

**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT
ROSEBERY MEMORIAL HALL, MAIN ROAD, ROSEBERY, ON TUESDAY
17 FEBRUARY 2009**

ROSEBERY DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Ms CATH PARKER, MANAGER, CAPITAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT,
Mr ALEX DOWNES, PRINCIPAL, ROSEBERY DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL AND
Mr MIKE WILKINSON, DIRECTOR, ARTAS ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS PTY
LTD WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE
EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Harriss) - Before we commence, we thank you for the tour of the school this morning, Alex.

Mr DOWNES - Our pleasure.

The Department of Education is seeking approval for the redevelopment of general and specialist learning areas, support facilities and external works at Rosebery District High School. This project has funding allocated over the 2008-09-10 financial years. The submission before the Government details a proposal to develop the grades 7-10 general learning areas to improve student ownership, equity and management, to integrate specialist learning areas to better facilitate synergies across subjects, to combine the library and online centre into a space that provides more effective school and public access, to provide flexible space for school and community and learning and training and to improve the accessibility within the campus.

As background to the proposal and as outlined in the submission, Rosebery District High School provides early childhood, primary, secondary and senior secondary education services. In addition, the site has a skill centre used to facilitate adult learning within the area. It is supported by a library/resource centre that provides whole-of-community access and online IT facilities.

The school services the needs of the township of Rosebery on the west coast of Tasmania and has a current enrolment of around 165, drawn predominantly from Rosebery, Tullah and Zeehan. The curriculum offered targets traditional literacy, numeracy, positive behaviour and effective reporting.

The school was originally re-established in the 1960s and has grown in stages to service the requirements of the mining community. The school also manages 16 teacher residences as part of its property portfolio. Overall, a considerable amount of existing accommodation is in an original condition and in need of refurbishment in order to provide a contemporary and equitable learning environment. In general, only a limited portion of the school has been replaced or extensively refurbished over the life of the facility, other than cyclical maintenance, minor refurbishment and fit-out alterations.

In summary, this redevelopment will achieve a quantum increase in the quality and amenity of the facilities available to the school and wider regional community.

Mr BEST - It was interesting that when we were having the tour earlier this morning it was quite apparent that some of the design features were out of context for what is required at Rosebery. Obviously some of this redevelopment will address some of those needs. We talked about some of the roofing issues and things like that.

Mr DOWNES - We were doing some work on the roof to address the leakages and the roof alignment. Certainly our classroom facilities need major work and need to be brought up to twenty-first century capacity. This particular redevelopment allows us to restructure the school so that we have specialist secondary areas and primary areas and it begins a process of contextualising a school for west-coast conditions. You are quite right.

Mr BEST - There has been a move with online centres to put them in schools but also here you have the public library at the school, so there is very much a community focus within the school here.

Mr DOWNES - Yes, very significant. The library is used by lots of people. There are many occasions over the week where students and the public are in the library using it together. Similarly, though to a lesser extent, the online access centre is open for many hours over the week. Significant numbers of people attend that facility. Our hope in bringing the online access centre into the school is to increase the services even more and to provide more relevant services to our community.

Mr BEST - What is your projected number at the school? It also depends on what happens economically, I know, because minerals could go through the roof next year - who knows what might happen globally.

Mr DOWNES - We are reasonably confident that our numbers will be around 150 for the next two or three years, give or take 10 or 15. If the mining industry takes off again then the numbers might go back to the 180s that we got them to a couple of years ago.

Mr BEST - Mike, have there been any specific design things that you have needed to think about with regard to the proposed development?

Mr WILKINSON - One of the most significant things is getting universal access through the buildings and being able to provide sheltered-ramp access for all students. That has been a key factor in the whole design and it links all the areas that we are reorganising and reshuffling. That has probably been the most significant thing, along with the new building work associated with each of the two atria, where the ramps are coming up through the buildings - both in building 1B and building 1C, the top one and the next one down.

Mr BEST - That central courtyard, is that another stage away, or at least coverage of it?

Mr WILKINSON - Yes.

Mr BEST - And you are looking at condensing some of the heritage things that you have there. We looked at the area, the Greek collection and other bits and pieces, and you are thinking about putting that near the access to the library.

