was originally established as the Green Point Primary School in 1978. Following the destruction by fire of the former Bridgewater High School in October 2007, the students and staff of Bridgewater Primary School were moved to the Green Point Primary School site so the high school could temporarily operate from the Bridgewater Primary School buildings. To accommodate the additional students and staff several demountable buildings were erected at the Green Point site.

2.4 At that time the Premier's Bridgewater and Southern Midlands Education Renewal Taskforce recommended the building of a new high school to replace the former Bridgewater High School and the establishment of the Jordan River Learning Federation. Subsequently, the Bridgewater and Green Point Primary Schools merged to become the East Derwent Primary School within the JRLF.

2.5 There are several identified issues with the current school design and infrastructure. These include:

- Seven ageing demountable buildings are still used as classrooms;
- A non-cohesive site layout, with limited sightlines and dispersed buildings, which results in a lack of connectivity between learning areas, support spaces and administration, and also creates challenges for passive supervision and student safety;
- The lack of a clear, welcoming entry and administration area;
- Ageing building services infrastructure which is no longer serviceable without major investment;

- Existing staff, student support and amenity spaces do not adequately support the needs of the school's high proportion of students with disability and First Nations students.

2.6 In 2024, the Tasmanian Government made an election commitment to provide $12 million for the redevelopment of the JRLF EDPS and assessed by DECYP as a Priority One school for capital redevelopment. Priority One schools having the most urgent infrastructure upgrade needs.

2.7 The redevelopment is designed to address the deficiencies identified above and will include the following proposed works:

- Removal of demountable buildings and rationalisation of the campus layout into a more cohesive and legible configuration;
- Construction of three new contemporary general learning areas (GLAs) with breakout areas and strong indoor–outdoor connections;
- Conversion of existing building areas to provide GLAs to maintain the enrolment capacity;
- A new reception and administration area providing a clear, welcoming front of school presence and improved visibility and security;
- Improved staff facilities, student support spaces, leadership offices and meeting rooms located together and near learning spaces;
- New and dispersed student bathroom facilities aligned with DECYP safer student bathroom standards;
- A new kitchen and dining room to support wellbeing programs;
- Upgrades to key services infrastructure, including fire detection, electrical distribution and associated compliance works; and
- Improvements to outdoor learning, play and regulation spaces to strengthen connections to the outdoors and support student wellbeing.

3 PROJECT COSTS

3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is $12 million.

The following table and explanatory material detail the current cost estimates for the project:

DESCRIPTION	***COST ESTIMATE ($'000)***
Construction Cost (inc. site infrastructure upgrades)	*9,011*
Includes: *Market Conditions and Escalation Forecast ($725,000)* *Construction Contingency included above ($825,000)*	
Consultant Services	*921*
Statutory Fees / Insurances	*206*
Furniture/Equipment/IT	*500*
Tasmanian Government Art Scheme	*80*
DECYP Project Management	*360*
School Administration Support	*60*
Design and Infrastructure Contingency	*750*
General Project and Post Occupancy Contingency	*112*
Total	***12,000***

...

The total budget estimate summarised above includes workable allowances for escalation and design and construction contingencies to manage unforeseen circumstances. Site infrastructure service upgrades are included in the construction cost estimate.

Budget allowances include a construction contingency of $825,000 and a project contingency of $725,000. If escalation risks are realised and rising costs exceeded the reserve contingencies, the PWG would be consulted for suitable project scope reduction.

The project budget currently allows for a total project contingency of $2.412 million made up of the following elements:

- *Market conditions and escalation forecast $725,000*
- *Construction contingency $825,000*
- *Design and infrastructure contingency $750,000*
- *General and post occupancy contingency $112,000*[1]

[1] *JRLF East Derwent Primary School – Major Redevelopment*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, p. 12

4 EVIDENCE

4.1 The Committee commenced its inquiry on Tuesday, 4 August 2026 with an inspection of the site of the proposed works. The Committee then returned to Committee Room 1, parliament House, where the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:-

- Kane Salter, Deputy Secretary Business Operations and Support, Department for Education, Children and Young People;
- Min Harman, Deputy Director Infrastructure Delivery, Department for Education, Children and Young People;
- Ted Barrance, Principal East Derwent Primary School, Department for Education, Children and Young People; and
- Marino Rossi, Director, Thomson Rossi Architects.

The following Committee Members were present:

- Ms Jen Butler MP (Chair);
- Hon Tania Rattray MLC (Deputy Chair);
- Ms Helen Burnet MP;
- Hon Casey Hiscutt MLC; and
- Mr Mark Shelton MP.

Need for and Benefits of the Redevelopment

4.2 The DECYP submission highlighted the need for, and the expected benefits of, the proposed works:

> *There are several issues at the JRLF EDPS that the redevelopment will address:*
>
> - *Seven classrooms provided in ageing demountable buildings.*
> - *A fragmented site layout and poor connectivity between learning areas, support spaces and administration.*
> - *Existing administration facilities lack a clearly identifiable and welcoming entry foyer, limiting visibility, security and engagement with families and community.*
> - *Limited sightlines and dispersed buildings creating challenges for passive supervision, student safety and campus cohesion.*
> - *Existing building services infrastructure, including fire detection, switchboards and electrical distribution, is ageing and no longer serviceable in the long term without major investment.*
> - *Staff, student support and amenity spaces are insufficient for a school with high proportions of students with disability (33%) and First Nations students (44%).*
>
> *The proposed redevelopment will support the effective operation of JRLF EDPS with improved campus connectivity, supervision, contemporary learning environments and support facilities.*

The proposed works will deliver safe, inclusive and contemporary learning environments consistent with DECYP strategic priorities and the DECYP Built Environment Guide (BEG).[2]

…

JRLF EDPS is grounded in an inclusive, strengths-based philosophy that recognises every child as a capable learner and places relationships, wellbeing and belonging at the centre of learning. Strong connections with families and community are integral to the school's identity, reflected through early years programs, family learning partnerships, and a culture of openness and collaboration. These approaches foster trust, promote engagement, and support continuity of learning from early childhood through the primary years.

