

**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT
THE BURNIE CIVIC CENTRE ON MONDAY 19 OCTOBER 2009.**

ROMAINE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms RHONDA DINEEN, ACTING PRINCIPAL, ACTON PRIMARY SCHOOL AND **Mr ANDREW GATES**, BROOKLYN SCHOOL ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED AND **Mr MALCOLM WELLS**, GENERAL MANAGER, LEARNING SERVICES NORTH WEST, **Mr ANDREW FINCH**, DIRECTOR - FINANCE, FACILITIES AND BUSINESS SUPPORT, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, AND **Mr HEATH CLAYTON**, CONSULTANT ARCHITECT, ARTAS ARCHITECTS, WERE RECALLED AND FURTHER EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Harriss) - Welcome, everyone. We will launch straight in.

Mr WELLS - Thank you very much, Paul. I have a similar context statement in relation to Romaine Park as I had for our earlier hearing. I want to point out the real contrast, if you like, between the two processes and the circumstances from this morning to this afternoon, where one was about nearly three or more years and another one was about three or more months. Certainly it is really important that the Building Education Revolution funding as a critical enabler for what has happened in this circumstance is acknowledged.

When this project started it was right in the middle of a backdrop where there was community awareness about the effect of demographic change, not only in terms on the general Tasmanian population but specifically on the Tasmanian school-age population. There was also a lot of talk about underutilised schools, with the minister encouraging communities to seize an opportunity; in fact, as you were probably made aware at an earlier hearing, even so much so as to speak to all principals - I think that was in February of this year - and school association reps. So, it is a very different backdrop for Romaine Park Primary. The North West Learning Services School Improvement Board had been talking about the provision of public education from a strategic point of view right across our 55 schools and the board was well aware of the overprovision of public primary schooling here in Burnie.

Thirdly, the project that we have now, as with the Somerset one, is guided by a steering committee and it has similarities there in that there is real strength around that table. Andrew is here representing the three school associations and Carolyn Williams and Michelle Young chair the other two school associations, Carolyn at Acton and Michelle at Upper Burnie. Rhonda is representing a group of three very hardworking principals, and I am talking about Jan Dicker, who is at Brooklyn, and Marcelle Norton at Upper Burnie. That group has some additional parent representation and Katherine Furman, who may be known to some of you, is the Deputy Chair of our School Improvement Board and Katherine chairs the steering group for the Romaine Park project.

Some of this might come out in questions, so I will skip over it. In a very tight time frame all three school communities ran an extensive as it could be community

consultation around the idea of addressing the issue of an oversupply of primary schools in the Burnie area.

There is one really important point, Paul, that I want to stress here. I know that the committee's focus is very much on the building of Romaine Park Primary School but from the very start and in fact at our very first launch of this whole initiative we had all of the principals from the Burnie City schools and the reason for that is that Romaine Park is part of a broader strategy to ensure the most efficient provision of public primary school education in the Burnie City area.

When we looked at the feedback from a whole range of processes that were run - I remember a meeting we had at the university, the Cradle Coast campus - three things emerged. One was about the time frame, and I mean the time frame in which people were being asked to consider the matter and there certainly were people acknowledging that this is a reasonably tight amount of time in which to make a very important decision. That was strongly counter-balanced, in fact as strongly as you can imagine, by the view that it was almost a known thing within the community that there was an oversupply, that we had a number of schools that people would colloquially say were half empty.

We had people saying, 'You can stand on the roof of one school and throw a stone and you can hit four other primary schools', or whatever. I think what helped the shift was, yes, the time frames were tight but the previous position for change, the recognition that there was an opportunity to address the issue, certainly proved to be strong enough to enable people to say, 'We need to do this'.

The second thing from the feedback, and this came through the on-the-ground feedback, was a groundswell of support that we could definitely pick up, and it was wider than just the parents that we surveyed. It was interesting to note and very pleasing to receive a letter from the Burnie City Council, from the mayor. It was the view of the elected representatives of the Burnie City Council that this was a sensible move for the department to take.

Finally at that meeting, I think everybody realised we have one opportunity here and we need to seize that opportunity and to move forward. Both Rhonda and Andrew might comment later about feedback post that decision. My sense of it is that we have very strong support for what we are trying to do across the three schools. I was going to say 'and more broadly', but I think people have tended to focus on the new school aspect more so than perhaps thinking three or four years from now that we will have a much more sensible provision of public education - government primary school education - for the Burnie City area.

The documentation that you have in our submission includes the vision for the school, which has been collaboratively developed. It talks about a vision which encompasses all children in Burnie - the provision of best birth-to-grade 6 education for this city - and strong viable schools is an important dimension of that, ensuring that we don't, in the long term, come back here in 2015 and have this school going really well with these numbers, this one battling around in space and that kind of thing. We have put some work in, as a group, to get a good model, we think, for the town, and we have provided some data there in relation to that.

Of course, having a greenfield site was a bonus because it took away, in that short time frame, some of the issues that may well have emerged had we tried to say one school was a better location than others. The greenfield site was handy from that point of view.

As I said to you in the other part of the hearing, I do not like to deny the fact that there are challenges, and certainly this is a challenging project as well. To bring three school communities together, for students, for parents and for our staff there will be challenges and we are confident about our capacity to meet them. There is a lot of work that has been done and a lot of work that still needs to be done.