Mr WILKINSON - Into the library and the online, yes.

Mr BEST - So that adds the community and learning aspect of the school, doesn't it?

Mr WILKINSON - Yes.

Mr DOWNES - We get a lot of tourists who actually walk into the school. They look at the waterwheel at the front and the mining equipment. We want to bring that feature out to the front so they can look at that as well.

Mr BEST - Excuse my ignorance here, but is there a museum at Rosebery?

Mr DOWNES - Yes there is a museum 50 meters north at the Heritage Centre.

Mr BEST - So you might be able to link up a bit with that one?

Mr DOWNES - We have and we will continue to do so.

Mr BEST - What has been the feeling of the parents and friends? I am not sure what your numbers are with parents and friends and the fact also that there was some mention that some students come in from Zeehan and surrounds and no doubt they would be excited about it.

Mr DOWNES - Yes, certainly we have had a lot of talks and a lot of consultation with our parent group and both our fund-raising group and our school association are very excited about the possibilities.

Mr GREEN - Were they involved in the consultation leading up to the final design?

Mr DOWNES - Absolutely, yes, all our meetings had representatives from the school association, ancillary staff, the parent body, the fund-raising group and teachers. We invited the Neighbourhood Centre, invited people from Ausminerals to come down and be part of that as well. So everybody has had an opportunity to be part of that process.

Mr GREEN - On the tour you mentioned that there are some buildings that are going to be demolished altogether -

Mr DOWNES - Yes.

Mr GREEN - Can you inform the committee why you would want to demolish those buildings?

Mr DOWNES - There are two reasons why those buildings need to go. One is structural: they are structurally unsound and it would cost more to renovate than to demolish. Secondly, the student population has fallen to a point where we don't need those rooms for present requirements.

Mr GREEN - You were showing us some windows along the side of one building that cost you a lot of money to maintain.

Mr DOWNES - Yes at the bottom end of the school there is a public walkway. Even though it cuts through the school it's been a public walkway for so long that anybody can walk through there any time of the day. The whole side has been a problem for us in terms of maintenance, broken windows and damage for the three years I have been here. It is a major issue.

Mr GREEN - Even though I arrived a little late for the tour, I must admit that from the design point of view whoever thought all this through has done a very good job. It was obviously very complicated before and I can see exactly what you are trying to do in terms of centralising the school as opposed to the decentralised situation that prevails at the moment. So congratulations to everybody who has put in the effort to design and do the work. To have the vision to see a different model within that school precinct is a fair achievement.

Mr DOWNES - Thanks, Bryan, it has taken three years, just quietly, building that vision so it has been extensive.

Mr GREEN - Thank you, Chair.

Mr HALL - A couple of questions. On page 14 you talk about the project time lines and the last line talks about construction defects liability period. I presume that refers to the notes underneath where we have a downturn in the mining industry and the lack of skilled tradesmen. Just explain the line to me, if you wouldn't mind?

Mr WILKINSON - The defects liability period is the period of 12 months normally and it will be for this project for the building contractor to come back and correct any defects that occurred during that period which were not foreseen at the date the project finished.

Mr HALL - I do not think I have seen that line in a project before. Maybe I have or maybe I have missed it.

Mr WILKINSON - It is a segment at the end of a building contract that we always provide for.

Mr HALL - Yes fair enough.

Given those notes that you have on the potential project constraints, are you confident that the contingency of \$100 000 is sufficient?

Mr WILKINSON - I think so. It is about 7.5 per cent or something like that. That is pretty normal I think we could manage it within that.

Mr HALL - Okay.

Mr WILKINSON - That contingency is only really for unforeseen works although it does get to fund some school requests at times for little things that get included. Generally

speaking it has to be reserved for unforeseen building works for problems that crop up during the course of construction.

CHAIR - While we are on the costings and contingencies, we usually go down this track with most submissions which come to the committee. In the event there is nothing unforeseen encountered on the project, you come within budget and you do not need to dip into the \$100 000, is that available for other works or is that returned to the Consolidated Fund?

