



---

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

---

**PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS**

**COSGROVE HIGH SCHOOL—  
REDEVELOPMENT OF SPECIALIST  
TEACHING FACILITIES, 'A' BLOCK,  
MATERIAL, DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY  
AND HOME ECONOMICS**

---

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

---

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**Mr Wing (Chairman)**  
**Mr McKay**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

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

By Authority: Government Printer, Tasmania

INTRODUCTION

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

COSGROVE HIGH SCHOOL – REDEVELOPMENT OF SPECIALIST TEACHING FACILITIES,  
‘A’ BLOCK, MATERIAL, DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY AND HOME ECONOMICS

PROPOSAL

Cosgrove High School has been central to the provision of secondary school education in the Northern suburbs of Hobart since it was opened in the 1950’s. Being located in the central northern suburbs, it provided local secondary schooling to students in the rapidly expanding dormitory suburbs of Glenorchy, Goodwood, West Moonah, Rosetta, Chigwell, Berriedale and Claremont. When the school was unable to cope with the enrolments, newer high schools at Claremont and Rosetta were built. Even though the suburbs in the immediate vicinity of Cosgrove contained an aging population, the enrolments were maintained at excess of 700 through to the late 1990’s.

Over the past ten years Cosgrove High School has undergone a number of minor works projects. These included minor upgrading of "B" Block, part of the MDT area and the Special Education Unit in Block C, provision of air conditioning in some buildings, provision of a fourth science laboratory, and the provision of a fire detection and emergency lighting system. All of these previous works were essential for the ongoing curriculum at the school and will be complemented by the proposed upgrade.

The proposal calls for the redevelopment of the Science, Materials Design and Technology, Home Economics, Humanities and Amenities areas at the school. There is also a need to provide covered ways between buildings, replacement of roofs, upgrading of building services and the demolition of redundant buildings. As mentioned earlier, works projects have been undertaken in some of these areas in the past and this proposed redevelopment will be an essential addition to these.

Most of the buildings lack teaching spaces that comply with current curriculum standards. The toilets are located in inappropriate areas and are of a sub-standard design and finish. The staff facilities in the buildings are inadequate in terms of area and location. Most of the specialist teaching areas are of a design that does not lend itself to modern teaching practices. The current facilities do not meet workplace occupational health and safety standards for either staff or students at the school.

There are also problems with the existing roof construction. The school buildings generally consist of a central corridor on each side of which are a number of teaching spaces. The roof is pitched from each side towards the central corridor, with storm water being channelled off via internal gutters. These gutters are prone to blockage which results in water damage to the interior. The proposed design will replace the existing roofs with a single roof that directs storm water to the sides of the buildings. This new roof design will also permit the central corridors to be assimilated into the building as useable teaching space.

Another requirement on the site is the provision of covered ways to allow undercover movement between buildings with the most pedestrian traffic.

Cosgrove High School is currently experiencing a significant fall in enrolments. However, should the development proceed, it would be expected that this would result in greater enrolments.

The ‘Fully Enclosed Covered Area (FECA)’ provision for Cosgrove High together with the areas and enrolments of high schools in the immediate location of Cosgrove are listed below:

School	Area in m <sup>2</sup>	Enrolment*	m <sup>2</sup> per Student
Cosgrove.....	9 087	549	16.55
Claremont.....	7 894	298	26.50
New Town.....	8 991	692	12.99
Ogilvie.....	9 942	1 038	9.58
Rosetta.....	7 733	501	15.43

\*These are preliminary 1999 census figures (FTE).

National guidelines recommend that a high school should have 9.75m2 of fully enclosed covered area (FECA) per full time equivalent (FTE) student.

**COSTING**

The breakdown of cost on the Cosgrove High School Re-development project is as follows:

	\$
Design and supervision fees.....	284 000
Initial Capital Investment.....	2 011 000
Loose furniture and Equipment .....	203 000
Artwork in Public Buildings .....	20 000
Total Project.....	2 518 000

The Building Budget for the project is \$2 031 000 which includes Artworks but excludes items such as loose furniture and equipment and Professional fees. An additional furniture and equipment allowance will be allocated to the school. The school community has also decided to provide some additional funding to complete items, which were identified in the prioritising process, but were not affordable under the overall budget.