We have a very strong steering committee, we have a project time line and a project plan for as many elements as might be going through your minds as you think about trying to, effectively, close three schools and start a brand-new one. In my preparation today, very quickly, I didn't go to the project document but this includes student transport, uniform, levies, enrolment guidelines, equipment, class structures, staffing et cetera, et cetera. It is a big project for us over the next 12 to 18 months. I am confident about our capacity to do that. I think the work will be challenging.

So, being both optimistic and realistic, we have a terrific opportunity and that was the message after we did the work that we did when we said that we were interested in doing this. People said, 'You need to seize this opportunity now'. Personally, I am looking forward to about 2012 to come back when it all settles down and I think what you will see at that site is a wonderful facility and I think we will have done a really good thing for setting up public education in the city.

I am happy to answer any questions off the back of that.

Mr GREEN - You talked about the efficiency of having one school as opposed to three. Have you quantified that at all?

Mr WELLS - With the broad data that we looked at, Bryan - and I don't have the exact numbers in front of me - you are looking at 2 000 down to 1 500 students over a relatively short period, so with 1 500 students, taking into account the available capacity of existing schools - the ones that aren't part of the amalgamation - you're bringing in the capacities of Havenview, Burnie Primary, Montello, Cooee and a new school and looking at the longer-term demographics. It is already under 1 500, it is at around about 1 400 now, so somewhere in that 1 350-1 500 territory is the likely number of children that we are dealing with. When you look at the capacity across the existing sites, we think we have got it right at that conceptual level. Regarding the three schools that came together in this initiative, there had already been some very tentative talk prior to this - that is probably the part that I missed. I know that Upper Burnie and Acton had had some kind of discussion because of a view that their schools were quite under-utilised. I think Brooklyn was under-utilised a bit but more so age of building and a range of issues there.

Mrs NAPIER - Regarding Havenview Primary, which is one of the smaller ones, is that because the school community didn't wish to be part of an amalgamation process?

Mr WELLS - To be fair, Sue, there are two dimensions to that. We had a limited period of time in which to operate to meet the Commonwealth guidelines around accessing the

BER funding. Secondly, Havenview is a smaller school; nevertheless, had we wanted to bring in a Havenview population, we would have then perhaps been building a primary school of around 650. What is seen as a big primary school in Tasmania is not the case by mainland standards. We are building a school around about the size of somewhere between Spreyton Primary and Nixon Street Primary. Culturally, in the city that would have been seen as really big and so there was probably that sort of undercurrent there and not really the time to engage across four school communities. We have some feedback that in the overall model that we're putting together parents like the idea that there are a couple of smaller schools that are available within the community as well as part of the mix of schools. We end up with a Burnie of around 400; a Montello hopefully of around about that size, a slightly larger school, but in Cooeee and Havenview two smaller schools as well. We did get some feedback which suggests that that mix of schools was probably a good mix for the community to have as well. So there are a number of factors in that.

Mr HALL - You mentioned the word 'funding' a minute ago. With regard to the previous project we talked about the valuation that was done on the old Somerset school, which was \$1 million. In this one we now have three assets up for disposal and it says under 'Project Funding', 'Other government funding (including asset sales of some \$8.2 million)'. That all seems a little bit loose to me. Andrew, can you quantify what you might anticipate out of the asset sales of those three properties and what 'Other government funding' means? I realise the BER stuff is separate.

Mr FINCH - Yes. Of the \$8.225 million, it is \$6.225 million in State CIP funding and \$2 million for asset sales. That is for the three sites. When we set out in forming the budget for the project we estimated \$2 million for those three sites. We have since had some valuations and I think the \$2 million is probably optimistic on these ones, given the nature of the sites, the specific locations and so on. Again, we are working with this cost and we will need to find additional funding if the asset sales aren't as high as we have estimated. As I mentioned before, we still have that issue about finding a location, particularly, for a child-family centre that services most of these communities. So it may be that we end up having to use a portion of one of the existing sites for that but, again, that is subject to future decision-making but it may limit the asset sale that we can get. But, importantly, that will not impact on the budget for this build because we have been pretty careful with the cost of building this school and its components.

Mr HALL - The other issue is that the Chair pointed out that in the message we have, it talks about \$11 million as being the project cost when, in fact, in our documents we have \$14.6 million.

Mr FINCH - Sorry, where was the \$11 million?

Mr HALL - In the message.

Mr FINCH - Okay. Again, this has been a fairly fast-moving but evolving exercise and when we sat down and tried to get the initial estimates we were initially hoping to get the building around \$11 million-\$11.5 million. Sometimes we talk about a construction amount and I am not sure whether that is the construction figure or the total budget. That might be closer to the construction estimate because, as you can see in the table below, the construction estimate is \$13 million and then there are a number of items that go on top of the construction budget. So I am not sure whether that was it and it explains the

difference but the other thing is, as we have worked more with Heath and sub-consultants, we have encountered some other costs that we probably didn't envisage when we sat down with a blank piece of paper and looked at the site and said, 'Yes, I think we can build this school for this much money'.

When you get into that detailed planning and design you find out things about the slope of the site, whether there is a pipe under the ground that might need to be relocated and those sorts of things. They do add to the cost so this is the correct cost now - \$14.6 million. But it is fair to say that has probably matured in the last month or so.

Mr HALL - Does that pose any sort of an issue that we have a message and we have two different numbers? I would ask your sage advice.

CHAIR - We have had a situation like this on previous occasions where the message has been somewhat different. This is significantly different to the tune of \$3.6 million and I can only presume that the message which His Excellency has provided to the committee is based upon a submission by the department in requesting funding to that amount.