The proposed capital works will strengthen this philosophy by creating a more welcoming, legible and connected school environment. A clearly defined front entry, integrated community and administrative spaces, and improved accessibility across the site will make the school more inviting and easier to navigate for students, families and community partners. By embedding culturally responsive spaces and applying clear zoning for public, privileged and private areas, the proposed capital works supports inclusion, safeguarding and community connection, directly contributing to improved student wellbeing and engagement.

…

Teaching and learning at JRLF EDPS are grounded in contemporary, student-centred practice aligned with the DECYP Pedagogical Framework … Staff actively utilise collaboration, differentiation and inclusive approaches, including flexible grouping, targeted interventions and regulation support, to meet students' academic, wellbeing and regulatory needs. These practices require environments that enable whole-class instruction, small-group learning, collaboration, intervention, and quiet regulation, current learning areas restrict the full enactment of these practices.

The proposed capital works directly addresses these challenges by delivering contemporary, flexible learning environments designed to enable these pedagogical approaches at scale. Open and interconnected general learning areas (GLAs), supported by breakout spaces, intervention rooms, staff collaboration areas and purpose-built quiet regulation settings, will facilitate team teaching, personalised learning and the effective implementation of differentiated supports. Flexible furniture, improved acoustics and access to natural light will enhance student agency, engagement and wellbeing, while strong indoor–outdoor connections will expand opportunities for experiential, culturally responsive and play-based learning. Collectively, the project ensures the built environment actively supports inclusive, innovative and consistent teaching practice, leading to improved learning outcomes for all students.[3]

…

The proposed JRLF EDPS redevelopment is a strategic response to the many challenges of providing high-quality contemporary learning opportunities in an ageing and disconnected campus.

…

[2] *JRLF East Derwent Primary School – Major Redevelopment*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, pp. 4-5

[3] *JRLF East Derwent Primary School – Major Redevelopment*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, p. 6

The project represents value for money as it will overcome the identified shortcomings of the campus and achieve a range of high-quality contemporary learning settings not presently possible.[4]

4.3 The Committee asked the witnesses about the current state of school infrastructure and the school environment. The witnesses reflected that the poor condition of the infrastructure and aspects of the built environment negatively affected the school community and adversely affected perceptions of the school. The witnesses noted that this made it difficult to create a welcoming environment or sense of belonging and did little to foster a positive attitude to learning. The witnesses emphasised the proposed redevelopment was an important measure to address these issues and to provide a welcoming environment for students, their families and the community:

CHAIR *- ...if you can explain to us the current state of the school, insofar as some of the negative aspects of the actual East Derwent Primary School at the moment...*

Mr SALTER *- Happy if Ted wants to talk to the specifics; I mean, you did also see the demountables which are a key aspect, to be getting rid of those and getting into contemporary learning facilities, but I'm happy for the team to talk broadly.*

Mr BARRANCE - *So, as you saw this morning, you walk around the site, and while there has been investment in the furniture and how the school is looking, the actual infrastructure around is pretty poor quality. As you saw, the leaks in the classroom, the small classrooms, the bars on the windows as responses to vandalism years ago and just the ageing infrastructure as well, with very minimal investment in capital works over the time. You saw a small glimpse of what that could do, but overall the site hasn't had much of an impact at all.*

Due to the weather, we didn't get out to the basketball courts and the other landscape too much, but that's in the same sort of state as well. And, while we do have great grounds and an EFFAR team [School Support and Wellbeing Team] making the school as best it can, it's an ongoing sink of costs at the moment trying to keep up a modern learning environment as well, which is really trying to be respectful around the community, around being able to provide a sense of belonging within the school - it's quite hard in that ageing infrastructure as well.

You saw the fences that were right up in front of classrooms as you walk into the school and that welcoming environment as you try and come into the school, it's not there. So, in terms of the community to feel like they have a sense of belonging and know what this school's about, it's really hard to demonstrate that and, as Marino pointed out and Dr Alterator said as well, the teaching and learning in the classroom is fantastic and we have an amazing teaching team, we need this infrastructure to reflect that as well.

CHAIR *- Can you speak to the difference that this new design would provide as opposed to the current site when it comes to that changing attitude to learning and culture building? How will this design or this new design or the proposed design better... reflect the school community?*

Mr BARRANCE *- Yeah, and that's one of the big ones in the last few years, around bringing that school community together because it has felt, in the past, that it's been quite disparate and that there wasn't that connection with the school. So, how have we focused on the First Nations families within the school, almost half of our families are recognised as First Nations, so how do we involve the community? How does our school reflect that? And a big part of that*

[4] *JRLF East Derwent Primary School – Major Redevelopment*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, p. 15

is a sense of belonging. So, transforming the way that you enter the school, that it draws you into the school as well. Also, it's quite disconnected with the cultural hub, the big river room and the kindergarten area is. So, being able to draw that closer and so, I think it's a really clever design in terms of drawing it all under one roofline as well, as much as possible, and trying to connect that kindergarten as much as well, because it does feel like there is a barrier there, over those grounds.

