

**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET IN
THE LONG ROOM, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON THURSDAY
12 FEBRUARY 2009**

OGILVIE HIGH SCHOOL REFURBISHMENT

Ms JUDITH TIMBS, PRINCIPAL, OGILVIE HIGH SCHOOL, **Mr BRENDAN KELLY**, GENERAL MANAGER, LEARNING SERVICES (SOUTH), **Mr ANDREW GRIMSDALE**, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, FORWARD BRIANESE AND PARTNERS, **Mr FRANK McCANN**, SCHOOL ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE AND **Ms MIN HARMAN**, SENIOR PROJECT OFFICER, WERE CALLED MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

DEPUTY CHAIR (Mr Hall) - Welcome everybody. Thank you very much to the Principal, the School Association and the department for the tour that we had this morning at Ogilvie. It was very enlightening and I think it will probably save a lot of questions and maybe some deliberations.

I would like to invite the first witness or whoever is making a presentation on behalf of the group.

Mr KELLY - Thank you very much. I am Brendan Kelly, the general manager, for Learning Services (South) and have a coordination role for all schools in that geographic region.

The project, as stated, has a value of \$4.14 million. It is one of the larger capital works projects that has been undertaken by the Education department under its capital investment program.

Under this program the plans for the redevelopment provide the school and community with a student centre including catering kitchen, canteen and outdoor learning spaces, refurbished classrooms, improved information technology and communications. When complete, this redevelopment will move Ogilvie High School further towards being a contemporary educational facility catering for around 850 girls. There will remain a number of outdated general classrooms that will be the focus of, hopefully, future projects. This redevelopment will also provide Ogilvie High School with an outdoor learning area and catering facilities available to the broader community and contemporary general learning areas, allowing the delivery of the curriculum in a much more flexible and collaborative way. The time line for this project is to go to tender in April/May of this year with works commencing in June and being completed early in the second half of 2010.

I would like to briefly provide some background to the context of Ogilvie High School and girls' education. Ogilvie High School has an important place in the community. It is one of the oldest government secondary schools in the State, first opening in 1937. It is the largest secondary school in the State and the only State high school catering for girls only. I believe it has an important community role.

When we talk about learning outcomes Ogilvie High School is doing particularly well. Ogilvie High School has an outstanding academic record and has consistently performed well above the average in academic testing in all areas.

I would like to mention the standard current facilities. As you would have noticed this morning, some of the facilities are antiquated. The existing facilities at Ogilvie High School, particularly the general learning areas were designed and constructed to suit teaching methodologies that are outdated and are no longer suitable for the effective delivery of the curriculum due to the size, configuration and standard of facilities. Four general learning areas are currently used as permanent computer labs, restricting flexibility of information in communication technology usage. Lockers are often stored in classrooms, further restricting the available use of space. The quality and condition of the learning areas is also declining due to the ageing of building finishes, fittings and services.

The existing home economics facility, which is at least 40 years old, no longer caters for current teaching and learning requirements. It is proposed that this area be refurbished to create contemporary general learning areas for flexible and contemporary learning spaces.

The main kiosk is not certified to meet requirements for food preparation, which limits the food served. The location of the existing kiosk causes congestion and there is inadequate access to indoor eating spaces. There is also a lack of outdoor covered eating and learning areas, as seen by today's tour.

The creation of a students' centre would incorporate a school cafeteria, two new home economics areas, indoor students' seating for dining, associated toilets and covered outdoor eating and learning areas. I am very happy to say that I believe that the design of the new facilities reflects a broad range of views and opinions. At this point, with the committee's due consideration, I would like to hand over to the Principal of the School, Ms Judy Timbs.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms TIMBS - Brendan has already mentioned that it is the largest high school in the State from grades 7 to 10 and I want to reiterate that is in both the public and the private sectors.