<i>Component</i>	\$
SCIENCE BLOCK 1(K).....	440 000-00
BLOCK A (2) .....	375 000-00
BLOCK C (4).....	355 000-00
BLOCK D (5) (Excluding ramp to toilet and new roofing) .....	258 500-00
GYMNASIUM Minor Works.....	20 000-00
KIOSK Minor Works.....	12 500-00
BLOCK F (7) (Excluding new roofing).....	337 500-00
COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES.....	40 000-00
SITE PREPARATION, DEMOLITION .....	27 500-00
LANDSCAPING AND SUNDRY PAVING (Excluding Block 2 demolition)	
COVERED WAYS & NEW SHELTER AREAS	87 500-00
WORK TO EXISTING SHELTER AREAS.....	10 500-00
EXTERNAL HYDRAULIC & ELECTRICAL SERVICES.....	39 500-00
CONTRACT CONTINGENCY SUMS AND ARTWORKS .....	90 000-00
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST OF WORKS .....	\$2 093 500-00

Note: None of the following items is included in the above estimated cost:

**EXCLUSIONS**

- Professional Fees
- Loose Furniture, equipment, white-goods
- New access ramp to Block D Toilets 8,000.00
- Curtains & Blinds

**SEPARATE ITEMS FUNDED BY THE SCHOOL**

- Lockers
- Temporary relocation costs
- Replacement of existing tiled roof to Block D 29,000.00
- Replacement of existing tiled roof to Block F 35,500.00

**ITEMS FOR SEPARATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FUNDING**

- Furniture Allowance to School
- New dust extraction system 32,000.00
- Demolition of Block 11 and landscaping of area 10,500.00

## EVIDENCE

The Committee commenced its inquiry on Friday, 30 April 1999. The joint submission of the Department of Education, the School Community and LOCKE HDM Architects was received and taken into evidence. The Committee inspected the site for the proposed Cosgrove High School – Redevelopment of Specialist Teaching Facilities, ‘A’ Block, Material, Design and Technology and Home Economics. Following the inspection, the Committee returned to Parliament House and heard evidence from the following witnesses:

- Ross Butler, Principal, Cosgrove High School
- Dennis Breen, Asst. Principal, Cosgrove High School
- Sue Gibson, Cosgrove High School Parent & Friends Assoc. Representative
- Brian Locke, Project Architect
- Tim Gourlay, Acting Manager, Facility Services, Department of Education

### *Project overview*

Mr Gourlay made the following submission to the Committee in support of the project:

“...I would like to underscore, I guess, the need for the updating, the upgrading, the refurbishment of all of those specialist teaching areas and general learning areas in order to appropriately provide for today's curriculum. If we start with science, we saw a variety of configurations of the science teaching areas, each of which are outdated. The long science benches and the console models have been superseded now with a much more open plan with service perimeter benches. This particular configuration provides a more flexible teaching area and a more versatile one. Obviously the old buildings need new finishes throughout and a replacement of some of the dated services, so that would have a big impact on that particular building.

In the A block, the general learning area, the rows of singular cellular classrooms have not changed over many years and the refurbishment plans propose that they too will be reconfigured in much more open, larger and interlinked teaching spaces. Again, the basics of the building will be totally upgraded, reroofed; the low corridor ceilings removed, windows replaced and this interlinking of adjacent teaching areas, as well as upgrading of the toilet blocks. That again will provide for the contemporary curriculum that is being presented at the school, and see the school well positioned for a long life, hopefully, of low maintenance on those buildings.

Moving up the block, we looked at the state of the removal of the locker bays. Those locker bays are a concentration of student traffic and present managerial problems during peak periods at break times. There is a much more appropriate solution being presented for those with the disbursement of the locker bays to areas at each end of the site and the reduced dependency on a lot of students travelling with bags and books in a more portable fashion. It reduces the dependency that has previously existed on the lockers.