The way that Thomson Rossi have designed and worked with the classroom teachers around what are the needs for the students in the learning hubs or the learning commons outside the classroom, how do we best utilise those different spaces and maximise those spaces across the school, so it's not just a stark corridor for kids to run up and down. How do we make sure that they're really intentional and really purposeful around student learning and making those sort of communities in there?

***CHAIR** - ...I noticed that some of the classrooms today - or the older classrooms today - are quite dark and the newer areas that had been refurbed had - were quite light. Is the new design going to be quite light and that natural setting style? Is that part of that learning culture?*

***Mr BARRANCE -** So, that's part of that, and we've worked with Thomson Rossi around that and their experience in designing these spaces to have those environmental impacts as well, around the light and the warmth as well, so it's not such a cold environment as a school because - and so making those changes and learning from what we did in a little bit to increase the natural light across the school for the students and for teachers as well. And so, thinking about the wellbeing, staff wellbeing, student wellbeing as well throughout the day.*[5]

...

***Ms BURNET** - ... we've talked a bit about the value of the build, and there are a lot of inherent values, but then there's the harder things to measure. It might be good to hear from you, Marino, in regard to that and building for this community in particular.*

...

***Mr ROSSI** - I guess a simple start to get to answering your question is: you would have noticed when you arrived today there was some car parking spaces that had been gratefully left open for you to park in so you could just drive in, but once you step out of there, you're walking past the fence, up a pathway to a fairly nondescript building. It's hardly a welcoming gesture for a community.*

We looked at changing that physical barrier by addressing that because the brief we were given was very much centred on reconnecting with the community and in order to do that, we worked very closely with the school at actually changing the physical approach to the school.

You have a safe drop-off/pick-up point, you can do that safely, and then you walk through a well-developed, welcoming soft landscape into a welcoming reception point. From there you're guided to the rest of the school. There's a series of walkways that connect the early years and other years, so it's all interconnected.

[5] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 2-3.

That community building - from an aspiration, we take and build a physical transformation from that. So, that's a very significant part of the brief, as well as the student agency, which I'm happy to talk about if you want to go there as well.

***CHAIR** - Please, elaborate on this.*

***Mr ROSSI** - Yes, so I think what we're talking about, as Ted alluded to, we had fairly intensive workshops with the staff around how they operated, how the teaching staff work with kids, and we actually had an education specialist spend a whole day at the school observing that pattern of behaviour, and how the kids learn, effectively.*

As Ted mentioned, the work that's going on in the current classrooms is fabulous from a learning point of view. So, the brief - what we do as design specialists, is look at student agency: how do we provide opportunities for kids to learn in different ways? So, if they're not engaging perhaps as best they could in a classroom with 20 other kids, what are the opportunities for taking that child out, or this small group of children out, to a support space nearby, where they can take one-on-one learning directly with the teacher? How do we provide that agency, spatially, within the existing parameters of the school? That drives the whole approach about making sure, or doing as much as we could, to transform the existing infrastructure. Not abandoning it, not saying, 'Here are "haves" and the "have-nots"'. How do we transform the whole school so no matter where those children are, they get the benefit of the transformation. So, that's the nutshell of the approach, if you like. [6]

...

***Mr BARRANCE** - ...with the change of the welcoming environment to the front of the school, parents are drawn in, students are drawn in through that front area, through a much nicer welcome, a really clear understanding of how they're going to come into the school, parents are the same as well, and so, you come past the cultural hub, which - we didn't get into the Big River Room today, but that that has been incorporated into there as a specialist space as well, next to the kitchen and that will be able to open up with the kitchen space as well.*

The act of the families coming through there and having spaces to sit within the school is something that we're sorely missing at the moment. At the moment, at the front of the school, at pick-up time, the parents all sit behind a fence and they're kind of waiting in the car park. So, if they've got kids, little kids and stuff, they're hanging out the front of the school there. So, being able to have those spaces, their outdoor eating spaces, the kitchen garden spaces and that connection there with the family, with the school, the families can come and utilise those different areas, and that goes to the safety and security staff as well at the end of the day, at drop off and pick-up. The kids are not just running through a car park and going through there. So, really trying to create that heart of the school and that drawing in for the community as well. [7]

...

[6] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 6-7
[7] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 11

***Ms BURNET** - I think it came out quite clearly in the public consultation that safety - a safe space and a welcoming space was something that was really important, and we've talked quite a lot about the welcoming space. Is there anything more that - those sort of elements of that are desirable for the community that are embedded in design?*

***Mr ROSSI** - The balance to the idea of welcoming, which we've gone hard to achieve, the balance to that is lingering: the ability for parents to linger and feel like they can linger in an appropriately designed outdoor area or an area close to the dining spaces, particularly, let's say for a weekend event, so you can actually have an entertaining type of element to it. The ability to linger and feel like a parent can linger and enjoy the environment and talk to other parents about their kid's progress, is a fundamental next step to the idea of welcoming them in. That's the way we've approached it.*[8]