It celebrated its 70-year anniversary in 2007 and to illustrate the important place of the school in the community the anniversary celebrations attracted hundreds and hundreds of former scholars, including some original scholars from 1937. So generations of families have attended the school and have very strong links and positive ties and a fierce pride in the school. Old scholars, for example, will ring me up to tell me that the girls don't have their socks pulled up properly. Its heritage therefore plays a significant role in our community and it is often viewed as a flagship school for the Department of Education.

The school is the only single-sex female school in the department and it is incumbent on our school to promote best practice for girls' education. Recently the school has become a member of the Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia in order to pursue this best practice and to participate in a network of girls-only schools. In Tasmania significant

links have been made over the past two years with the other four Hobart-based girls' schools and activities have included co-funding of a visit from a researcher from the United States to work with our students, staff and parents on leadership programs for our students.

The school's reputation has been built on a very firm foundation of high achievement, including three Rhodes scholars, two Olympians, two world medalists and many high achievers who have made significant contributions to the community, including the Premier Bill Neilson and Kath Venn OAM. Our superior academic results are recorded in our 2000 annual report, of which I think you have a copy with the submission.

The school is known for its contribution to the performing arts area of the curriculum, in particular music programs are well known and are showcased at many community events. Dance, drama and art are also noteworthy areas of our curriculum, with not only high student participation rates but also high achievement in community awards. The school has approximately 120 sporting teams which are supported every Saturday morning and our ovals and gymnasium are used to support some of these teams.

The house system within the school has developed a great sense of community, fun and competition. Students can access a vast range of academic, cultural and extra curricula activities such as student exchanges with our sister school in Japan, participation in world competitions - for example, three of our students are travelling to Austria this year to compete in an international RoboCup competition - a science one - and they are being sponsored by Google scholarships. It is a fantastic achievement. We have also performed at music and choral concerts in Europe.

Currently we have more students who want places in our school than we can offer. This year we accepted 50 per cent only of the grade 7 students on our waiting list. The average number of students at Ogilvie over the past 10 years has been 1 093. Despite the fact that the Government report says there will be a decline of about 6.7 per cent over the next five years, our figures show that the demand for places at our school will not diminish. I will talk more about school size a little later.

In order to maintain this high standard of achievement at Ogilvie the school community embarked on a school improvement process in 2008. Real-time data was collected from students, staff and parents. After eight months of collection and analysis of the data and extensive educational research into best practice new directions and plans have been established for Ogilvie for 2009, which include splitting the school into a middle and senior school. Our major emphasis is on developing close relationships with students, with an objective to know each student's story. The submission for the new building developments at Ogilvie support our current commitment for school improvement and maintaining excellence. With regard to the school improvement process, data collected from those sources recommended that student numbers at our school be reduced. Research showed that the ideal maximum number for students for a secondary school is 400-800. The reference is Brian Caldwell's paper on demographic change. We thus intend to cap the school at 800-850. The previous total intake of 280 students into grade 7 has been cut by 50 students in 2009 to a total of 230 students, thus excluding more students from out of area being able to achieve the goal of entering our school but also enabling us to gradually downsize the school numbers to the desirable level. It follows that the capital expenditure on the redevelopment program at Ogilvie will be a

sound investment as demand for places remains strong. Community use is genuinely encouraged and will grow with the availability of the new facilities.

I wish to table a list of the current community users. You can see the wide range that we have up-to-date but, as I say, the new facility, I believe, will grow that list.

This morning you have seen the state of our current facilities and our plans for the infrastructure improvement. Our current classrooms are crowded and some teaching is conducted in unsuitable environments. I think you saw that classroom opposite the canteen and could see that there were actually 29 students in there, including one in a wheelchair, and how difficult that was to operate.

Of the 30 general learning areas within the school, almost half are less than the building code standard. Reducing class size, particularly in grade 7, as per government policy, will assist in improving our relationships with and the teaching of our students.

In 2009 there will be two fewer home groups - from 40 down to 38- thus reducing the pressure on our specialised classrooms. For example, some maths classes have to be taught on benches and on stools in art rooms.

