(No. 19)



## PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

# Major Redevelopment of St Marys District School

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

## MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council

House of Assembly

Mr Farrell Mr Valentine Mrs Rylah (Chair) Mr Llewellyn Mr Shelton

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

To Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Kate Warner AC, Governor in and over the State of Tasmania and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia.

# MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

The Committee has investigated the following proposal:-

# Major Redevelopment of St Marys District School

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

# 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This reference recommended the Committee approve works for a major redevelopment of St Marys District School to provide contemporary and flexible learning environments, an improved music and performing arts facility including a new canteen, improvements to administrative, staff and support facilities and suitable staff and student amenities.
- 2.2 The proposed works have been developed in response to a number of identified deficiencies, directly resulting from the age, nature and layout of many of the school buildings.
- 2.3 The project will include the following works:
  - Provision of additional general learning areas of 90m<sup>2</sup> for the junior school and 75m<sup>2</sup> floor area for the senior cohort with appropriate withdrawal and support facilities;
  - Consolidation of the performing arts into a central facility complex accommodating music, dance and drama along with storage, amenities, new canteen and a foyer space;
  - Refurbishment of the administration centre to provide suitable accommodation for all staff, including main reception, staff offices, amenities, and meeting room;
  - Works to improve campus connectivity and improve accessibility;
  - Rationalisation of external learning and social space, ensuring improved facilities for each age cohort to enhance amenity and a reduction of safety incidents;
  - Provision of an efficient solution to student lockers to reduce anti-social behaviour; and
  - Provision of appropriate student amenities to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- 2.4 The proposed works will deliver the following benefits:

- Utilises the existing building fabric and site infrastructure;
- Reinforces the flow of year groups through the school;
- Creates and identifies year level learning precincts within the structure of the campus;
- Clusters all year groups around the centre of the school;
- Reinforces the links between year groups and the supporting functions;
- Locates the performing arts complex for easy access by parent and community groups off the existing car park; and
- Maintains existing access, bus and car parking areas.

# 3 PROJECT COSTS

3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is \$5 million.

The following table details the cost estimates for the project:

Item	\$'000
Construction	3,650
Up-front expenses including consultant fees	389
Furniture and Equipment	450
Construction, Infrastructure and Post-Occupancy contingencies	439
Art Work	72
Total:	5,000

# 4 EVIDENCE

- 4.1 The Committee commenced its inquiry on Wednesday, 26 July last with an inspection of the St Marys District School. The Committee then commenced the public hearing at the school, whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:-
  - Todd Williams, Acting Director, Facility Services, Department of Education;
  - Ros Smith, Acting Principal St Marys District School;
  - Mr Nick Wardlaw, Music Teacher, St Marys District School; and
  - David Gillies, Architect 6ty°.

## **Project Overview**

4.2 Mr Williams provided an overview of the proposed works:

Thank you to the committee for making the time to tour the school today. That is very important to get a real feel. Whilst we can always read submissions and documents, as you have experienced today, the real-life feel is very important. As you would have seen this morning, the school is doing its best to work within the facilities it has. Unfortunately those facilities are very dated, are not of the contemporary nature, and don't provide the modern, flexible facilities that schools should have to undertake their education. It is very valuable for you to have seen that first-hand.

The State Government has allocated \$5 million to provide contemporary learning environments with a focus on the music and performing arts and the support areas, which have been lacking, and staff areas, and also the amenities of the school and the administration.

The department has worked closely with the support of  $6ty^\circ$ , the consulting firm, to engage with the school and the school community over the last 12 months to develop the plans you see in front of you today. There have been a number of discussions and consultation through that process which has engaged with the staff, the students and the school community to reach this point.

There is broad support throughout the community for this submission and we welcome your consideration.

4.3 Ms Smith also provided and overview of the school and the need for the proposed works:

**Ms SMITH** - St Marys District School has a long history in this community of providing secondary education to students from a very wide geographical basis, incorporating Upper Esk, Mathinna, Fingal, St Marys, Bicheno, Seymour, Coles Bay, Scamander, Beaumaris, St Helens, Four Mile Creek and Falmouth. With the closure of the Mathinna Primary School and the amalgamation of the Fingal Primary School in 2011, we also provide primary education for students from throughout the Fingal Valley.