4.4 The Committee understood that, despite the recognised issues with the school's infrastructure and built environment, community attitudes towards the school had gradually improved and asked the witnesses to explain what had driven this change. The witnesses provided detail on how engagement with parents and the community more broadly had improved, and how the redevelopment would build on this:

***Ms RATTRAY** - ...I'm just interested in having some understanding of the change of the community attitude towards the school. And I know that we spoke onsite and you showed us the bars on the windows and that, and yet there aren't bars on windows in the new areas that are designed in this design. Can you give me some indication of how that community attitude has changed and we won't need to see bars on windows?*

***Mr BARRANCE** - I think the security is always with every site around the state, security is an issue no matter which community you're in. Being able to provide a safe environment for the students is always key. Looking at, as well around the CCTV, upgrading our CCTV across the sites, and also our speaker setup as well because there's some areas that that doesn't get to, so being able to be having that communication across the site as well.*

A number of years ago, we didn't have a school association, and we didn't have a really good connection with our parents. I've been able to build that over the last few years and build that confidence with the parents around that it's their school. We're not trying to keep our parents out. The design now reflects that as well, and sort of draws people into that heart of the school. We feel that with the input from the community and also from where they want a place to be and a place that they feel proud of, as well, that the design elements that we've worked through with staff, with families, with students as well. And the landscaping needs have really captured that.

***Ms RATTRAY** - Right. Effectively the broader community will call out bad behaviour because they have some ownership now.*

***Mr BARRANCE** - Yes, absolutely, and we've formed really strong partnerships with Brighton Council and Tagar Lia, the community house as well. People are talking about the school in a really positive light, which is really good, and we welcome the feedback. If there's things that we can improve or change, we're happy to address those. We really want to make sure that it is a community-feeling school.* [9]

[8] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 16.
[9] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 3-4.

Consultation

4.5 The DECYP submission described the focus of community consultation on the project, and how the feedback received had been reflected in the scope of the proposed works:

> *An Education Brief was prepared for the project and informed by DECYP's Get Involved consultation process. The key educational themes informing the strategies for the proposed works plan include:*
>
> - *Proximity and Flow: clear spatial relationships between Early Years, learning hubs, support services and community-facing spaces.*
> - *Transitions: improved corridors, reduced bottlenecks, enhanced sightlines, natural light and low-stimulation finishes.*
> - *Community and Identity: a welcoming and legible front-of-school entry supporting family and community engagement.*
> - *Support and Inclusion: student support spaces located near administration and learning areas to improve access and collaboration.*
> - *Learning Environments: flexible zoning, strong indoor–outdoor connections, storage, regulation and small-group learning spaces.*[10]
>
> *…*
>
> *DECYP undertakes extensive community engagement for all major capital works projects and initiated community consultation in February and March 2025 for this project. The purpose of the consultation process was to generate awareness and seek feedback from the school and the community on the draft site master plan to inform the development scope of works for the JRLF EDPS redevelopment. Feedback informed the prioritisation of removing demountables, improving campus connectivity, upgrading administration, and enhancing outdoor spaces.*[11]

4.6 The Committee was aware the school had a large cohort of indigenous children and was interested in what consultation had been undertaken with the local Aboriginal community and how this this had influenced the redevelopment:

> ***CHAIR*** *– …If you can talk us through the consultation that you have undertaken, at the moment you have the Big River space, so the consultation with the local Tasmanian Aboriginal community, you obviously have a lot of interactions or engagement with Tagari lia - fabulous centre, by the way - can you run through how that has informed some of the design principles, especially within this landscape area?*
>
> ***Mr ROSSI*** *- When we received a brief, we noted the high percentage of indigenous children in the school, which is really high. We saw that as an important issue to address right from day one, so we engaged an education specialist, Dr Alterator, who also happened to be an Indigenous man. The reason we engaged him was because I had worked with him before and understood how he approached these things. One of the key things he brought to the team was he was not interested in token efforts. Painting an Indigenous mural on a wall was not enough to say 'Oh, we've addressed all the indigenous issues here; they'll feel welcome'. That's not enough. We actually went into a lot of detail particularly around understanding how the Big River Room worked and also transferring that, bringing it into the school itself. So it's not*

[10] *JRLF East Derwent Primary School – Major Redevelopment*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, p. 4

[11] *JRLF East Derwent Primary School – Major Redevelopment*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, p. 4

just a standalone sorry-looking building in the corner. But also a lot of attention around the fact that the kids who undertake activities there set them up and they're there for quite a while, several weeks, so it's not, 'Let's do something and pack it away'. They engage with that for long periods of time. So, for example, designing the joinery so they could display their work in an appropriate way was really important, the type of carpet they sat on, the pattern of the carpet, the pattern of the ceiling, and most importantly of all, the connection to the outside, that direct connection, which perhaps you might talk about, Ted, is the proximity of the yarning circle, but also the way the landscape was structured. That's how we got to the where we got to.