The plan to refurbish existing computer laboratories and catering classrooms to provide for more general learning areas equipped with ICT will vastly improve more flexible learning spaces to include cooperative learning in groups, private study, whole class activities and the use of more creative teaching strategies.

Many of our students will be employed in jobs in the future where the competent use of technology will underpin their work. Our new classrooms will be flexible enough to enable cross-curricular teaching and will accommodate teachers working in collaboration. Ogilvie has embraced the new Tasmanian Curriculum Framework and, in particular, has implemented new vocational and applied learning curriculum offerings.

Students at Ogilvie are now able to access increased opportunities to engage in authentic learning tasks such as in the hospitality, building, fashion design, hair, beauty, grooming and jewellery-making industries. The new foods catering classrooms will provide state-of-the-art classrooms to teach the new hospitality courses.

Our focus on a green, sustainable school will also include kitchen gardens adjacent to these classrooms. Andrew will talk more about initiatives in that area.

The new student centre, incorporating a cafeteria - and you saw the state of our canteen this morning - will focus on promoting a healthy lifestyle. We will link the presentation of healthy food to our curriculum, both in the VAL - the vocational and applied learning areas - and in our health-for-life physical education courses.

The centre will also provide the school with flexible learning spaces for small and large group instruction. Already the school has established a number of partnerships with community groups and it is intended to extend and expand community use of the Ogilvie facilities, particularly by hiring out that facility as a discrete facility; we will not have to open up the whole school, which is a difficulty at the moment.

By utilising the void under the dance/drama suites, we are addressing previous issues raised by the 2004 PSCP members with regard to the vacant area under these suites, while at the same time improving the traffic flow for students and staff around the buildings.

Student surveys particularly highlighted the lack of toilets, the poor condition of these current amenities, the lack of healthy food and the lack of outdoor sheltered seating.

I pointed out this morning to you that there are sufficient toilets on the site to meet the local government regulations but most of these are located over in Hills Block so the rest of those on the campus are well below standard.

The new design caters for some additional toilets and our long-term plan in the 2008 capital investment program submission calls for more amenities into the main buildings. The new student centre will redress the outdoor sheltered seating problem that we have at the moment, which I think you experienced just as you were leaving the campus this morning. Student, staff and parent surveys identified 'a village on the hill' concept for Ogilvie High School. The provision of outdoor teaching and social spaces compliments this vision and creates a heart for the school. This space will also be used as a performance space for students.

Staff surveys highlighted the inferior and crowded staff accommodation as well as the lack of interview rooms and storage space. This submission will provide some upgrade to these issues.

Just regarding future planning, the school community in conjunction with the architects has a master plan for the continuum of development on this site. The 2004 presentation and the current plan developed for the 2008 capital investment program addressed the needs for a new music centre, a centre for the arts, design and technology, outdoor recreation, administration centre and staff accommodation. Traffic flow has also been addressed - I mean in terms of cars - in the future plans. The master plan addresses a number of strategic priorities, incorporates environmental sustainability and ensures equitable provision for the State's largest high school. I would like to now hand over to Frank McCann, a member of our school association.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr McCANN - I am representing the Ogilvie High School Association at this committee meeting. Before I start, can I say how sorry we were to hear about Mrs Napier's illness and on behalf of the school association and the school community wish her a speedy recovery?

CHAIR - Yes, we can pass that on. Thank you.

Mr McCANN - Thank you.

The school association is comprised of representatives from the parents, staff, students and community. I have been involved with the association since 2005 and an elected member of that association since last year. We are very active in all aspects of the school and we run two businesses on the site: the canteen and the uniform shop. We contribute

substantial funds to projects in the school, averaging at about \$60 000 a year towards various projects such as the painting that Judy mentioned this morning, trips and equipment et cetera. We assist with writing submissions, running some social events such as the Taste of Ogilvie. We consult widely with all our constituents, the whole school community.

The association fully supports the redevelopment under consideration at this meeting. We have been actively involved in developing and implementing a master plan for the campus since 2001. The master plan is organic in the sense that it is being improved over time to accommodate the needs of the school as they emerge, but the theme has been the same throughout the process; one of recognising that the facilities are ageing and some aspects are barriers to teaching and learning.