Our school is an integral part of our rural and isolated community and the facilities are frequently accessed by various members of our community. As we move forward with providing additional services to a range of students from this geographically increasing region, our facilities need to be substantially developed to meet the demands of providing a twenty-first century education and access to the digital age. It is essential that we are able to provide our students with a range of opportunities which will support them in achieving educational outcomes which are not hindered but enhanced by our rural, isolated and very strong community.

Our community, both extended and within the school, set high standards for our young people and we aim to provide them with every opportunity to be successful within our community and set them up for success beyond their time at St Marys District School and promote a culture of lifelong learning.

The whole school and extended community are excited about the opportunity to upgrade our 1950s facilities and to accommodate students who will be our leaders into the future. We are excited to offer them the opportunity to work in an environment they can have pride in and which will accommodate all aspects of their learning.

Our school has a focus, through our school improvement plan, of developing student thinking. We have a two-year emphasis on teaching problem-solving approaches to support our students in leaving and succeeding in an ever-changing world. We believe the development of the general learning areas will provide our teaching staff with flexible learning spaces to use a variety of teaching and learning approaches to support this emphasis on problem solving.

Our staff are also several years into a planning approach where we work together as part of collaborative planning teams. The planned learning environments and shared teaching staff studies and senior staff offices will support this important work.

...... I have personally worked in this wonderful community for 20 years, both as a teacher and as a local business owner. We have a vibrant and supportive parent community and excellent staff who are all dedicated to the development of outstanding young people who will lead our community into the future. The proposed redevelopment is an exciting time for us all. We believe these works will support our school in providing 21st century educational outcomes in revamped and revitalised buildings, complementing the stunning natural environment we work in every day. We ask you to support the plans for the redevelopment of St Marys District School.

## **General Learning Areas**

4.4 The Committee noted that enrolments were not anticipated to grow and sought further information on the impact of the proposed works on general learning areas. The witnesses noted that while there was no gain in the number of classrooms (although there will be an increase in performing arts teaching spaces), the redeveloped learning areas would be larger, more flexible and efficient, which is in line with the 21<sup>st</sup> century collaborative learning philosophy observed by the Department:

**CHAIR** - I note the population projections are not growing. The school is at a constant level of population over the next five years. With this redevelopment, is it a zero sum gain in that are we demolishing some buildings or some rooms and gaining more teaching space? What is happening here? I see the FECA is increasing, but what is happening with teaching spaces?

**Mr WILLIAMS** - The FECA is the fully enclosed covered area. It is a measurement we use to measure the size of the buildings which comes into play from a resource allocation point of view for cleaning and maintenance.

The focus of the redevelopment - and I might hand over to people with a bit more expertise in that area - is around providing flexible learning environments. The school has capacity for a larger number of people. However, it is not working very well. We are focused on improving the size of the classrooms because, as you saw today, a number of them are very constrained and do not provide flexibility. The plans are all around that flexibility.

Whilst the projections at this stage are not showing considerable growth, we want to make sure that should that change, we have the flexibility to accommodate that. We have marked

on the plans future development areas in regard to years 11 and 12, which has been well received. The potential growth in that area is not reflected in the projections we have presented in that submission. I am not sure if Ros or David want to add anything?

**Ms SMITH** - Probably the only other aspect which could influence the number of students we have here is that we are currently a feeder school for Bicheno and we would currently probably get about 50 per cent of those students. Fifty per cent go to Hobart and access schools in Hobart and about 50 per cent come to this school. We would like to be in a position where we would have everybody who had children at Bicheno feeling comfortable to send their children to these facilities and not be thinking that they had to choose whether their children left home when they were in grade 6 to access better educational facilities in Hobart. Regardless of their circumstances, they would be thinking that they can send their children to school here. That could influence how many children we have because at the moment it would be around the 50 per cent mark who are choosing either direction.