The challenge for the committee is this: we are tasked with taking account of the message which His Excellency has provided to us to the tune of \$11 million but the submission indicates the project is going to cost \$14.6 million. Clearly, in the past projects have overrun their budget and departments are probably well aware that the committee really has no jurisdiction over that because once the committee deliberates and approves a project and it proceeds, if there is a significant budget overrun, this committee can never revisit the issue. The Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament can do so to follow some accountability. I will just take some advice from Shane as to whether there is anything else that I haven't covered off in answering that question of Greg's because it is a really important consideration that I think your delegation needs to be aware of as well.

Mr DONNELLY - In the past there hasn't been quite such a difference between the message figure and the submission but in the past the committee has taken into evidence the explanation. I cannot recall, off the top of my head, which figure the committee has ultimately approved, but we can do some research on that.

CHAIR - Based on what Shane has just indicated, the committee will need to think seriously about that because I can recall some other projects which were only \$200 000 different. But, Andrew, I take into account what you had said in response to Greg's question. When we look at the construction estimate, which includes the contingency, you remove the contingency out of that and that comes to a net figure of \$12.55 million -

Mr FINCH - Yes.

CHAIR - which is still more than \$1 million more than the message from the Governor.

Then, of course, we factor in all the other matters that we need to take into consideration in our deliberations about the project because everything comes into what we are tasked with considering.

Mr GREEN - Was the potential sale of the land built into the figure?

Mr FINCH - I would say that the process of how the figure got into the message was when we initiated it, some time ago, before we had finalised the design and had those other subconsultant issues about the site and so on come into play. I think we probably have not gone back and corrected it, so it is probably a matter of timing really. For the last month or so we have been working on this \$14.6 million with everyone involved. So that is where it stands at the moment.

Mr GREEN - But the potential, that is the question. So it is \$11 million, plus you add \$1.6 million for the land sale and it comes up, and you end up with \$12.6 million. Then with the contingencies that the Chairman has just talked about, you end up around the same figure or not? Is the allocation \$11 million?

Mr FINCH - The allocation is \$6.4 million of the Commonwealth funding and \$6.2 million of State CIP funding. So it is about \$12.6 million in terms of allocation and then \$2 million of asset sales. That is how it has worked through.

Mrs NAPIER - What was identified in the State Budget for this project?

Mr FINCH - Again, when we set off, the initial estimate was \$11 million. But, again, it was before we had done that detailed design work. That is bit like trying to assume the figure based on other schools. It is as broad a cost estimate as that. It was not until we sat down and did the really detailed design and then found some of those site issues that we had not anticipated, that we ended up getting to this budget. But it is just not practical to build the school for lower than this cost. So this is the budget. Again, it is really just how that figure was initially communicated, I think.

CHAIR - Can I then go back to the question that Bryan posed? The assets sales potential has been built in there and you had indicated, Andrew, in a response to a question from Greg, that is indeterminate at this stage and that is your best guess.

Mr FINCH - Yes, that is right.

CHAIR - So if you do not realise that amount and if you are significantly short, where does it leave you?

Mr FINCH - We will not be significantly short. No, it will not be like that at all and, again, we are under way. We have not tested the project at tender yet. That will occur in a month's time. So we will look at what the tender outcome is. But it will be a question of finding additional funding if necessary - if the asset sale does not come up to that level.

When we arrived at the \$11 million it was really just looking at a site and then basing the cost on building the St Aloysius School, for example, on which the school is designed, and then just looking at the number of students. So it was really just a very early, basic estimate and then we have come through and firmed up that estimate with a detailed design but we have not gone back and amended the figure that has gone into the message.

Mrs NAPIER - What are the particular features of the location that have caused the cost escalation?

Mr FINCH - Heath, do you want to explain that?

Mr CLAYTON - Yes, I am happy to answer that. I suppose there are a couple of issues. One is, there is water pipe that is located through the site that, in consultation with the Cradle Coast Water Authority, we have to relocate. A risk assessment has been undertaken by consultants and we are in the process of agreeing the location and the route that it is to follow.

Secondly, the site has some slightly unstable ground and there is some additional cost in regard to the structure and how we go about using the concrete slabs and how we tie that into the building to minimise any future maintenance of the site. So they are probably the two critical factors.

Mr HALL - Can you isolate how much the additional cost will be to relocate that water main and create that easement through there?

Mr CLAYTON - We are still negotiating with the Cradle Coast Water Authority on the preferred route. So it is little bit up in the air at the moment. We are just in the process of finalising that with them at the moment.

Mr GREEN - Does the water main go diagonally through the site?

Mr CLAYTON - Yes, it goes straight through the middle. Basically, there was an easement through there. Where the buildings were located, it went through our site but we did not build over it. So the very early advice was that, as long as we did not build on it, that was okay. But then we undertook a risk assessment and it was deemed too high to have it running through a new primary school. Cradle Coast Water Authority want to relocate it completely away from both the high school and the primary school and we are just negotiating with an alternative route that diverts it around the primary school.

Mr HALL - So have Cradle Coast Water given any indication that they will put their hand up and help with that?

Mr CLAYTON - They have basically said it is a Department of Education problem.

Mr HALL - It is all your cost?

Mr CLAYTON - Yes, and I believe the department has held discussions directly with Cradle Coast Water and they have basically said there is no funding available.

Mrs NAPIER - The Cradle Coast has said there is no funding available on their side?

Mr CLAYTON - Yes.

