



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC WORKS

RIVERSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL RE-DEVELOPMENT AND REPLACEMENT OF PARTS OF SCHOOL

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

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Mr *Harriss*

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Mr *Green*
Mr *Hidding*
Mr *Kons*

The Committee has the honour to report to the House of Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1914 on the:

RIVERSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL RE-DEVELOPMENT AND REPLACEMENT OF PARTS OF SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

This reference sought the approval of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for the re-development and replacement of parts of the Riverside Primary School.

HISTORY

A primary school was established at Riverside, a suburb north-west of Launceston in the 1950's. Riverside Primary School is a kindergarten to grade 6 school where more than 600 students aged 4 to 12 years are enrolled. The school serves mainly an urban community consisting of Riverside, Legana, Bridgenorth and Grindelwald. The feeder areas of Riverside and Legana have continued to develop over the past years, attracting young families to the area, which has contributed to the consistency of numbers. Riverside Primary School has had stable enrolments for a number of years and is predicted to maintain this situation into the foreseeable future. Fire damage on the site made necessary a replacement program for two classrooms, which have been rebuilt on the southern boundary.

Over the past years, expansion of the school has been accommodated by the placement of a series of terrapin type structures on the site. These have received nominal refurbishment, fit out alterations and normal cyclical maintenance over the years since they were built.

THE PROPOSAL

The Department of Education proposes to redevelop existing facilities as part of a long-term strategy for delivery of education services at Riverside. The proposal called for the redevelopment and or replacement of accommodation to provide for the following functions:

1. 900 sq m of primary accommodation in 11 general learning areas (GLA's) of contemporary design;
2. Limited refurbishment of six existing GLA's;
3. Additional female staff and student toilets;
4. Covered way circulation;
5. Staffroom extension and refurbishment; and

6. Redevelopment of the site with new paving and landscaping where old buildings are removed.

CURRENT SITUATION

The school consists of a collection of buildings made up of one major primary block, an early childhood block, kindergarten, grade 2 block, general purpose building, library, administration area and five terrapin buildings. The school has been awaiting major redevelopment for a number of years with the view to replace the terrapin accommodation with modern GLA accommodation and to refurbish other parts of the school.

The school consists of 3650.5 sq m of fully enclosed covered area (FECA). All buildings are currently fully utilised in terms of Department of Education (DOE) Standards for floor area per student and associated site area. GLAs are distributed across permanent buildings and temporary transportable terrapin buildings.

NEED FOR REDEVELOPMENT

Although the existing floor area is sufficient for current demand, much of the accommodation includes temporary terrapins and these are in need of either refurbishment or replacement. In view of the sustained demand, there is clear justification to provide permanent GLA accommodation to replace terrapin and old and dilapidated permanent buildings. In terms of DOE accepted standards for delivery of education services, there are fundamental short-falls in key functional areas as follows:

- There is insufficient permanent GLA floor area suitable for current methods of education delivery and the level of current enrolments
- There are insufficient toilets to service the site. The existing toilets are in need of refurbishment and there is also the need to provide additional female staff toilets.

Failure to address these issues could lead to occupational health and safety problems. There would also be significant ongoing maintenance problems.

STRATEGY OF REPLACEMENT

It is intended to stage the proposed work in such a way as to cause the least disruption to the teaching program of the school. This can be achieved by taking advantage of the holiday periods to carry out demolition and building work that cannot be done while students and staff are present.

The project involves redevelopment of half of the buildings on site. Much of the work will require demolition of buildings before new work is commenced. This will mean that students and staff will have to be decanted to other temporary locations within the complex and the high school while the work is in progress.

It is likely that work will be commenced on block A over the Christmas holiday period, with work staged over the 2 years of the life cycle of the project.

EXISTING ACCOMMODATION

Background

Riverside Primary School is located in Cleghorn Ave. in Riverside, within a ten-minute drive of the Launceston central business district. The site is on a slight slope to the North-East, with distant views of the eastern mountains.