CHAIR - Are we getting more teaching spaces or is it a constant number?

**Ms SMITH** - We would be picking up additional teaching spaces for our performing arts area. There are going to be three teaching spaces there where we currently only have one and the space is flexible enough to then be used for its current purpose as well.

**CHAIR** - No other additional classroom places in the redevelopment? It was hard to try to work that out.

**Ms SMITH** - No, it is the same number of spaces.

**Mr GILLIES** - In terms of the classrooms, there are six now that they have currently. In the redevelopment there will also be six classrooms but they are going to be more efficient. They are going to be larger and more flexible.

#### **New Performing Arts Complex**

4.5 Ms Smith highlighted the limitations of the school's current preforming arts facilities and the advantages of the new performing arts venue. Not only will the new facility address the challenges the school has faced in providing performing arts programs, it will also address other deficiencies. It will provide space for whole-of-school indoor gatherings with the ability to accommodate parents and community members, and will include a student common room and new canteen:

.....We are excited that plans will allow them to work in a dedicated space where collaboration and cross-subject connections can be supported. The previous housing of these two subjects in sub-standard separate buildings has been a challenge. The discovery of asbestos in the music room has resulted in a loss of necessary storage. Development of this area has also been restricted. We have also had issues with timetabling in a District High School to allow both primary and secondary music and drama. Primary music is taught by a different teacher from the secondary classes. We have had to timetable them in on different days so that we have the facilities for more than one group to work at a time. The new facilities will make this timetabling and transition between the primary and secondary programs for music and drama seamless for staff and students.

This space will also address another long-term issue we have had with space. There has only been one indoor space large enough for all of our students in our District School to meet together, which has been the gymnasium. If students are in this space on the floor, it is cold, there is no stage, and the acoustics are very poor. Our current school hall has been too small to comfortably fit all the students. Even if we can squeeze them all in, we are unable to fit any parents or community members into the space. The new performing arts space with the removable walls will suit the dual purpose of having a space that can be divided into separate rooms to enable group practice while still being suitable to open up for our whole community to enjoy school events and successes.

The addition of the canteen into this space and the break-out student common room will make this space suitable for a variety of community events, connecting facilities into one location. Currently all catering occurs in our kitchen on the other side of the school and we do not have the ability to cater successfully in this area. In addition, the current canteen is small and difficult for staff to supervise.

We live in a very cold part of Tasmania. The students currently go to places such as the library, the canteen, the gym and an older classroom at lunchtimes to keep warm during the cold months. This spread of students over a variety of areas has created supervision difficulties for staff as these spaces are not designed as dedicated spaces for students and visual access to some of the spaces is limited. The open but dedicated space of the common room, which is close to the canteen and toilet facilities, and a central location within our school, is something that students have been requesting for a long time.

4.6 The Committee sought further information from Mr Wardlaw, a long-term music teacher with the school, on the challenges he had faced in the current facilities and his view of the proposed new facility:

**Mr FARRELL** - This is probably in your area, Mr Wardlaw. I believe arts in the form of music and drama are really important in schools. A large part of the redevelopment here substantially expands the music area. The school has a great reputation for music so far and you have done very well with the existing facilities. How do you see this major expansion of the music area affecting the school, the students and the broader community in general? I know you do have interaction with the community.

**Mr WARDLAW** - At the moment we do not have a purpose-built primary music classroom. Classroom sizes are generally on the increase. At the current facility we are unable to teach primary music. We have had to make use of a temporary space in the primary school.

This new development will allow us to further encourage the community to use these facilities. At the moment, we have itinerate music teachers coming in to take specialist lessons for guitar, vocal tutoring and drums. With this construction it will allow us to encourage more of that type of extra tuition which we require. As well as that I can see this facility also being used for community input, events and functions with a purpose-built stage. We are seriously lacking for venues on the east coast for performing arts. A state-of-the-art facility like this with lighting and capacity to hold a seated crowd would certainly be welcomed by the community to be used, apart from the teaching role it would facilitate.

**Mr FARRELL** - What are the current issues you have with teaching and the facilities you have? Is there a restriction to the number of classes you have?