Mrs NAPIER - Just looking at cost issues: the money allocated for furniture and equipment is \$750 000 compared to about \$350 000 for the project we have just considered. I accept that it is not all totally new on the other one. There seems to be a fairly big difference, though, between the allocations for similar sized schools. What is envisaged

in terms of furniture and equipment that would not necessarily be envisaged in the previous project we were looking at?

Mr FINCH - We really just work on percentages for that. The other project was less than half. That was \$6.1 million compared to \$14.6 million. So, again, it is just the basis of allocating an amount of funding. We have not really sat down and done a detailed analysis of every piece of equipment that will go in at this point in the project. But because of our experience with other projects and doing redevelopments in schools, we generally set aside an amount of about 5 per cent of the total project for furniture and equipment.

Mrs NAPIER - I am happy if the school can get some better equipment out of this, some extra furniture and so on, but we are identifying the fact that there has been blow-out in the original estimated cost. There are site issues, not necessarily the design of the building, and it cannot be attributed to the population because the population of the two schools is roughly the same, although the figures on this one might be firmer than those on the previous school. Is there any sense in doing it on percentage estimates of the actual cost as compared to the percentage estimates of the in-principle cost?

Mr FINCH - It is based on long-standing practice of allocating a component of a budget for schools to enable them to sit down and decide what they can buy to fit out that school. It ranges over a lot of things. When the builder walks out, you generally get your carpet but then you have to go and get blinds, window furnishings, desks and chairs -

Mr CLAYTON - It even goes further into external play equipment and things like that. West Somerset have quite good play equipment and things already there that we don't need to purchase. Secondly, when you are establishing a brand new school, obviously we have all that play equipment that we spoke about and the rubber soft floor. That generally comes out of the furniture and equipment budget because it is equipment; it not necessarily building stuff. That is why there might have been a little bit of a discrepancy there.

Mrs NAPIER - Has there been any new equipment and furniture bought by any of the three sites and what is envisaged might be transferred to the combined site?

Mr WELLS - We have audit processes in place across the three sites to ensure what is, for want of a better expression, in good order that you would want to take forward. It wouldn't be responsible to do anything other than that. I do not know how far that work has progressed but we are looking at it in terms of ICT materials like interactive whiteboards and those kinds of things. They are good examples of recent purchases in most schools.

There is some assessment of furniture. Mind you, you have to look at establishing a furniture platform for the school that is relatively consistent. We are doing the best we can to identify resources within the existing schools that would suitably transfer to the new school. It would be impossible to put any dollar figure on it at this stage.

Ms DINEEN - Certainly the ICT audits have already begun and there have been initial site visits to look at the equipment. I am not aware of any audit having taken place yet but it is certainly under way.

Mrs NAPIER - Is it likely there will be an ICT technician as a part of this school complement and do the existing schools have ICT people that can do that?

Ms DINEEN - Tim Latham is the Burnie cluster person that we would look to for that kind of advice and he is currently conducting that audit.

Mrs NAPIER - Okay.

Mr CLAYTON - He has been involved through the design process as well with what we have been looking to implement. We have had meetings with him in the three schools over what gets implemented, what gets included, what can be reused and what can't.

Mr FINCH - To answer your question about keeping the allocation at that level, when we learnt about some of these site factors, yes, the first option may have been to say we haven't been to tender yet so we don't really know what price we are going to be able to construct the school for. We could go into the project without a contingency and perhaps halve the furniture and equipment, but over the next 12 months of construction you would be taking a high level of risk in terms of just what might come up during the construction period.

Mrs NAPIER - I don't think we have come across a project that doesn't have a contingency factor.

Mr FINCH - No, so the decision we took, especially before tender, was to keep the contingency and the furniture at the normal budgeted levels that we usually set aside for each project but to go and look at increasing the budget allocation for the cost of the pipe and the site and so on. I guess that was the decision we took.

Mrs NAPIER - So then why is the art in public buildings the same figure as it is for the other project?

Mr FINCH - Because that is a maximum. It is 2 per cent of the project budget.

Mrs NAPIER - Up to a maximum of \$80,000?

Mr FINCH - Yes. It is 2 per cent of the project budget up to a maximum of \$80 000. For furniture and equipment, the percentage across the total budget is still relevant because you have a bigger site and playground to equip.

Mrs NAPIER - Is there a maximum for education buildings? It's not a government policy overall, is it?

Mr FINCH - No, it is the Arts in Public Buildings Scheme, so it is the same for any public building, say a hospital or another facility.

Mr HALL - With the old Somerset school you had a valuation done of \$1 million. With these three sites, have you had a separate valuation done on each of the three?

Mr FINCH - Yes, we have.

Mr HALL - And it comes up to about \$2 million in total.

Mr FINCH - It is a little bit less than \$2 million.

Mr HALL - I presume they are surrounded by residential at the moment. There is a community, I would take it, so they would be reasonably saleable sites?

Mr FINCH - Yes, definitely. There has already been interest in those sites but it will be part of a public process for the sale of those sites.

Mr HALL - Just going back to Mrs Napier's question about art in public places, do you always run for the \$80 000 maximum figure?

Mr FINCH - If it is a project for \$2 million - we do a lot of \$2 million projects - we would be spending \$40 000 on art works, because that is 2 per cent of that figure. Obviously there is a limit to how much art work we need in a facility. It has been the generally held policy that \$80 000 should enable sufficient art work to be put into a site. That is why it has plateaued, because otherwise we would be allocating something like \$280 000 for art work, which would be too much if it went on a flat percentage.