Buildings on the site have been constructed progressively from the 1950's, and comprise a mixture of permanent buildings and temporary transportable Terrapin buildings. The majority of the school buildings and GLAs in particular, have only received nominal refurbishment and fitout alterations since they were constructed.

Building 1

Currently accommodating Administration, GP Room, Canteen, Library, Staff Room, and nine Classrooms, this building has been extended in various ways in the past.

Administration, Canteen and GP room areas are located in the southern wing of the building, are in reasonable condition and no work is planned for these areas.

The central section of Building 1 accommodates 5 classrooms, the library, staff room and staff amenities. The 4 classrooms on the eastern side of the corridor are in need of minor refurbishment including upgrading of heating and lighting. The existing staff room is inadequate to cater for current or future staffing levels.

The 4 classrooms accommodated in the northern wing of the building have had only nominal refurbishment since construction and are unsuitable for the effective delivery of a contemporary Primary education curriculum.

The balance of Building 1 is in reasonable condition.

Building 2 (Prep. Classrooms)

In its current configuration, this building is unsuitable for teaching of Prep. Children, with a series of small spaces rendering effective supervision difficult. The building is in a somewhat dilapidated condition with roof leaks and loose ceiling tiles in some areas pose a safety problem.

Buildings 3, 6, 7, 8 and 11

Currently accommodating 6 classrooms these are temporary Terrapin buildings and should be replaced with permanent accommodation.

Building 4

This building is the Kindergarten and has experienced several foundation settlement problems resulting in some non-structural cracking of building fabric.

Building 5

Building 5 is a Terrapin unit currently utilised as a specialist Music room.

Building 9

This building is a stand alone student toilet block supplementing the toilets in Building 1. Current toilet facilities on the campus will be insufficient to cope with estimated future enrolments.

Building 10

This building currently accommodates 4 classrooms and is in good condition, having been constructed only recently to replace a building destroyed by fire.

Building 12

This is a new classroom constructed in recent years. The building has been designed to be extended, with a temporary wall on it's southern side.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE REDEVELOPMENT

Briefing Process

The briefing process included a series of meetings between the School Redevelopment Committee and the architects to establish redevelopment options. Priorities for redevelopment were identified after lengthy consultation and testing of financial constraints.

Detailed briefing was then developed through meetings between the School Redevelopment Committee and the architects.

The School Redevelopment Committee also undertook site visits to recently redeveloped schools in the Launceston area to gain an understanding of current Department standards.

Redevelopment Priorities

Fundamental shortfalls in key functional areas on the campus are identified as follows:

1. There is barely sufficient GLA floor area suitable for current methods of education delivery and the level of current enrolments. Much of this accommodation is provided in Terrapin units which are in need of either refurbishment or replacement. There is also a need to rearrange accommodation to improve accessibility and supervision.
2. There will be insufficient toilets to cope with estimated enrolments. Some of the existing toilets are in need of refurbishment and there is an existing need to provide additional female staff toilets.
3. Additional staff administrative and amenities accommodation are required due to the size of the school and level of demand.

The priorities for the redevelopment are identified in order as follows:

1. Demolish northern wing of Building 1 and Buildings 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11.
2. Construct 900m² of primary accommodation in 11 GLAs of contemporary design.
3. Additional staff and student toilets.
4. Office facilities for teaching and support staff.
5. Extension and refurbishment of the existing staff room.
6. Limited refurbishment of 6 GLAs.
7. Covered Way circulation.
8. Redevelopment of the site with new paving and landscaping where old buildings removed.

Budget constraints

In order to meet budget constraints, the works to be undertaken in this redevelopment must be limited to the following:

- Demolition of buildings 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11.
- Construction of the new blocks A, B and C, without the attached covered ways.
- Minor repairs to building 2 to satisfy safety requirements.

The following works are proposed to be deferred:

- Refurbishment of existing classrooms.
- Covered ways.

Depending on the amount of the tenders submitted, it may be necessary to defer the extension and refurbishment of staff room.