The school is 71 years old. From the Main Road it looks magnificent and it is acknowledged as a Hobart icon. You have now seen it, warts and all. Judy talked about the demand for places at Ogilvie in spite of the downturn in population trend, particularly of school age. That demand is continuing for 10 years and beyond. This means that any money spent on the school is a sound investment. I cannot emphasise that point enough.

To follow on from the principal's comments, we share the vision of the 'village on the hill' concept, a concept which includes integration with the historic St John's precinct. The architects also share this vision and the master plan that they have developed for the campus is quite brilliant. It incorporates improved student internal circulation and external traffic flows and the development of new facilities. In brief, the overall master plan for the school includes the following projects: moving out of H-Block, hostel accommodation inside the main front entrance, and making that available to the Department of Education as office accommodation; establishing new facilities to include learning areas to form a health, sport, science and environment learning cluster; and refurbishing existing areas and circulation spaces on the entire campus to create learning centres for design and technology, music, resources and administration, and visual and performing arts. We would have five main clusters on the school. We would also develop appropriate meeting places. There is nowhere to have private meetings at the moment, unless you kick someone out of an office. It also covers the creation of covered, outdoor student learning circulation and recreational spaces; development of safe traffic flow systems and increasing on-campus parking; redevelopment of the gym, which you did not see this morning; resurfacing the tennis and netball courts for school and community use; providing a lift in the main building and other access improvements; and completing the upgrade of the whole campus ICT infrastructure. That is our master plan.

This program is a practical response to the needs of the school and has the support of the school community. The first phase in the redevelopment was the 2004 project which you are all familiar with. The project that you are now considering is the second phase of the redevelopment. From a practical aspect we are making use of the void under the dance and drama suites which your committee previously commented on in 2004. We are also creating a soul or central focus for the school. At present that is really lacking and this central focus aspect appeals immensely to the students, the staff and the association. From a practical point of view it will also enable many more community groups to access the facilities out of hours, at a lower cost to us and in a more convenient facility with access to toilets and kitchen facilities. This will make the venue far more attractive for

the community groups, including our very active alumni and this aspect is commended and endorsed by the association.

We have been involved in developing the specifics of the current proposal in conjunction with staff and students over the last three years. We have been lobbying for funds for the project, selecting the architects and working closely with them in developing the plans which you are now considering. I must commend the architects for the extensive and inclusive consultations they have conducted with the school community. They have insisted on student and staff input at each stage and have included association members in their workshops and consultations. At times they have led us and at other times we have led them and the result is a collaborative strategy and a plan which satisfies all school stakeholders.

We have listened in particular to the students and taken note of their concerns. Judy has mentioned the situation with the toilet facilities on the campus and you saw examples of them during your visit this morning. This item has top priority for students. Other priorities include locker space, crowded rooms, lack of outdoor undercover seating and the hole-in-the-wall canteen. These are all being addressed in this project. Prefect representatives are members of the school association and they have informed association members of the feelings and needs of the student in the redevelopment process and we fully endorse their proposals.

We have also had staff who specialise in the areas under consideration, such as catering, playing a very important role in visiting other schools and reporting back to us on best practice and good ideas that would work effectively at Ogilvie. Their input has been invaluable. It is important to note that the association receives submissions from and discusses issues with students and staff. We fully support the project and will continue to be actively involved with the construction phase. We have representation on the redevelopment committee, which is managing the project. Also on the committee are the principal, members of staff, including the executive officer and specialist staff, student representatives, the architects and the project management representative from the Department of Education.

At this stage I wish to formally acknowledge the work of the committee, especially Brad Wheeler who is the original departmental project manager, and Min Harman who is the current project manager. I conclude by saying again that the project has the full support of the school community. Thank you.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thanks, Frank.