Mr HALL - Was there no opportunity to consolidate on one of those sites as there was at West Somerset? The greenfield option was by far the best one? You are probably going to tell me they are all too small to do that.

Mr WELLS - No. The strong consensus was that the greenfield site was critical in enabling the amalgamation to occur. What we have had in Burnie is an enrolment pattern that has reflected perceptions about schools and their areas. That has been a complicating factor that is clearly reflected in the way enrolments have occurred right across the city. Had we tried to bring together the schools onto one of the three sites in the time frame we had with the BER resource, we would not have been able to do justice to a quality consultation and feedback process with all three communities on that kind of an issue. It would have been a deep issue. You looked this morning at Somerset; over three years of work was done for two schools in one town where there was a history about the different schools. They took that amount of time to get to that point. Today is about this amount of time and that was not achievable. We wouldn't have been able to look at any group and say we would have been satisfied with the consultation process to achieve that kind of an outcome. Is that fair, Rhonda? You have worked in two of the schools.

Ms DINEEN - I am currently substantive principal at Brooklyn, and have been there for 11 years and am now acting at Acton, so I know a lot about both of those communities. The public perception and the patterns of enrolment have certainly been a significant factor and the choice of being able to bring three schools together on a brand-new site was fairly critical to the timing of the project.

Mr WELLS - Mr Chairman, Andrew, from the parent and school association perspective, might like to comment, given that I don't live in those communities.

Mr GATES - I would have to agree with the comments made that had we tried to build one school on an existing site, I think the opposition or negativity would have surrounded

that, given the factors that Malcolm has already mentioned, because the enrolment patterns indicate that in the current schools.

Mr GREEN - Obviously the school community has been consulted widely, and I asked the same question at Somerset with respect to those people who use the site from a sporting point of view, on weekends, particularly at Acton which is a big site. Has there been any consultation with local government or others with respect to the further utilisation of those grounds?

Ms DINEEN - One thing to remember in regard to the Acton site is that the large cricket and softball grounds are quite separate -

Mr GREEN - They are already owned by local government?

Ms DINEEN - Yes. They all look as though they are part of the Acton area but they're not.

Mr GREEN - I just made that assumption, I didn't realise that.

Ms DINEEN - Most people feel that in Burnie.

Mr GREEN - That's good.

Mrs NAPIER - Who are they owned by?

Ms DINEEN - I presume the council; it's the cricket ground and the Burnie softball association.

Mr GREEN - That's a relief.

Laughter.

Mrs NAPIER - Regarding the amalgamation of the three school communities, what changes are going to be made to the SES or this school?

Mr WELLS - I am not quite sure if I can give you a figure, Sue.

Mrs NAPIER - Is it likely to take it up or down?

Mr WELLS - Acton Primary would be one of the lowest SES schools in the State, it would be in the first four or five, probably number 5, in terms of having the lowest SES, and Upper Burnie is within the Commonwealth's first 70 on their measure of need, if you like. So both Upper Burnie and Acton would be low SES schools on the socioeconomic scale rating, whereas Brooklyn would be a little higher. So you are bringing two relatively low SES schools in with a school that doesn't quite fit into that first broad band of low SES schools but isn't far away. Regarding what the mathematical effect of that in the end will be, I don't know quite what term to use to give you an answer until we get everybody in and do the stuff that we do -

Mrs NAPIER - So it had a marginal effect in terms of taking it up?

Mr WELLS - For want of a much better expression, I think it will be lifted, but the extent to which it is lifted I am unsure about.

Mrs NAPIER - Is this going to provide a good mix whereby you will be able to retain the kids who are coming from a slightly better-off community?

Mr WELLS - That is a potential by-product. We think we have three communities that can work and mix together and it can work really well. But I think ultimately those are judgments that are in family homes that people make. I find it hard to get into that too much, if you know what I mean. From the start, three school communities have said, 'We're prepared to give this a go and we want to come together and seize this opportunity'. So I think I am answering more on the basis that we have not encountered any major level of opposition, we would have had a few people who have said, 'I'm not too keen on this', but the overwhelming majority of people are with us. If that is the starting point, I think we have the potential to bring them together successfully and get a really good mix of families and students at the school.

Mrs NAPIER - We are spending a bit of time talking about the physical location, the greenfield site, and so on, and the co-location on the Parklands High School grounds. There was some discussion about whether Burnie needs two high schools, whether they need one - I have heard people talk about that issue. It would seem that given that you are locating a primary school on that site, there would be an assumption that two high schools would be part of the future of Burnie's provision of education.

Mr WELLS - I am aware of the work that was done, prior to my taking up this role, about secondary education in Burnie. But where that settled, I think, is how you described it and, at the moment, with both schools in the 500 to 600 territory, any one school model is a high school of around 1 100 and that probably would be a very hard, for want of a better expression, sell. I think at the moment, given the populations, we have settled on the two-high-school model for the city, for sure.

Mr GATES - Just to reiterate from the parents' point of view comments that have already been made, when this was first discussed one of the things I picked up from parents was, 'Really, we are going to do this?' In the whole consultation process we have taken them from basically the unknown to, I think, a sense of excitement amongst the parents and the students about the possibility of a new school on a new site.

The other spin-off is that the choice of the greenfield, where it is, will have a significant benefit to Parklands High School as a feeder school, being basically close. At the moment we have schools dotted around and if we are to have the one primary school, obviously there should be some benefits there for the secondary school as well.