PROJECT BUDGET & DETAILED COSTINGS

Construction cost:	\$ 1,370,000
Loose furniture:	\$ 111,000
Art works	\$ 28,000
Consultant fees	\$ 161,000
Total Budget:	\$ 1,670,000

EVIDENCE

The Committee commenced its inquiry on Wednesday, 18 July 2001, and inspected the site of the proposal. Following the inspection, the Committee commenced hearing evidence. The following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:

- Lyle Catlin, Project Officer, Department of Education;
- Jan Kuzniarski, Principal, Riverside Primary School;
- Steven Young, Parents Representative, Riverside Primary School;
- John Lewis, Attrio Architects; and
- Robert van der Elst, Attrio Architects.

Enrolment predictions

The Project Officer, Department of Education, Mr Lyle Catlin advised the Committee of the enrolment predictions for the Riverside Primary School:-

If I could just go to enrolment predictions, if we go over to the area of predictions ... you'll notice that Riverside Primary School predicted enrolments - for 2001, is 613 and I believe, ... that they've crept up even now since this enrolment was done ... going to 2002 - 622, right down to 2007 where you have 644.

And there's 652 now ... so the numbers show that it is stable in every way ... the numbers (for Exeter Primary School) are very stable also, ... so there wouldn't be numbers coming and going between those two sites; they're very stable.

Consultative process

Mr Catlin outlined to the Committee the consultative process that had been undertaken by the school in relation to the proposal:

In February 2001 a consultative group consisting of the principal, staff, parents, community and architect representatives, was set up in the school to consider the design footprint that would be used to support the teaching and learning at Riverside Primary School. This group and subgroups thereof have worked extensively with staff and students to achieve results that will support quality learning outcomes for students. They have reviewed designs and visited other sites to achieve favourable planning that would suit the site and desired outcomes for teaching and learning.

Staff room

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to how the inadequacies of the current staff accommodation at the school would be addressed by the proposed works. The Principal, Ms Jan Kuzniarski responded:

From my perspective in terms of providing educational leadership and management within the school, it is critical that we have a space that is conducive to the planning and preparation of the educational program. In terms of an inclusive and consultative approach, which we follow, it is quite common that we would need enough space for at least 40 people at any given time. We also utilise that meeting space for our school association meetings, and we don't have the capacity in there to use whiteboard displays for presentations when we have people who come in to work in the school. It is also an issue for the ancillary staff who need to be able to also have meetings with the executive officer. At the moment there is nowhere we can really go to do that. There is also an issue in relation to access to that staff room, which is a problem where you have 40 people moving in and out of the doorway where you have hot drinks, you have a sink, people trying to get into their mailbox. It is a fairly frustrating time and it is quite a bottleneck there at some fairly key times during the day.

The Committee questioned Ms Kuzniarski as to whether the provisions contained within the proposal would be adequate for the needs of the staff. Ms Kuzniarski replied:

The short answer to that ... would be yes. I am fairly confident that will be more than adequate to cover our needs because with the redevelopment it has increased some office

space. Up until now no teachers have had office space at all and under this proposed redevelopment all teachers will have their own office space, so they will have the capacity to use that for some of the things that we are currently having to use the general staff room for.

When questioned as to whether or not the provision of these staff facilities were contingent upon the availability of funds, Ms Kuzniarski replied:

I think it is, but this was a decision that was made by the full project committee which has parents involved on it as well and, while we spoke fairly passionately about the need for staff, the general feeling - and I think Steve would support that - was that the learning areas are premium in relation to the size of the classes we have. We are running class sizes between 25 and 28, and I think the committee felt it would be very difficult to justify having a large staff room when the actual teaching conditions and learning conditions were less than satisfactory

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to the process whereby funds were allocated for projects, and whether or not there had been a 'shrinkage' in the funding for this project. The following exchange took place:

Mr CATLIN - *It is not a matter of shrinking. It's a matter of stretching it far enough, I guess. The fact is it is costing us roughly about \$120 000 per classroom around that new development, or thereabouts, so the money is burned up into that component of it.*

Mr HIDDING - *Sorry, just remind me of the process. The Government just doesn't throw an amount of money at the school based on per capita. It is on a needs basis, isn't it? I mean, somebody somewhere have put up their hand and said, 'We need \$1.67 million'.*