**Mr WARDLAW** - At the moment we can't house an upper primary class in there of 25 students. We can get them seated in that area but if we are using larger instruments, like xylophones and marimbas, percussion instruments, we can't get them in there. I have to look to use a different space if there is one available and a timetabling issue comes in there. I also have a duty of care problem with the facility I have, which is a house, so it has small rooms. If I am based in the main room and I have six groups of other students working in other rooms, behind closed doors, the duty of care is obvious that I can't physically see every person at any one given time. This facility addresses that, with the use of windows. If I am in the central location I will be able to see what is going on.

**Mr FARRELL** - Are you happy with the level of consultation you have had through this process?

**Mr WARDLAW** - Yes. I have been actively involved in this process from the start and the whole project developed from issues we had in the music department. It has needed to be redeveloped for a number of years. I have been teaching here for 27 years and I have been shunted around the school, to use a better word, and I have made my home where I am now. To meet the demands of the current learning environment a new facility is unquestionably needed at the moment.

## Accommodation for Administration and Support Services

4.7 Ms Smith noted the challenges the current administration and support services spaces presented to staff, students and the school community, and highlighted the benefits of the new administration and support services area:

..... The changes to our administration area will provide for a more welcoming and efficient processing of any requests and inquiries. The very small individual spaces currently available have made it difficult for our talented administration team to work as a cohesive team. The new administration area has also been designed to accommodate our support team - the speech therapist and school chaplain, school psychologist and social worker. These staff members, whose role within our school requires a high level of confidentiality and privacy by nature, have been housed in office spaces throughout the school. Some of these office spaces have had issues with soundproofing. All these office spaces have been visible to other students and staff, compromising the ability of the support team to meet the students and guarantee that the student body will not know that students are accessing these services. The design of the new space will allow students to access these services and support without fear of exposure to the general student body.

## **Disability Access**

4.8 The Committee noted there were currently some issues relating to access for disabled students, and sought further information on what measures would be taken as part of the proposed works to address these issues:

**CHAIR** - There are no works that I could see that deal with the outside play/movement space, the alignment of it for disability access. Is that an issue or not? How does the school work?

**Ms SMITH** - I think it is an issue. I thought that from looking at some of the plans that it was part of the planning.

**Ms GILLIES** - It's the case that we are providing disabled access into each of the buildings that we are working on. We are making it all level out the back of building 1, the external courtyard and then connections up to each of the buildings that we are working on. We are providing disabled access.

**CHAIR** - That is all happening in this work. Excellent. I am pleased to hear that.

## **Toilet Facilities**

4.9 Ms Smith noted that currently, student toilet facilities are inadequate and located some distance from classrooms. Ms Smith also noted that this presented some difficulties with supervision and resulted in a loss of learning time for students, and that new amenities attached to the redeveloped learning spaces would overcome these issues:

..... The access to the toilet facilities attached to each of the learning spaces will result in the reduction of lost learning time. Our current secondary toilets are quite a distance away from some classrooms and are in need of major refurbishment. Much learning time is lost with students moving to and from the toilets, sometimes in very inclement weather. Staff

supervision of these students who need to go to the toilet during teaching/learning times has been difficult.

## Internal Classroom Environment

4.10 The Committee noted that the classroom environment was inadequate, with poor comfort levels for students and staff. The Department noted that classrooms were cold and draughty in winter and very hot in summer. Such an environment in not conducive to good teaching and learning outcomes. The Committee questioned the witnesses on what was being done to improve internal classroom environments:

Mr VALENTINE - Are you having double glazing for the most part?

Mr GILLIES - We are, yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Perhaps on that score, can you give us a bit of an overview on how you are improving the solar gain at all, or the environmental performance of the building?

**Mr GILLIES** - The beauty with that building (Building 4) in particular is that we are taking off all the cladding so we can then address floors, walls and ceilings to improve the thermal insulation of it. The idea also is to take the windows out of the building and reinstate them with double-glazed units. Then we have a fully insulated envelope for the building.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And heating, how is that going to be achieved?