From the parents' point of view, it is at an exciting point for the three communities and I know from the conversations I have had with both the Acton and Upper Burnie communities that the parents are very positive. Any of the negativity I have heard in talking to these people has been quite easily dispelled. So choosing that site I think is crucial.

Mrs NAPIER - Thank you.

I come back to the issue of the \$14.6 million. We were talking about the two predominant additional cost factors that are driving the \$14.6 million and we compared it previously to the cost of the one we saw earlier but I am also reminded of the Claremont and Roseneath schools which were based on the Aloysius design - about the same numbers, I think - and the figures in there were \$12.27 million. Are we saying that the water pipe relocation and the issues of the floor structures are likely to cost that additional \$2.4 million?

Mr FINCH - To correct that, the two schools we looked at were both the same size but at different sites. One was \$12.3 million and one was \$12.8 million, the Roseneath one being the \$12.8 million.

Mrs NAPIER - An amount of \$12.2 million and \$12.7 million - close to it.

Mr FINCH - Yes. Again, that was demonstrating that there were site issues at those sites or one site compared to the other. With this school I think we have built a little more floor area into one of the pods to cater for what was explained in the submission.

Mrs NAPIER - Would that be additional depth in the cement base?

Mr FINCH - No, sorry, some additional floor area into one of the pods to cater effectively. One of the buildings has a bigger floor area. So there is a little more floor area in this school compared to those other two schools. But, yes, it is essentially saying that from the most expensive one in the south, this is another \$1.8 million, and the three major factors would be the additional floor area to cater for slightly more students, the cost of the pipe that we have come across and the site costs that Heath explained. So they would be the three factors that make up the difference.

CHAIR - I suspect we have ranged across some of the issues that Rhonda might have wanted to address her mind to in terms of the consultation. It is important that we go down that path about the funding process when you have raised the matter.

Mr WELLS - I know Rhonda will give an insight from the learning perspective.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms DINEEN - I wanted to start by reiterating Malcolm's point about this particular primary school being within the context of all the schools in Burnie. Having been part of the principals' group there for some time now, I am aware of the fact that that conversation has been ongoing and we have never really been able to work through a process to tackle that problem. In hearing about the funding that was available from the Building Education Revolution, we came away from that meeting realising that there was indeed the opportunity here to do something about rationalising that problem. In going back to our schools and looking at the current schools that we were in, for instance at Acton, the three schools have little boxed classrooms and were really in line with the older type of thinking in education that Denise talked about this morning. The idea of being able to do something really different and to change the way that we provide for education in Burnie was a really great opportunity. We took the idea to our school associations and ultimately to the School Improvement Board and the board was able to work with us to

implement a wider consultation throughout the community to bring about the idea for amalgamating the three schools.

In bringing together the three schools, I guess there is an implication there for resources, that we are able to upgrade our access to staffing and to increased leadership, which means that with the principal positions and assistant principals and so on you have greater leadership potential within the schools and increased potential for a wide range of programs within the school as well. In some cases there is a larger peer group for the students themselves. So bringing the numbers together onto the one site was obviously a really great advantage.

In looking at the site, although there came to be some implications further down the track in terms of the actual site, it did suggest itself as being one that presented itself as an obvious option in that all three school areas converged pretty much on the corner of Romaine. The positioning of those three schools in close proximity was quite ludicrous. I mentioned this morning that you could stand in the Acton playground and hear the bell going from Upper Burnie Primary School, so obviously there was some work there that could be done. There is the potential as well to provide for putting together the birth-4 programs and then looking towards high school with grade 10, of being able to put together an education program that went seamlessly from basically birth right through to grade 10 and the really great transition potential that has for our senior students in the primary schools and maybe some middle school programs being developed over time with people in the future.

We have come up with a name, Romaine Park Primary School, after a great deal of consultation with the community. We went to the local history society and asked for their input, and the name of Romaine turned out to be the name of William Romaine who was one of the early settlers. The area of course is geographically known as Romaine. The idea of the 'park' came about because, as you have heard this morning from Heath, the overall concept has a lot to do with the environment, with sustainability issues, and indeed with the name of Parklands. I think when Parklands was first mooted quite some years ago, it was called Park Lands. That was one of the first thoughts at that time. Looking at the site today and seeing the green and the trees up that hill, to envisage a design that develops that kind of idea and linking it to the park is fairly exciting.

The working party then explored options for the building designs and ultimately chose the pod design and that led to our work with Artas. Again, as Denise mentioned this morning, we know that learning these days happens in a variety of ways, that it is student-centred and it is quite often activity-, project- or inquiry-based and therefore requires multifunctional and flexible learning spaces. I think the most exciting thing about this design is its flexibility, being able to open up doors and create small spaces or large spaces for small groups or large groups or, indeed, individual work, is possibly the most exciting part. We are trying to develop learning that is about problem solving and inquiry and ultimately engaging children in that learning. The idea of the doors and the glass and the shared spaces all add to that.

In amongst that is the idea of collaboration - the collaboration of students working together with their own learning - and also with the staff, making sure they have the opportunity within this space to work collaboratively, to plan and to comment on each other's teaching and inform each other's practice.

The learning spaces provide seamless access to staff support and to resources for learning, because the resources are spread throughout the three pods, and access therefore to information and ICT. The idea for the ICT is for it to be where you need it and when you need it for learning. It is not tucked away in a computer lab or some isolated space but is indeed part of the whole environment for learning.

We have looked at the idea of laptops, wireless net boards, SMART boards and some PCs with the flexibility of laptops so that there is a great deal of movability there.