Mr CATLIN - *Yes, they base it on a PIP program where there was an initial plan done and it was done cost but the lag factor between that PIP and the time you get around to doing it there is always a loss in it, simply because the money does not go as far three or four years later. That is always an issue for us.*

And further:

Mr CATLIN - *That's the difficulty because there may not be a shortfall when the tenders come in. Our evidence shows that the tenders have been coming in fairly sharp so we are fairly confident we will get that staff room. It is always hanging over our head until that last minute.*

Mr HIDDING - Yes, except that if you had \$1.87 million now - that's my question - where would that other \$200 000 go? Would you do a bit better than this that is proposed? I mean, you have designed this small extension to the classroom based on a budget constraint.

Mr CATLIN - In fact we would probably not do much more than a staff room at all. Jan is right, we have made up an area that will deal with those 40 people. We have built in storage and staff rooms into the classrooms deliberately to meet the needs of teachers where they spend the bulk of their time, where they do their marking, their preparation and so on. We have built in a provision that they can collaborate in every way and the staff room then becomes a minor proposition in terms of the actual collaborative planning that happens there right now. So we think we have overcome it in the class room - well, not think, we know we have overcome it in the class room organisation.

Covered ways

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to why the provision of covered walkways was deleted from the project, and what would be the cost of providing them in the event funds were available. The following exchange occurred:

Mr LEWIS - The covered ways attached to the buildings were in the order of \$50 000. It is quite a reasonable sum of money given the situation we find ourselves in.

Mr HARRISS - And what about the isolated covered ways?

Mr van der ELST - The free-standing ones and the one in front of the girls' toilet that John mentioned earlier on.

Mr HARRISS - Yes. Is there an indicative cost of that?

Mr LEWIS - It is a similar figure, something slightly more, I would think. \$60 000 is the figure that comes to mind.

CHAIRMAN - So if those covered ways are not constructed the children in wet conditions will have to leave the class rooms and go straight out into the elements, no protection from the weather.

Mr van der ELST - If we had no covered ways that are actually on the class rooms themselves, yes, there will just be some cover over the doorways.

CHAIRMAN - *I would have thought there is a health and safety factor involved here. If any of the children happen to develop pneumonia, I would have thought their parents may well have an action in negligence against the department. It is an unusual situation where new buildings are being constructed with no protection for the children from the weather, notwithstanding the type of weather, once they leave the class rooms. I mean, they have to go out into the open. I would have thought there is a risk of a damages claim. It is as serious as that for the sake of \$50 000. What is the procedure, if necessary, to seek extra funding? We're not talking about a large amount of money.*

Mr CATLIN - *Okay, if I could answer that, the procedure at this stage for us in this case would be to apply for a minor works grant through the district procedure, and then we would have to wait for that to come up as a go-ahead, an agreement from that area. There are a number of schools that fall into this same category throughout the State where they don't have covered ways around their individual buildings, and it is a dilemma, but fortunately at this stage wet weather procedures in schools are such that schools manage. They tend not to send their kids out of class. Teachers stay on duty in there, so they tend not to leave the rooms. I think you would be able to speak to that, Jan, a little bit more. The procedure is they usually supervise in class, so it doesn't sound as bad as it could be ... We certainly considered it at the initial stage that it was essential but when it comes down to making decisions about your priorities and, as someone has already said, class rooms become the highest priority and we've got to make hardball decisions. Our only avenue now is to go to the department and say we'd like a minor works following this one up.*

CHAIRMAN - *I don't understand why that didn't happen months ago once it seemed that this would need to be deleted.*

Mr CATLIN - *We can't move until we get our prices fixed and everything's in place at this stage that's really our locking devise now because we wouldn't be knowing what we're asking for in dollars and cents, and I think we need to know that. We are really in the laps of this decision-making body here and then the tender process if it goes ahead.*

Fault line

The witnesses were questioned as to what effect, if any, the geological fault running through the property had on the proposed works, and more particularly, had a geological survey been undertaken to support the project budget. The following exchange took place:

Mr LEWIS - *Actually the area of the proposed building seems to be the best part of the site. The bad area is pretty well limited to where the kindergarten is.*

Mr KONS - *So in essence there shouldn't be too many variations.*

Mr van der ELST - *No, we're told by our structural consultants that they are aware of the situation. There may be a few spots that are a bit shaky in terms of the quality of the foundation material that we find, and hence my comment to Peter this morning. There is an allowance in there to allow some piers to go in, but basically the geo-technical report mentions that they do not anticipate any major problems.*

Mr HARRISS - *I understand the desire to build buildings which are low maintenance, this being of brick construction, it raises the question as to why we wouldn't build the new buildings out of timber, which then become much more flexible in case there is some foundation problem either in the construction stage or down the track. The buildings become much more flexible if in timber and then I understand the maintenance difficulty down the track, has that been a consideration of the project team?*

Mr van der ELST - *Not from a structural point of view. I guess where we've come from with the nature of the construction is twofold: one is the flammability of the materials given recent events in the State and, secondly, is the maintenance of painting and keeping those sort of services good.*

In terms of the cost comparison - and that rather surprised us a little bit - there's not really that much of a difference in cost between brick veneer and a timber building that has lining on it, some sort of external lining. The cost differential is quite negligible.

Building aesthetics

The Committee questioned the witnesses regarding the treatment of the exterior cladding of the proposed new buildings, particularly why it was decided to utilise two different coloured bricks. Mr van der Elst responded:

You're quite right about the building that was constructed after the fire setting the tone for the rest of the building and I think initially that's where we were coming from. Taking the fact of the two issues that I've raised, the flammability and maintenance, that's really the best thing that we could come up with in terms of holding on to the basic look and, as far as designing in brickwork is concerned, actually creating some sort of a banding situation is not going to affect the integrity of the brickwork as such. That is basically the rationale that we're using for it.

And responding to the proposition that the project presented an opportunity for a 'contemporary' design,

... that certainly would have been an option for us, but keep in mind that the materials that are used in the building that you've mentioned, the issue of weatherboard is only one issue; the rest are the proportions of the building, the nature of the roofing and so forth and what we decided to hold onto. Once we made that decision, one thing more or less leads on to another and that created the banding situation with the brickwork. And then you say, 'Okay, that's where we're headed to. What can we do to break up the brickwork so it's not just the same colour all the way through, because that will look rather bland'.

Ms Kuzniarski added:

And there was a strong feeling amongst the community that we would like to try to maintain the integrity of the design, to try to keep it as much like that new building as possible.

Balustrading

The Committee questioned the witnesses regarding the need for balustrading. Mr Catlin responded:

That has already been flagged to the department, that it is a major work that needs doing - not a major work in this sense, but a work that needs doing - and that's already come up with the department on one of our visits. We have flagged it already and it is up for a job to be done so it is in the pipeline, I suppose you would say. You are quite right, it is an issue, particularly on the higher end, even though it meets all the

safety standards, it is still dangerous to a lot of people so it is to be done.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Committee notes that in order to meet budget constraints, the submission proposes that the following works are to be deferred:

- Refurbishment of existing classrooms.
- Covered ways.

Further, depending on the amount of the tenders submitted, it is contemplated that it may be necessary to defer the extension and refurbishment of the Staff Room.

The Committee is concerned at the prospect of any deferment of the covered ways and extension and refurbishment of the Staff Room and considers these matters, together with the failure to address the lack of balustrading, to be integral to the project. Further, the Committee is concerned that funding for the project is insufficient to properly complete the project and accordingly recommends that sufficient funds be provided through other sources, if necessary, to ensure that these works are undertaken.

As the project will be undertaken over two financial years, there is an opportunity for extra funding to be made available in the 2002-2003 budget to enable these essential works to be completed as part of this project.

The evidence presented to the Committee clearly demonstrated the need for the redevelopment and replacement of parts of the Riverside Primary School.

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

**Parliament House
HOBART
20 August 2001**

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