In the art teaching area, again it is proposed for opening up that block and reroofing it; replacement of the finishes internally and creation of more generous, larger teaching areas. Again, new finishes and increasing versatility of those spaces. Within that block too, additional space will be provided for the special education component and improved access for those kids with restricted mobility.

In the home economics area, again we saw the outdated, outmoded kitchen facilities. It is proposed one kitchen will be refurbished and one area of that block will be redeveloped as a modern kitchen. Again, the configuration of the kitchen being a much different configuration with, I guess, a commercial arrangement to it, as much as anything. The other spaces in that block will be the complementary dining area, laundry facilities and general purpose learning area as well.

The MDT space—a large block with ample room—has had some minor works undertaken within recent years, but it needs to incorporate a whole-school design facility and much more modern practical teaching facilities. The plan that is presented proposes a reuse in the consolidation of MDT facilities in that block.”

*Provision of lockers*

The Committee questioned the witnesses in relation to the adequacy of the provision of lockers as part of the proposed redevelopment. Mr Butler responded:

"...I believe however that with the redevelopment of the spaces we have earmarked for locker development that would be sufficient to have a pretty flexible system for those who want lockers, especially the grade 7's where we virtually require them at present to have one and it is optional in grade 8's and most of the grade 8's do and some of the grade 9's and 10's ... I believe that what we have at present is going to be flexible and would provide some scope for an increased locker usage in the future if necessary. But I think it would be adequate at this stage."

*Covered walkways*

The Committee questioned the witnesses in relation to the provision of covered walkways, specifically, why the proposal did not provide for a complete walkway from Classroom Block 'A2' to the M.D.T. Block 'F7'. Mr Locke responded:

"...The major traffic is between the blocks that we put the covered ways. I should say that the school went through a fairly lengthy process looking at options which would fit within the budget and over the whole of the school we tried to spread the money as much as possible but not to the extent that we would not do a reasonable job and that was the hard thing for the school, what to weigh it up against ...

... So basically we could design a covered way and shelters which could be extended in the future, if need be. It would not impact on the school community, whereas if we had tried to reduce the upgrading of inside of some of the subject blocks it would have been a lot more difficult and a lot more pain for the school afterwards. So it was basically a decision taken considering all those factors and also considering the factor that it is a certain number of days in the year, we now have provided some shelter areas up through the school, right up to the last block, so even though we do not have a covered way between the last two blocks it was seen as the least, if you like, important issue when we considered all the other factors."

*Integration of disabled students*

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to the extent the policy of integration into schools of disabled students has impacted upon the proposal in terms of design and cost. Mr Locke submitted:-

"I should make a statement that in a lot of the schools we have varying levels, lots of steps, et cetera—there (are) very few of them which are on one level and are easy to access. The other statement I should make is that it is just not students in wheelchairs we are talking about, it is people with difficulties just walking—they may have sight difficulties. So the sorts of things we are talking about in most of the schools is that we get rid of dangerous steps, we have little ramps and those sorts of issues and those sorts of issues help all the students, they do not just help the disabled students. So the specific things that we talk about may be the toilet facilities but even there we have the aspect of ambulant disability and they have to have more space.

When you get down to detail in the student areas, it is becoming more and more evident that with the aids that these students have—I am talking about the practical situation and not the philosophical—the aids that they have with the new wheelchairs, the adjustable wheelchairs and all the other factors, that we do not have to specialise as much in terms of designing the furniture. So even though we have to think about things like levers on taps and the position of benches, et cetera, those things actually help other students as well. So I would say, yes, there is a big cost factor if you are talking about getting from one complete level to another—you have lifts, et cetera. But as far as the rest of the upgrading is concerned it is probably just as advantageous to the other students as it is to the disabled students.

The other factor I have noticed is the interaction between the abled students and the disabled students, there just seems to be a lot more responsibility on the part of the able students and that interaction in school life is a positive thing, I think."

Mr Butler added:

"... could I add for the record from an education point of view I have been totally in favour of the integration. It has been magnificent the development that the disabled children have shown and there has been widespread support by parents for the development there."