The idea of the three pods: in our initial consultation process we found that some of the community were a little bit afraid of the school being too big. They were losing what they saw as their small-school focus and the security that came about that. So the idea of the three pods was a way to build many communities within the larger community, and therefore build a secure learning environment within that. The issue then became how we connect all of those pods. The idea of connecting them through the social court and having them all around that central hub and connected also by covered ways and with the student services building and the multifunction area seems to lend itself to that connectivity.

As I mentioned with environmental education considerations, there are lots of links with the outdoors and the in-site programs. At our school we currently have a Stephanie Alexander kitchen/garden program, so there are some really great links already being forged with gardening and cooking and working that through. The building itself is a model for educating children about sustainability issues, in particular the way you use the water and water reticulation. That lends itself to education as well.

The potential for specific programs and opportunities is entrenched in our thinking right through the consultation. All three schools have a very strong arts, performance arts and music culture. Two of the schools have a specialised art program and all three schools now have a strings program in collaboration with the Cradle Coast strings group. So the multifunction area was very much around designing something that would lend itself to this as well as enabling a space for PE programs in bad weather and so on.

The discovery centres have really exciting potential for arts and cooking and sciences. One of the main considerations, in particular for the multifunction room, was making sure it had community access, that it could indeed be hired out. The canteen has lockable areas so that it can be used exclusively by the school but then hired out to the community. There is not a lot of community use in our schools at the moment so I would like to think there was an increased potential with the new school.

In terms of landscaping, I believe that the design has really tried to consider lots of different types of play and recreation, sports as well as quiet and passive play, having lots of areas where children can interact in different ways.

Ultimately the vision we have for this school is one that is pleasing and welcoming physically but also acoustically and aesthetically. With its position at the bottom of Parklands High School, I would like to think that as you come over the hill and look over that site there is a building there that really says something about the way we value

public education in Burnie. I believe the vision we have come up with might well do that.

Our working party was then extended. We started with an initial group of six in the very early times and then we formally made the Burnie amalgamation steering committee. That had equal representation from each school; that included two parent representatives from each school. Within that we then formed a building design group which met regularly with the Artas representative - Heath - and the senior project officer in Scott Dickson. I would like to commend the way that process has been collaborative and the way we have been able to go along to those design group meetings and work with them and know that our thoughts and ideas have been taken on board.

As well, there has been a culture and identity group established. We are very mindful that communities become very strongly linked to their schools. In bringing three schools together we need to be doing two things simultaneously. We need to be guiding those communities towards establishing a new culture; we also need to respect and take forward some elements of the old cultures of each school.

We have hired a graphic designer who is currently working with us to explore colours and logos. That will be a good way of representing the new school and has been an area in which we have been able to involve lots of other parts of the community, particularly in the selection of uniforms. There is a strong group of parents working on the uniform committee. Because of the nature of the issue within the Burnie area, having a group collaboratively working through some enrolment protocol issues was an important consideration.

The culture group is also considering transition. As we transition, we have next year to work these things through, but Malcolm just hinted at a few of the things we must start to think about. There is a huge task ahead in bringing together all the resources, education programs, students and staff and making sure they are involved and taken towards the new school idea. We know we still have a fair bit of work to do. The key consideration right throughout was the need to work with and involve all three communities equally. In doing so I would like to acknowledge the work of Marcelle Norton and Jan Dicker and the school association chairs - Andrew Gates, Carolyn Williams and Michelle Young. I think underneath all of our work we have been aware of the exciting potential we have in creating something new and exciting for the Burnie public education system.

Mr CLAYTON - The proposed new school will accommodate up to 500 students and has been made possible by the agreed amalgamation of Brooklyn, Acton and Upper Burnie primary schools. The project is recognised by education and community stakeholders as an exciting opportunity to create entirely new teaching, learning and support areas in a new school environment. The purpose of the new school is to provide the best possible opportunities for the students to learn with success. Students are central to all programs and learning activities that occur in the school complex. Any new primary school must be designed with the learning needs and characteristics of the child in mind. The buildings and the physical environment should reflect the goals of high levels of participation and achievement for all learners. The design of the proposed new buildings provides facilities for learners that are engaging and aimed to motivate high achievement.

The school will provide challenging programs for all students, with a curriculum, instruction and assessments that are responsive to the students' needs. As a consequence of these aims, the proposed new building design has taken into account the best information, experiences and understandings from current research about how students learn. The building design provides new ways to engage students in a more personalised approach to support learners for life. The school aims to be inviting, supportive, safe and challenging. It fosters a sense of community and a place that promotes in-depth learning and enhances the students' physical and emotional wellbeing. In a healthy school environment quality interpersonal relationships between all members of the school community are paramount.

The overall school site plan provides for three learning pods similar to those you have seen in the two Hobart schools. Each pod contains general learning and break-out spaces located together around a central open courtyard. The courtyard is seen as a central social hub of the school. Typically, each pod accommodates a student cohort of 150-170, making a total student population of between 450 and 500. Outside spaces are formed between the pods and are directly accessed from teaching spaces that open into a series of intimate landscaped play and learning areas. The pod design will enable students to work and learn together with teachers, consultants and other adults as communities of learners. Teachers, regardless of their teaching area, have the responsibility to work collaboratively and cooperatively as part of teams. The central courtyard is further strengthened by the radial connection of the multipurpose hall, the performing arts centre, the canteen and staff amenities and student services buildings. A covered walkway links these buildings with the learning pods and creates a sculptural canopy that protects and reinforces the central courtyard spaces.