**Mr GILLIES** - Each room will be heated and cooled, more than likely with heat pumps in each classroom. They are the most cost-effective units to put in.

#### **Project Management and Staging of Construction**

4.11 The Committee noted that undertaking works in a school presented project management challenges. This includes how works are staged while a school was operating, particularly when existing buildings currently in use are redeveloped. The Committee sought further information on how this would be handled:

**Mr VALENTINE** - One of the biggest problems with a development involving a lot of the school buildings is that the project management side of it must be quite tight and significant. How is that being handled? Are you doing the project management in conjunction with the principal or acting principal?

**Mr GILLIES** - We will go through as part of our documentation process and come up with how the project is to be staged. It won't be all done at once. We will do building by building and that allows the school to relocate those facilities into other parts of the school and keep operating during that period.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Obviously, that has complexities. Are you explaining about students with disabilities and how you have to move certain activities around to cater for them? Are you happy that you will be able to do that effectively?

Ms SMITH - Yes, we will.

Mr VALENTINE - It's not an easy task. I don't envy you.

**Mr WILLIAMS** - It is always a challenge when you are continuing to operate a school and undertaking major construction. It is part of regular business for the department in upgrading our school facilities. We currently have a fairly large capital program, which is

very welcome. The utmost priority is ensuring the safety of staff and students while continuing to operate. With the guidance of 6ty° and working with the school, 6ty° will work out the best plan to stage it to ensure everyone is safe.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I notice that most of it is within existing buildings as opposed to greenfield sites. That is why I asked the question about the extra complexity, trying to have a working school at the same time as doing development.

**Mr LLEWELLYN** - Obviously you need to work out an evaluation review chart of some sort to analyse how you go about doing it. Have you started to do that?

**Mr GILLIES** - We have started thinking about it. We have not formally locked in any stages for the project as yet. It will be a case of working with the school to work out what spaces are available at the moment so we can move functions into and still operate the school.

**Mr WILLIAMS** - We are still going through our planning and approvals. We are respectful of the Public Works Committee and seek its support. We have lodged a Development Application for the plans. We attach those plans that have been lodged with Council for consideration. We are working our way through and, hopefully, in the not too distant future we will be opening up tenders to local construction firms. As we get closer to that point we will start to get our planning and our logistics in place as well.

#### Art Deco Frontage

4.12 Ms Smith noted the importance of retaining the Art Deco frontage of the school in the redevelopment:

**Ms SMITH** - The maintaining of the current Art Deco facade of Building 1 is an extremely important aspect for our school community and we are excited this has been included into the establishment of a dedicated performing arts space.

4.13 The Committee sought further information on how this would be achieved:

**CHAIR** - Ros, as we entered the school from the music room you raised the importance of keeping the Art Deco front area that the community raised. How has that been preserved and what are you doing? It has old windows. What is happening in that space to keep its integrity?

**Mr GILLIES** - The idea would be to take the windows out and put back a profile or a look that is exactly the same as what is there at the moment, putting in aluminium window frames with double-glazed units in them. Essentially the building will look the same but just with modern materials in it. As you drive up the drive, you will still see the round room on the front. There will be a small addition beside that for the stage and practice rooms, but the facade facing the car park will look the same. It will present itself as it does at the moment. Then we will create a new entrance two-thirds of the way down that facade into the new administration wing. Whilst it will still be visible, it will be an understated entry. It is not going to take away from the current architecture.

#### **Priorities for Future Works**

4.14 The Committee was interested to ascertain what other works options were considered, and whether any of these options were future priorities for the school:

**Mr LLEWELLYN** - If we were to have another couple of million dollars, where would you next look to improve the school over and above what is there?

**Mr WARDLAW** - I believe in our early discussions on the plans we were looking at a covered area between block 5, I guess it is block 4, as an undercover area for the students to use in

inclement weather. At the moment it is very limited for them. It would be a space they could have. There were some plans drawn up.

**Mr GILLIES** - Yes, back in the early days when we started working on this project we developed three master plans. One of the first options was to connect buildings 4 and 5 together and create a communal space in between the two buildings which would provide the students with more indoor space.