Mr Gourlay submitted:

"... in any event in relation to the provision of access, we have a mandatory obligation—a statutory requirement that all redevelopment projects will comply with the current codes in the DDA—the Disability Discrimination Act—and that is a fairly stringent code that ensures that all new buildings and significantly refurbished buildings will be fully accessible... the Building Code of Australia covers it very thoroughly and there is specific reference and very detailed requirements in respect of toileting facilities, transfer between levels, equity of access for people with varying levels of mobility and it does not require you to completely rebuild existing structures that have obstacles or barriers that are outside reasonable bounds to amend but where you have the capacity to change buildings that have obstacles for access then you are required to do that under the code. So, with or without the integration of students, we would be building a barrier-free facility at Cosgrove."

*Consolidation of schools in the northern suburbs*

The Committee questioned the witnesses in relation to the enrolments and projected enrolments for the Cosgrove, Rosetta and Claremont High Schools. Given that the driving time between each school is six and four minutes' respectively, the Committee sought an assurance that alternatives had been considered, namely some form of consolidation of these schools, and that the proposed redevelopment was in the public interest in respect to the use of resources and would still be required in the event of any foreseeable rationalisation or amalgamation.

Mr Butler submitted:

"All the literature I have read in recent years ... strongly argues that to develop a sense of community that is absolutely essential in schools, especially for this age group of children, the ideal enrolment is somewhere between about 500 and 600. My practical experience tells me that amply, from my experience previously at Glenora, Murray High School and at New Norfolk High School, the kinds of problems that were not manifest there in antisocial behaviour that has been manifested in Cosgrove High School since my time here when the enrolment has dropped from 800 to 550—or theoretically 800 at any rate when I arrived in October 1996—but I believe about 550 to 600, you should not have children in this age group in any bigger institution."

Mr Gourlay added:

"... as a facilities manager and with the responsibility for the assets of the department, we have an ongoing project that looks at school utilisation ... cost of service provision and appropriate service delivery channels in the various geographical areas. It would be imprudent of us not to do that but the whole exercise involves detailed consultation with school communities and detailed analysis of the costs and quality of education being delivered in these various schools. So, it is an ongoing exercise and it is a fairly complex matter and on the basis that it might seem that there are opportunities that might be easily realised it is a fairly involved and detailed process and one the department is addressing and working on in an ongoing sense."

The issue was further clarified when the Committee sought an assurance from the witnesses that given the proposal was for expenditure in excess of \$2.5m, the expectation of the Committee would be that the school would continue and that there were no plans within the Department to close Cosgrove.

Mr Gourlay submitted:

"No, I can indicate that in respect of any major works project the Treasury guidelines now require that any department undertake a very detailed value management study and this is affectionately known as the PIT process—the project initiation process. I have a copy of the document that was prepared under those requirements for Cosgrove High and having looked at the various options and examined the condition of the school and the ongoing demand it was a clear outcome of this study, this exercise, that there is an ongoing requirement for a secondary education facility in the location that Cosgrove High provides the service. It did look at alternative options and I certainly reinforced them under the proposed project before us today."

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The evidence presented to the Committee demonstrated the need at Cosgrove High School to modernise the teaching areas, address the major maintenance items in relation to each building and to configure the buildings in the most appropriate way to reflect the current demand as represented by the current and projected enrolments.

The Committee was concerned to ensure that the proposed expenditure would not be effectively wasted were Cosgrove to be involved in a school rationalisation process in the medium term. The Committee is satisfied that this will not occur and that it is appropriate to approve the project.

In view of the low enrolment of Claremont High School, its close proximity to Cosgrove and Rosetta High Schools, and the capacity of these two schools to accommodate more students, the Committee is of the view that the Department should give serious consideration to a rationalisation which would create two larger high schools from these three institutions.

The Committee recommends that consideration be given to directing any savings achieved towards completing the covered walkway to the M.D.T. Block 'F7'.

Accordingly, the Committee recommends the project, in accordance with the plans and specifications submitted, at an estimated total cost of \$2,518,000.

Parliament House, HOBART  
25 May 1999

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