***Mr BARRANCE** - We have the privilege of having an Aboriginal education worker with us, Corey, four days a week and he's working with the neighbouring school as well, so building up the program there and building up the connections with the local community. We also have a proud First Nations kindergarten teacher, Liz, she runs a specialist First Nations for prep to 2 on a Friday. That's been absolutely essential for our students to build that respect for all students across the school community. With their input and with the student input, we're able to talk about what impact can we have on our school environment, on our community environment, our local area and also wider Tasmania as well. So, with the partnership with Connected Beginnings and Tagari lia and with the local council, Brighton Council, as well, so working on the school site, but also taking it off to Green Point, the reserve out there as well, which has been an amazing space for our students to develop their skills and knowledge around the lands around there.*

Incorporating that, that came really strong, when Miriam did a student consultation around acknowledging the bush tucker around there, and the yarning circle, and how we use those within the classes; also around - you will see around the back of the oval, there's a trail around there which would incorporate the plantings and things of the local area so classes can run different activities and things across there, working with the cultural group, the older students in grade 5 and 6 on interpreting those spaces as well, which will become really important for us; but also that it's not static as well. It's a cultural hub. We do have our First Nations families, but also understand that we've got a migrant community that is growing within the community as well. So, how do they feel that they've got a sense of belonging, as well as First Nations families and the rest of the community as well, how do we create that sense of belonging for all members of our community?[12]

School Capacity

4.7 The Committee questioned the DECYP witnesses about the school's capacity prior to and post the redevelopment, and how the proposed works represented value for money given projected future enrolment numbers. The DECYP witnesses provided further detail on capacity, noting the value did not just lie in capacity and enrolment numbers but in how the works enabled the school to improve its overall learning environment, and the impact this has on student learning:

***Mr HISCUTT** - This is just regarding the enrolment and capacity and what this change effects. Our role is to look at the value for money, and I guess that's across being spent here or elsewhere as an option. I just wanted to ask, because there's obviously a change in where the GLAs sit, removing the demountables, but looking at the projected numbers and the current numbers, if the three new GLAs were not to be built, and averaging, we've discussed before, about 25 per class is a capacity reasonable assumption, that would put the capacity to 375. Currently, that still sits at only 82 per cent if you didn't build those and in the future projections potentially only 77 per cent of capacity.*

[12] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 13-14.

The question I wanted to ask is:

A. *What would be the reduced cost if those three new GLAs were not built?*

B. *What would the impact be on learning if they were not built?*

…

***Mr SALTER** -… Firstly, I would say with the enrolment figures that are in the document, that the kindergarten figures for 2026 and going forward aren't a headcount; they're an FTE, so that is an error on our behalf. They should be a headcount, so that's understated the numbers slightly, so they will be more consistent with the high 30s to 40 figures.*

In terms of what's the right balance in terms of capacity. Firstly, the model across all schools provides a generic indication of capacity utilisation. When schools get to sort-of the 80 to 85 per cent, we think that's too close to that 100 per cent. The figure of sort of 65 to 70 per cent is probably a really good balance of assets that are being utilised; it creates extra space for areas like arts et cetera. Ted outlined in terms of the breakup of students with disability - it provides some flexibility for support areas. It also then provides a little bit of contingency should there be increases in enrolment numbers down the track that not having to go straight to adding in new rooms.

Broadly, I would say that 65 to 70 per cent is probably a good balance for capacity and providing flexibility in learning options.

***Mr HISCUTT** - … I guess when we're looking at value for money, there are schools that we know that are closer to 100 per cent and we're spending money…. on a school that's not reaching that level yet, and so I guess it's finding that value for money when we know there are schools above that as well.*

***Mr SALTER** - In terms of the specific question on what the cost would be of those GLAs if they weren't proceeded with.*

***Ms HARMAN** - Yes, it's in the order of $1.6 million for the three new areas approximately. It's a bit hard to specify out on its own, though, because there's so much other redevelopment and reuse of areas through it.*

…

***Mr SALTER** - In terms of broader capacity issues, then, we do go through the annual process of ranking priority 1 sites. Sites particularly with capacity issues, are in that priority 1 space.*

We remain comfortable that the funds allocated and the way that they're being utilised are providing excellent value for the school in terms of how it wants to build on its learning, when we heard how they've got good staff retention. Having good environments can only enhance the staff retention. We don't think it is, if you like, overcooking this project at the expense of others. Ted Marino is also, as you saw, looking to maximise how the funds are used in all parts of the school, so there isn't just one part that is done well and the rest isn't seen to have some of the refurbishments done to it. [13]

Campus Layout and the Impact on Safety

4.8 The Committee recognised the non-cohesive nature of the school's layout presented challenges related to sightlines and passive surveillance and therefore

[13] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 4-6.

potentially compromised student and staff safety. The Committee sought to understand how the redevelopment would improve campus cohesiveness and how this would improve visibility and safety outcomes for students and staff:

> ***Mr SHELTON*** *- …One thing I did get out of this morning was the fact that safety is an issue, and with the terrapin arrangement, where you've got primary school children leaving the main confines of the main building, and then heading out, and the supervision of that for the teachers is fairly difficult. So, if you could just explain that a little bit to whoever might be listening to this, because I think that's important when you come down to talking about eight- and 10-year-old kids -*
>
> *…and as you've talked about this afternoon, it is critically important to the community to have a safe environment for the children.*
>
> ***Mr BARRANCE*** *- Yes, absolutely, and as you saw there's fences up around cornering off different areas. There's blind spots around the whole school as well. So, when you've got teachers on yard duty, and duty during break-time there's little areas for hiding, and things like that, as people walk through, and for students to run around and run away from them, out of seeing eyes. So, really try - with the way that we worked with Playstreet, and Thomson Rossi around the landscaping as well, is really trying to make sure that that landscaping took into consideration the security areas, like where fences took into place by creating these natural barriers, or the transition zones, as Miriam likes to put it, in terms of not having the physical barrier, but having ways of students being able to play in different spots. So, the nature play area, the playground spaces, the court spaces as well. Just really trying to maximise that sort of space across there. Also with the fences at the front of the school, right in your face, it feels a sense of enclosure across the site as well. So yes, really trying to open that type of thing up as well.*[14]
>
> *…*
>
> ***CHAIR*** *- …As with a lot of primary schools around Tasmania, they may be subject to lockdowns from time to time. Can you speak to how the design - it will still be a safe place to lock down from time to time?*
>
> ***Mr BARRANCE*** *- I can talk about that. Currently, with the outbuildings and students being out in different areas of the school, it's quite tricky to track if there is an emergency situation. As you've seen, there's lots of gates around and things as well. So, being able to be under the one sort of roofline in the one building, it's easier for us to keep that secure and thinking about all the doors. The external doors will be magnetically locked, a new locking system across the school. That will increase the safety as well around how we're making sure our kids are all safe across there.*
>
> ***CHAIR*** *- Brilliant. That new front entrance area will probably be safer as well for office and admin staff.*
>
> ***Mr BARRANCE*** *- Yes.*
>
> ***Mr ROSSI*** *- You can see an airlock indicated there. The school will have control over the locking of the airlock. It can be a free airlock or there could be a secure point once people are cleared to go through. This whole idea around security for schools has been heightened in the last few years through a movement called trauma-informed design, and it has been generated through*

[14] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 8.

unfortunate circumstances in the US where, as you would all be aware - and that's something we definitely want to avoid happening here. I think the measures that Ted has just talked about, backed up by things, certainly advances around CCTV, are really, really important passive security measures.[15]

Improving Accessibility and Learning Opportunities for Children with Special Needs

4.9 The Committee was aware the school had a high proportion of students with special needs, and understood the fragmented layout presented both accessibility and learning challenges. The Committee inquired about what was being planned to make the school more accessible and to improve learning opportunities for children with special needs:

> ***CHAIR*** *- Also on page 7, under proposed works, you have staff, student support and amenity spaces are insufficient for a school with high proportions of students with a disability, 33 per cent, and First Nations students at 44 per cent. Can you speak to us about accessibility within the design and how the design will better improve learning opportunities for students with a disability and also for their carers as well.*
>
> *...*
>
> ***Mr ROSSI -*** *...As part of the process of developing a new front entry to the school and new administration point, there are a new series of compliant ramp entry pathways that take a visitor right through to the school. We've looked closely at once they've passed that point, making sure that all the spaces within the school are fully accessible, but probably one of the significant advantages in amenity is the redesigned student toilets. They will be fully compliant and also adopt best practice around design measures to eliminate bullying. So, they are fully supervised in terms of the wash areas; they have individual compartments. So, again, it limits opportunities for bullying, and there are also changing-place facilities, ambulant facilities. So, it does cover the wide range of disabilities that kids may possess when they're attending school. So, they're probably the significant points in terms of the overall upgrade, bringing it all up to code in terms of access and amenities.*
>
> ***CHAIR*** *- Can you speak to any aspects of the proposed design which would enhance learning opportunities for students who are neurodivergent. I believe there's a number of students at the school on different levels of neurodivergence and would that be acoustics or lighting? Could you speak to that?*
>
> ***Mr ROSSI -*** *Yes, sure. There's probably two levels I can talk to there; one is the availability of the Zen den and also in the engine room, which are specific spaces designed to either calm or elevate children, and they are specific environments. So, one's quite vibrant, one's much more relaxing. So, it allows children to self-regulate if they need to be taken out of a classroom context and self-regulate to a point where they're more comfortable to join the main cohort but overall, there's been a significant amount of attention paid.*
>
> *Because this is effectively an internal transformation, the majority of it, a lot of attention is paid to the types of materials, the colours, natural tones and definitely acoustics, the provision of acoustic baffles as supplementary sound absorption to ceilings, et cetera, because they are significant points to reduce the amount of noise being generated and you would have seen, as you walked through, I mentioned at the time, the long corridor with the hard surfaces all the way through, all the sound reverberates right through the whole school. We're looking to*

[15] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 15.

really break that barrier down and make it much more welcoming and much more suitable for neurodiverse environments.[16]

Relocation of the School Library

4.10 The Committee had earlier toured the school and had noticed the current library seemed very functional. The Committee asked the DECYP witnesses what had driven the decision to move the library and use that space for GLAs

> ***Mr HISCUTT*** *- ... I'm sure there are some very reasonable design reasons why not, but I just noticed that the library space that we entered was quite amenable. It was quite nice, warm and inviting - and noting the brilliant idea of buying furniture and things that can be relocated - but I wondered about the need to relocate. It seems like we're moving the library to a space that potentially could have accommodated the two GLAs anyway and we're moving to move something in whereas opposed to just adding those two GLAs to that current space where the library is going to move to. Could just get some thoughts into why that was not possible or if that was considered.*
>
> ***Mr ROSSI*** *- The main reason we looked at converting the existing library to two GLAs is that it actually assists with the cluster of the year group levels in that area of the school. It's important that we work through a transition from early years junior and senior. That worked really well in terms of that point of view, but also the floor area was conducive to two new GLAs. If you look at the floor area, if we were to try to do the same thing to the library, we'd have to actually demolish a lot of the surrounding offices for that to happen.*
>
> *Having said that, we have taken a lot of effort to, as I mentioned, undertake a refurbishment of the library space to bring that warmth in because it's not that now because it's not a library. There will be that reintroduction of new finishes to bring the warmth in and importantly, the connection to - we're trying to make the most of the internal courtyards as spaces to look out onto in terms of bringing natural light into what is a deep plan and bringing natural light and views out to natural landscaping, et cetera. That's part and parcel of the library transformation as well. The overriding principle was to get the year-level groups to work in one particular area.*