Mr LLEWELLYN - Is that possible now with the existing drawings?

**Mr GILLIES** - It certainly is an opportunity down the track to put that in but it might mean some modifications to either building to make it work.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There is pretty inclement weather here in winter.

**Mr GILLIES** - That is why we went down that path. When we received the prices back on it, it was a little bit too far to stretch the funds, so we looked at a couple of different options to scale it back.

**Mr LLEWELLYN** - I was just going to finish off on the point I was making before with regard to the prospective or further submission that you might make regarding the covering of that particular area. If it is at all possible and if that is an urgent issue that will be required some time in the future, we really need to make sure that what we do now doesn't hinder that into the future.

**Mr WILLIAMS** - If I may add, we take a conservative approach in framing our projects and our budgets. We do have the contingency allowances in there which are necessary to have. With any project, as you progress you are going to find things that come to light. Should we progress well through that project, should we get a good tender result, then we certainly would consider using any funds that become available to tackle the next raft of priorities for the school as well.

Also, the Department has an annual capital works process. Through this planning, it has brought to light the next raft of submissions that the school can put forward that have been well considered and scoped. We are absolutely mindful of setting the school up for the future and making sure it is clear where those next priorities are.

4.15 The Committee also noted the current policy of extending Years 11 and 12 to high schools and sought further information on what works would need to be undertaken if the school were to offer Year 11 and 12:

**Mr VALENTINE** - On that, we were talking about years 11 and 12. If perchance you did get those extra students from Bicheno or wherever they come from, you are confident that you can provide the space needed to be able to satisfy the need for those college years, if I could put it that way?

**Ms SMITH** - Yes. On the plans there is a space which would currently be the art room which will be a dedicated space for years 11 and 12. We currently use it because we have a dry lab in the science building that is used for the science lessons that we teach. And there is a classroom currently attached to our trade training centre.

**Mr GILLIES** - If art is displaced out of the space it is in at the moment it will move into the MDT components. All the arts sections will be together.

## Does the Project Meet Identified Needs and Provide Value for Money?

4.16 In assessing any proposed public work, the Committee seeks assurance that each project is a good use of public funds and meets identified needs. The Committee questioned the witnesses who confirmed that the proposed works addressed the areas of highest priority identified by the school community, with both the school's future needs and value for money at the forefront in the planning and design process:

**Mr VALENTINE** - .....I am assuming that it is not the holy dollar that is necessarily driving this but good design. Would that be right? .....We are not going to look back on this in years to come and think 'why on earth did we do that'. I am interested in the design philosophy. I have read some of what you have said. I hope it's the case that we can look back on this in 15 or 20 years and say that it was a good decision.

**Mr WILLIAMS** - Certainly from a value-for-money consideration, we do consider ourselves fortunate. We have a healthy allocation to work with - \$5 million. We can do some well-planned, strategic work that sets the school up for the future focusing on the priority areas.

Mr VALENTINE - Not just corner cutting. Thanks for that.

**CHAIR** - Ros, would you say this project we have before us fits the purpose for which the community and the school community want?

**Ms SMITH** - Yes, it would and it addresses the most urgent needs we have.

**CHAIR** - Todd, and I do not want to verbal you, do you think this is value for money from the Government's perspective?

Mr WILLIAMS - Yes, I do.

# 5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE

- 5.1 The following documents were taken into evidence and considered by the Committee:
  - Major Redevelopment of St Marys District School Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Department of Education 26 July 2017.

# 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 deliver contemporary learning environments, a new performing arts facility including a student common room and new canteen, redeveloped administration facilities including appropriate staff and support areas, and new, more appropriately located amenities. The proposed works will overcome a number of identified deficiencies with the current ageing school building stock and will provide flexible and adaptable learning spaces to support 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning practices.
- 6.2 Accordingly, the Committee recommends the Major Redevelopment of St Marys District School, at a cost of \$5 million, in accordance with the documentation submitted.

Joan hufal

Parliament House Hobart 25 August 2017 Joan Rylah MP Chair