Mr BEST - I think that it is a very good design and a very good strategy. I am really impressed with the layout, particularly of the village style, which was very much reinforced on the completion of our tour when we saw students sitting about in less than perfect circumstances. You have done a lot of work and it was great to hear from the students about how happy they are to have been involved in the planning.

You talked a bit about the master plan. A major feature you mentioned is that you are looking at things such as a music centre, science and arts and recreation, which I understand give you that platform to do those things. I guess that is an ongoing process to be worked through. I think you have covered it well.

Mr GREEN - You mentioned that the school's student population has gone from I think an average of 1 090 to 800. Can you just explain to the committee the reasons for that?

Ms TIMBS - We received a paper from the Department of Education last year about demographic trends and patterns in Tasmania as well as a research paper from Brian Caldwell about the ideal size of secondary high schools. The research paper showed that schools with a student population of more than 800 are dysfunctional in carrying out their educational objectives.

Mr GREEN - Even though you have very good academic results.

Ms TIMBS - Even though we have had very good academic results, yes. Perhaps we could have better. We took into account the feedback from students, staff and the parent community that the facility and accommodation on the site was overcrowded. Having looked at the research we did a very modest change, which was to take 50 fewer into grade 7 from out-of-area, and we do have a very strict enrolment policy. Current figures today are 988 enrolled at the school so it will take us four years to get down to a desirable figure of 850, bearing in mind that it is mandatory for us to take in-area, so our only control factor is the waiting list from out-of-area.

Mr GREEN - Do you think it is likely that those students who miss out on Ogilvie will go to private schools?

Ms TIMBS - No, I do not think so. We took a list of them this morning from 104 communities, so that would be three back to Swansea, three back to Triabunna, three back to Bridgewater - so from a vast range of small communities.

Mr GREEN - Even though the school seems to be divided into two areas - you have the old hostel area that you were saying is a grade 10 area but we did not get the opportunity to have a look at that - will all of the facilities that are being built as part of this development be readily accessible to those students in the other block?

Ms TIMBS - Yes, they will be.

Mr GREEN - It is fair distance between the two.

Ms TIMBS - It is indeed and that is a problem on the campus. I think Frank mentioned that in the master plan we would like to decommission H block and put everybody over on one side of the campus if we could. It is certain that this new area will be so attractive that the girls will want to come over and eat lunch and buy lunch from this particular area.

Mr GREEN - The girls from grade 10 at the moment use the existing canteen?

Ms TIMBS - No, they do use a small canteen in H block but we would decommission that.

Mr GREEN - The underneath area was discussed at the last committee meeting with respect to it being wasted space. It is my understanding that there are to be glass doors or access via bi-fold doors.

Mr GRIMSDALE - No; basically it is open. There will be what I refer to as the Qantas Lounge analogy, up in that zone. There will be a corridor spine that runs from the bottom of those stairs that we saw where you were standing right through the new development. That will step down the bank as we go and then there will be bits opening off on either side of that. It is totally redeveloped in that undercroft space. There is basically no waste space at all and it will give a better link back to the existing buildings. Where we walked around that back section, it will link those two together.

Mr GREEN - We talked a little bit about the accommodation for teachers and you mentioned that the model you prefer is to have teachers within specific areas. Can you elaborate to the committee what work will be done on enhancing those facilities and the strategies for supervision et cetera?

Ms TIMBS - We are very conscious of the fact that most of the staff rooms on the Ogilvie campus are tucked away in dark areas of the buildings. There is a provision for a new staff room in the new facility. Having looked at buildings in Victoria as part of a conference that I went to, in order to help increase student supervision staff rooms are more centrally placed, with many more glass walls for greater supervision. A temporary solution at Ogilvie will be to try to put more glass into the existing staff rooms, which will be a cost for the school but I believe will increase help increase student supervision and safety of the students.

Mr GRIMSDALE - The staff zone in the new development is located up in that undercroft area we saw this morning. It overlooks the catering GLAs because they are down at a lower level but it also looks into that learning centre, Qantas Lounge-type arrangement, so it is an area which is accessible for students but it also has that overview for supervision.