Removal of Corridors

4.11 The Committee asked the DECYP witnesses to explain the reasoning behind the removal of corridors in the design and the benefits this provides:

> ***Mr HISCUTT*** *- We had a discussion at the North West Support School about definition of space. They had moved to corridors that make it known that that's a transition space, versus classrooms which are defined as learning spaces. In this scenario we've got the removal of corridors and, I guess, the lessening of the identity between what's a transition space and what's a classroom space. I just wonder if you could talk to that, and I guess - recognising that they're very different scenarios, but why that's necessary and how that will help?*
>
> ***Mr ROSSI -*** *Yes. So, there are still elements of the corridor left simply because we have to keep them and they are the main circulation point, but I guess what we're getting at is that in terms of transition, we're now - rather than, say, walking through a pair of double doors, you actually were walking into the learning commons. The way that learning commons is furnished and the way the finishes that are used, gives us an ambience, and that's tied very close to the year levels that are working within those learning commons.*

[16] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 10-11.

If you like, it's like a mini village. You're walking from one village to another village. There's a sense between the kids that they are actually transitioning from one space to another. There's a certain level of recognising that it is a learning space. They're not in a corridor anymore. They're getting to where they need to be, so, they're walking into a learning space and adapting to the behaviour that comes with that, because they will be seen, you know, it's a very - that passive supervision is there, the teachers can see what's going on because they have view across all the common spaces. It's basically providing these nodes that break down the typical institutional connotations that go with a corridor. So that's the reasoning behind it. [17]

Project Timeline and Staging of Works

4.12 The Committee questioned the DECYP witnesses on how the works would be staged, and how they would be managed to minimise any disruption to school operations:

> ***Ms RATTRAY*** *- ...I'm just interested in managing the disturbance at the school should this project proceed to build. Can you give me some understanding of how you might manage that, because whether it's 450 or 300 students, it just takes a bit of managing.*
>
> ***Mr ROSSI -*** *I'm happy to answer that question. We actually, as a matter of fact, had a session on this yesterday with the school. It does rely on a staged approach. So, we will be looking very closely at defining, in this case, probably three to four separate stages of work that would roll through the school. Those stages are determined with the school in terms of making sure they have enough GLAs to actually function while other areas are being decommissioned, with appropriate hoarding and safety measures put in place so builders can access and complete stages as they go through and work their way around the school site. There will come a point where some of the GLAs will have to be accessed externally, which they have access already, but that will become the primary point of access for a short period of time; but I think we're getting to a point where, again, working with their curriculum, make sure they can deliver their curriculum during the year whilst the works are being undertaken in a safe way.*
>
> ***Ms RATTRAY*** *- You don't see any issues?*
>
> ***Mr ROSSI -*** *No. No, as long as it's thoroughly planned and also thoroughly communicated in the tender documentation so the builder is fully aware that there is a requirement they will need to stage the works and -*
>
> ***Ms RATTRAY*** *- Right. So, it will be one tender, though?*
>
> ***Mr ROSSI -*** *Yes.*
>
> *...*
>
> ***Mr SALTER -*** *One tender, and in the tender responses, whilst there's guidance around the staging, they're also asked to submit how they will plan for and meet staging requirements.*[18]
>
> *...*

[17] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 15.
[18] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 9-10.

CHAIR *- … Do you think this timeline is realistic in front of us? Do you intend to do a fair bit of work in school holiday periods?*

Mr ROSSI *- Yes, we would. That was also part of the staging discussion yesterday. So, there will be some elements of the works, whether it be particularly noisy, or involve dust, or whatever, we might defer to school breaks that give the trades much more access. So yes, we would look to utilise certainly those breaks. The builders will work right through.*

CHAIR - *Have you considered, within the costs, I suppose, as well, securing that site as well, during that construction period?*

Mr ROSSI *- Part of the methodology in identifying the staging in the tender documents to the builder is that they must make dual allowance for appropriate hoarding of those stages to occur. Ultimately, because they take possession of the site, they are responsible for the safety of the site. So, they will need to demonstrate, for example, where the compound area is, where the materials and trades will enter the site, and also the appropriate hoarding lines to secure the stages. Because that's all part of the assessment, making sure they understand all the safety measures required for the process.*[19]

Project Budget and Contingencies'

4.13 The Committee questioned the DECYP witnesses about the project budget, in particular seeking further detail on the budget contingencies, and confidence around the expected tender price:

Mr HISCUTT *- … so, we have design and infrastructure contingency versus construction contingency. What's the difference between infrastructure contingency and construction contingency?*

Ms HARMAN - *There's a design contingency held through the design process until we get to tender and generally that reduces, as a percentage, as we get closer to the tender process. This says an infrastructure contingency - it probably should actually say more accurately an allowance. So, we have got a number of infrastructure elements that are being covered in the project under that infrastructure amount.*

Mr HISCUTT *- So, by allowance versus the construction contingency, that's 825. What's the difference between -*

Ms HARMAN - *Then the construction contingency is held, so whether it's for the building works or the infrastructure, through the construction stage. So, generally, we have a target tender sum that we want to get to -*

Mr HISCUTT *- Should hopefully be the $9 million minus those two figures.*

Ms HARMAN - *Yes, it'll include the infrastructure allowance; it won't include the contingencies, because the contingency is generally for unforeseen elements that occur through the construction phase that we need to cover from tender to the end of construction.*

Mr HISCUTT *- So, what would be the difference between - What would you see as an example of an infrastructure contingency, then, versus - I mean, I understand construction contingency to mean as in 'we found a big rock and it's going to take a lot more to take out than we thought so we're going to need more money for it'. That would be, to me, construction -*

[19] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 20.