Ms PARKER - What normally happens is that the school can work with the architect to extend the scope of the works. What generally happens in the initial planning is that there might have been a request for additional works but we have had to shave those back because the budget would not cover them. Then, as we go through, we might find that because we do not need that contingency we are able to extend the project to include those works that have already been identified but were not able to be funded. So it is returned to this particular project.

CHAIR - Just flowing on from that would be the obvious question as to what the estimate might be to cover the courtyard area at some stage, being a future project?

Mr WILKINSON - The roof is being costed at \$41 000 and the concrete slab is being costed at about \$6 000, or maybe \$10 000. I think the whole lot is about \$51 000. Then if we want to fence it off to make it secure at night time and on the weekends, the steel picket fence is another \$4 000, so about \$54 000-\$55 000.

CHAIR - So with a fair wind and a bit of luck, you might be able to get that part of that expectation covered off in this job?

Mr DOWNES - Yes, let us hope.

Ms PARKER - It would definitely be a possibility.

Mr WILKINSON - Some of the information we have been receiving on cost estimates, particularly services estimates, is that there has been a bit of a downturn in prices and they are getting more competitive, although Rosebery is a fair way to come for someone from Burnie, say, to service the job. So we are not anticipating that those savings will be as much as they might be in a major regional centre like on the north-west coast or in Launceston.

CHAIR - So is it the department's desire then, Cath, to do that courtyard covering in this project if the money is available?

Ms PARKER - If that is the wish of the school community, it certainly would be, and I should say, Mr Chairman, we are also interested and enthusiastic about the money that is flowing through from the Commonwealth under the Rudd stimulus package. We see opportunities there for extending the scope of works and doing a more substantial project around that multipurpose hall if, again, that is the wish of the school community.

So I think the flow-on effect of that money might have a very large impact in this school.

CHAIR - I think I could speak for every committee member and say we would be encouraged by that. If that is the direction the department is heading, there will be no opposition from the school community, I will bet.

Mr DOWNES - No, the school has not had a major refurbishment for many years and it really needs a lot of work.

CHAIR - That covered courtyard area would be really desirable in this project.

Ms PARKER - Yes, and in this climate in the west coast. I think we all know the extremes of temperature and the sort of weather that comes through here.

Mr HALL - How many square metres is that courtyard area?

Mr WILKINSON - It is 350-400.

Mr DOWNES - It is about 20-odd metres, squared. About 20 metres by 20 metres.

Mr HALL - So it would encompass 150 kids comfortably? If need be, will it take up the whole population of the school if need be?

Mr WILKINSON - I would think so.

Mr DOWNES - That area is an ideal area to be covered because it has protection on three sides.

Mr WILKINSON - Also, it is right next to the hall, which can be opened up to it.

CHAIR - With regard to building 1A, the longer-term plan to construct a small extension to provide student toilets and a cleaner's store is not included in the scope of this submission, is it?

Mr WILKINSON - We were going to include it in our tender documents but we asked for an itemised price for it so that if we have a problem with the budget it is one of those items that we can, perhaps, do later.

CHAIR - But you might get that as well.

Mr WILKINSON - Yes.

Mr HALL - Another quick question I have, and it is not germane to this project: I have noticed that you also manage 16 teacher residences which is a quite considerable task. Are they up to speed at this stage? Are they going to need some work?

Mr DOWNES - They are getting up to speed. I think it would be fair to say there was a time where maintenance was not as a high a priority as it should have been, but certainly we have had extensive talks with the department and we have had some bathrooms and kitchens replaced and so we feel we are on track with that part of the management of the school.

Mr HALL - I realise Rosebery's relative isolation, do many other schools have that?

Ms PARKER - Yes, we do have funding under a minor works budget to maintain teacher residences.

Mr HALL - There wouldn't be many schools that would have as many as 16 though?

Ms PARKER - No, I don't think so. I am not exactly sure of the numbers and where they are situated but certainly we do spend a proportion of our minor works budget on maintaining those houses.

Mr HALL - Apart from that, Mr Chair, I think it is quite a complex project in some ways in that it is trying to rectify a school which has probably been added to over time - there are a few of those around the State, I suppose, and to me it seems to be a sound proposition.

Mr WILKINSON - Thank you.

CHAIR - Back to the costings, what do you expect to be picked up in the post-occupancy commissioning works? What sort of scope work would that involve?