Mr GREEN - Do you think the whole model - the design and consultation with the school community and particularly with the architects - has been a good process?

Mr KELLY - It has been very sound, a real partnership right through from students to the community. Everybody has been engaged - a very strong model.

Mr GREEN - Do you think the school reflects that as well?

Ms TIMBS - Most definitely. The timing was excellent for us when we were concurrently undergoing a school improvement review. Staying the best is a challenge and if you do not change then you are not likely to stay the best, so we really wanted to improve our practice. At the same time, we were working with the architects so a lot of data that we were gathering from our students, staff and the community fed into the process that the architects were also using in their consultation processes. So there were a number of focus groups on very general things to start with, such as what do you like about the school or what don't you like about the school, and then focusing and narrowing down as we sifted through the data. It was a very strong model.

Mr GRIMSDALE - We set up a system in our fee scale. Our fees are a lot more expensive than other architects up-front and they taper off down towards the back end. Our approach is that the better the brief, the better the building, so we would rather engage

with all the people up-front to have that dialogue. We conducted a lot of workshops in that situation where we almost insist that the students are involved as well as the cross-representation of staff, Frank's parents' group and an external community group. We ran right through that. We do a thing which is called 'glad, mad and sad'. We take data about who likes what, what works in the school, what doesn't work in the school and then we collate it up into a big return brief which gets signed off. You could tell that the people and the students were engaged throughout the process. It was very well run.

Mr GREEN - I agree with Brenton. I think for seven years people have been very tolerant, particularly with respect to where they have lunch and manage their way around the building. From what I can see of this project it is very worthwhile and it will make a big difference.

DEPUTY CHAIR - With a construction budget of \$3.37 million, in today's volatile world you have a contingency of \$190 000; is that enough?

Mr GRIMSDALE - We generally manage within that, yes. Those figures have been set up with a quantity surveyor. Contained within the main budget is a design contingency, because obviously we have not finished the design as yet, so the contingency you are looking at is basically for latent conditions that we find on site as we go. Yes, we are quite confident there is enough.

Ms HARMAN - There is also a post-occupancy contingency of \$63 000 after completion.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Yes, I noticed that. Just explain what that is for.

Ms HARMAN - That might be for something that comes up during construction or after construction that needs looking at or revisiting. It is so that we do not get to the end of the project and discover an issue and there is no more money in the budget.

DEPUTY CHAIR - On most of the projects we do on this committee there are sometimes hundreds of questions, however I must say on this one we had - as Mr Green and Mr Best have mentioned - a very comprehensive look around and briefing, and the solutions are pragmatic. They fit well with your intentions. Therefore, as you can see, that probably lessens somewhat the number of questions that might come from the committee. I would like to congratulate everybody who has been involved in that and thank you very much for what you did this morning.

Mr GREEN - The new outdoor area will be gated to a degree from the rest of the school, so it can be used by other groups. You tabled a document about the number of groups that are actually using the school already. You mentioned, specifically, that it will be available for people to hire. Is there the opportunity for the general public to use the space without hiring it?

Ms TIMBS - You mean just walk onto the property?

Mr GREEN - No, by arrangement, because the Government has generally tried to encourage participation within the school and usage of school facilities generally. We have on-line centres for skills where we encourage people to come to the school. Are we talking about always hiring this facility or are we talking about general use as well?

Ms TIMBS - No, at the moment it is a combination of hiring, in terms of a fee, and free. We operate within the department's guidelines on access to public facilities. As much as possible, yes, we would like to offer the facilities, bearing in mind that sometimes they have to be cleaned before classes can start and so on. There are also some other pragmatic aspects to the use of the school facilities. From my perspective and the staff's perspective we are genuine and sincere about wanting those open for the public.

Mr GREEN - You mentioned parking, which has been a bit of an issue in the past, but that has been taken into consideration with this project.

Ms TIMBS - Yes, the next phase - the master plan - takes that into account. The architects have actually done some preliminary work with us on traffic flow around the property, which does need some more thought.

CHAIR - Thank you very much.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.