Ms HARMAN - *Yes. So, in the infrastructure contingency - probably should be allowance - there's elements of the switchboard's renewal, the stormwater, the sewer, you know, those sorts of elements that - and sometimes even the building fabric works, like the box gutters replacement, those sorts of elements.*

Mr HISCUTT *- So, they're known contingencies, or that's why they're allowances, not contingencies?*

Ms HARMAN - *Those are known at this point, and we've got quite a good understanding of those infrastructure issues across the site, but there will still be elements that we -*

Mr HISCUTT *- Yeah, and that would be sort of there. So, it's more like - what's the word they normally use? Not a lump sum, but a -*

Ms HARMAN - *Well, we will have a lump sum tender, but then there'll be contract variations as we go through for those unknowns.*

Mr HISCUTT *- Yeah, that makes more sense. Thank you, appreciate that.*

I guess just to finish off that thing - the expectation, again, at this stage you're feeling comfortable with the decision that when it goes to tender, it should be that nine minus about a million - so, somewhere around the 8.2, that's our current feeling. That's pretty good?

Ms HARMAN - *That's our target, and we'll have more cost estimates as we get closer to tender. But at the moment we're comfortable that we're sitting in that area. It'll be tested at tender time, though.*[20]

Does the Project Meet the Requirements of the Public Works Committee Act?

4.14 In assessing any proposed public work, the Committee seeks an assurance that each project meets the criteria detailed in Clause 15(2) of the Public Works Committee Act 1914. Broadly, and in simple terms, these relate to the purpose of the works, the need for and advisability of undertaking the works, and whether the works are a good use of public funds and provide value for money to the community. The Department's submission addressed these matters:

Do the proposed works meet an identified need/needs, or solve a recognised problem?

Yes. the proposed design addresses the issues raised in consultation with the school and community including the needs for removal of reliance on disconnected demountable buildings, a new reception and administration area, improved staff areas, additional carparking, improvements to outdoor learning areas and renewing aged building and services infrastructure items that have reached the end of their service life.

Are the proposed works the best solution to meet identified needs, or solve a recognised problem within the allocated budget?

Yes. A new school master plan was developed and costed to meet the school and community priorities. The PWG reviewed these priorities and agreed the proposed design as the best solution to effectively meet the priorities and remain within budget. The design solution gives a strong strategic direction for the future of learning in the school with a clear progression for learners through their school journey and grouping learners and support spaces in strongly connected ways with ongoing flexibility.

Are the proposed works fit for purpose?

[20] Transcript of Evidence, 4 August 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 19-20.

Yes. The proposed works resolve the problems expressed by the requirements expressed of the Education Brief. The design solution has the support of educational experts, school leaders, staff, the School Association and the community.

Do the proposed works provide value for money?

Yes. The proposed works address the key priority needs for JRLF EDPS as agreed by the school community and DECYP. Value is achieved by retaining existing building structure for renovation where needed and some new buildings to achieve the necessary enrolment capacity. Appropriately durable and uplifting design features and materials combined with using the existing site to gain indoor outdoor connections will raise the facilities to contemporary standards for effective educational settings.

Are the proposed works a good use of public funds?

Yes. The proposed works offer a cost-effective solution to meet the highest priority needs to assist JRLF EDPS to deliver quality contemporary educational services and to support the learning journey of the students. DECYP considers this to be a good use of public funds.[21]

[21] *JRLF East Derwent Primary School – Major Redevelopment*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, pp. 14-15

5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE

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

- *JRLF East Derwent Primary School – Major Redevelopment*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works;
- East Derwent Primary School - Existing Site Plan;
- East Derwent Primary School-Landscape Master Plan;
- DECYP response to questions on notice-Redevelopment of East Derwent Primary School.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 The Committee is satisfied that the need for the proposed works has been established. Once completed, the proposed works will address the deficiencies identified with the school's configuration and infrastructure and provide a high-quality contemporary learning environment that is not possible in the school's current condition.

6.2 The proposed works will remove ageing demountable buildings, provide additional GLAs with strong indoor/outdoor connections, and convert existing building areas to GLAs, while providing a more cohesive campus layout that maintains capacity. A new reception and administration area will provide a clear and welcoming school entrance, and there will be improved staff facilities, student support spaces, leadership offices and meeting rooms co-located near leaning spaces. Other works will include new bathroom facilities, a new kitchen and dining room, upgrades to services infrastructure, and improvements to strengthen connection to outdoor spaces.

6.3 Accordingly, the Committee recommends the Redevelopment of East Derwent Primary School, at an estimated cost of $12 million, in accordance with the documentation submitted.



Parliament House
Hobart
5 November 2026

Jen Butler MP
Chair