Ms PARKER - Maybe I can talk to that, Mr Chair. As part of our overall allocation of the project budget, we maintain 2 per cent of the construction budget for what we call post-occupancy contingency. This is to cover things that the school might identify that are not necessarily connected to the scope of works. They might think, 'Oh, we didn't want a door there, we wanted a door over there, that's not the way we thought it was going to be on the plans'. We find that there are things that are not picked up under the formal defects procedures because they relate to the plans but there are additional things that the school decides that they wish they had done, or wish they had thought about as part of the original works. So again that money is paid out to the school to pick up those things at the end of a project that they might not have foreseen.

CHAIR - With an overall management with the school community involved you could well have \$124 000 available, if you throw in the general contingency. The school might say, 'We're going to really bite the bullet here and be happy with what we've got', so there is no post-occupancy contingency required. So it is really conceivable that those other works could come right into this project.

Mr WILKINSON - Yes, quite possibly.

Ms PARKER - I would certainly be optimistic, wouldn't you Alex?

Mr DOWNES - Always optimistic.

CHAIR - There is nothing identified in the demolition area, do you expect that to be a reasonable component of the project? There is a bit of work there with clearing the site.

Mr WILKINSON - There is a fair bit of demolition work there. I am trying to remember the -

Mr DOWNES - There is \$70 000 for the demolition work.

Mr WILKINSON - It might be that or a little bit less, Alex, but it is a fairly significant item of external works.

CHAIR - That is built into the \$1.52 million, I suppose?

Mr WILKINSON - Yes.

CHAIR - I do not have any further questions.

Mr HALL - On page 14, project time lines - am I missing something there? On the third last line 'construction completed in stages up to', you have left that - is that a flexible area at this stage?

Mr WILKINSON - Yes, we are in the final phases of documenting the project at the moment and Alex and I need to sit down so he has a good understanding of how the works will proceed and how they best suit Rosebery District High School. It may not be possible to do it all in the one hit, having the builder work on all the aspects around the school at one time, so we might need to do the top building first, leave it, do the middle section -

Mr HALL - So it follows on, occupation by the school in stages as well?

Mr WILKINSON - Yes.

CHAIR - There is one other area I want to cover off on. The submission indicates that when the all-weather external play area is constructed, it may combine with a new canteen. We understand from the site visit that the canteen is to be relocated anyway to -

Mr WILKINSON - The student lounge and the staff room.

CHAIR - Yes, so it is being relocated anyway as part of this expectation. Will there be another canteen?

Mr WILKINSON - No. If we are running pretty close to the wind, it is one of those items that might be funded separately, either by the school or as part of some future works of fitting out that canteen. We will live with the canteen that we have in the meantime.

CHAIR - The floor plans we have -

Mr WILKINSON - Reflect the new position.

CHAIR - showing the reconfiguration show the canteen being relocated?

Mr WILKINSON - Yes.

CHAIR - But in the event that the main courtyard can be covered, will the canteen be located closer to that covered area, because that's what it seems to suggest on page 7?

Mr WILKINSON - At one point in time we had an option for the canteen to be down there but in talking with Alex and the school, we have considered that the best location for it is up with the student lounge and closer to the staffroom.

CHAIR - Fine, because I was looking at that as part of an extra in the event that the covered area can be achieved, but that will not be required. The canteen, if it is being relocated, goes to where indicated on the plan and that is by negotiation with the school?

Mr WILKINSON - Yes.

Ms PARKER - There is a possibility, Mr Chairman, if for example the courtyard area is covered and it is opened up from the existing multi-purpose hall, it might be desirable - particularly if the hall is to be opened for community use after hours - that there is a tea-and coffee-making facility or kitchenette area built into that. So we will think about that as well.

CHAIR - Thank you. Any further comments you would like to make?

Mr DOWNES - No, thank you for visiting and making yourselves more aware of the project. I think we have agreed that it is reasonably worthwhile project and we look forward to its beginning.

Mr BEST - Thank you for a good report too, it is very easy to follow and the tour was great.

CHAIR - Thank you, we will stay now to deliberate on this project, plus a couple of other issues we need to attend to, before we depart. Thank you for your hospitality.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.