Adjacent to the building site is an extensively grassed play area with a fitness circuit running track and softball play areas for both fitness and play equipment. This play area can be easily accessed from the learning pods. The lowest tier on the side is dedicated to active play with both grassed, hard stand and formal play courts. There is also provision for a market garden with stores and a future provision for an orchard, which is part of the school program - the Stephanie Alexander program.

Parking for staff and visitors has been located along the northern edge of the site and is linked to the student services building and central courtyard by a covered walkway. This has suitable disabled access. The multipurpose hall may be accessed by community directly without entering any of the teaching zones. A network of pedestrian and bicycle paths connect the broader built environment and, as we discussed on site, we have looked for future links to the surrounding areas.

The landscape is designed using the principle of water-sensitive design - all plant species of low water demand, negating the need for irrigation. Much of the planting will be native and in many cases indigenous to the area. Stormwater will be collected and used for toilet flushing and in the market garden and orchard area. These facilities will provide learning opportunities in horticulture, home economics and environmental studies. Aesthetically the landscape complements the architectural forms and the site and the views afforded from the site. It does this by suddenly softening the architectural forms through mass planting of grassy tussock and strappy-leaf plants, low-dense shrubs and strategic use of median shrubs as screening and to provide shelter from cold winds and also shade during summer.

The central social court features a range of structures to facilitate student socialisation. Half a dozen sloping, artificial turf segments are randomly sited in the centre of the court, mainly facing north. These are designed to be used to lie about in the winter sun or in the shade of the trees during summer. Circular and semicircular seating is also randomly distributed around this area to allow for eating, talking and socialising. Functionally the landscape is designed to facilitate efficient circulation of people through the school in a direct but interesting manner. Pedestrians can traverse the site between all buildings on hard surfaces, minimising the tracking of mud and dirt into the school. However, the areas of soft ground, grass and artificial turf treatments is maximised to minimise costs and to soften the landscape. A series of outdoor classrooms are situated behind each pod. These are mini amphitheatres, with terraced seating that allows classes to be held outdoors.

As we said earlier, the learning pods are based on the models of the two schools in Hobart and also at St Aloysius, with some minor adjustments to suit the needs of the users. Each pod accommodates a minimum of 150, up to 170 students, with six to eight learning areas and a discovery centre used as a project room with specialist resources to support art, science and cooking.

The pod consists of a group of flexible spaces. It can be used for a variety of purposes, including home-based learning, studios shared for a task, project-based learning, break-out spaces, connected outdoor learning, formal and informal learning spaces. The pod design offers spaces that are flexible enough to allow both independent and simultaneous activities that involve individuals, one-on-one learning, small groups and large group activities. Team teaching can easily occur within the adjacent classroom or shared space.

Staff work spaces have been provided which support collaborative team discussions and planning and personal work spaces and storage. They are all highly visible from the learning spaces and to the students. The teaching and learning space is designed to incorporate continuous access to information technology and an anywhere, at any time basis is promoted. There is lots of display, whiteboards, interactive and digital media positioned throughout the building with adequate secure storage for materials and equipment for both staff and students.

The entrance to each of the pods has been designed to become a studio space for students and families, for places to read, listen, select material, music for borrowing and for the display of student work.

One of the pods has been established as an early childhood building, located with the same features as the others but provides additional fenced and secure areas to the outdoors.

The student services and administration building exemplifies the students' identity through the selection of joinery, finishes and colours. The administration area provides working space for staff, IT, senior executives and secure store and archival storage.

The office area includes the principal's office, four general offices, consulting rooms, meeting rooms and a boardroom with its own kitchenette facilities.

The multipurpose canteen, performing arts and staff amenities building is used for whole-of-school assemblies. It can be divided into two spaces by the knock of a wall, providing further flexibility for large groups requiring a space simultaneously. The hall is supported through a canteen which can also double as a commercial-grade kitchen when required. The hall can provide for PE, audiovisual and it has its own chair storage. It is connected to the performing arts base, which includes practice rooms and its own music store.

Sustainably, the fabric of the building and all associated energy-related systems are required under the building code but, furthermore, under the green-star requirements. Some of the key concepts for sustainable and energy efficiency for this site include maximising insulation in ceilings and walls, providing thermal mass, using concrete slabs, insulating the building perimeter, the use of double-glazed windows and doors, maximising natural light levels and providing auto-dimming to light fixtures, the use of low-energy, T5 energy-efficient light fittings, connected with movement sensors, geothermal -

Mrs NAPIER - So that will mean that lights will come on when people are using an area, basically?

Mr CLAYTON - It will be basically sensed up so with storerooms, for example, you walk in, the light will come on, you walk out and it will turn itself off after a set period of time. Also if the lighting level in a room, say the classroom, is sufficient through natural light then the lights turn off automatically and they will only come on when the light gets below a certain level.

We are using geothermal technology for heating and cooling, and natural cross-ventilation for all major spaces to minimise the mechanical extraction requirements.

Mrs NAPIER - What is geothermal heating?

Mr CLAYTON - Geothermal is the in-ground technology. It is the same as the two southern ones where they drill down into the ground and things like that.

There are low-volatile, organic compound paints, and water-efficient fixtures and fittings for capturing the rain water for re-use and also off the site. We are utilising landscaping to shade outdoor areas where practical.

The proposal is for an entirely new school built to the five-star, green-star rating that links directly with the department's strategic asset management plan for building better schools. In addition, the new school is being constructed as part of a plan that would create a new, improved infrastructure enabling resources in the future to be better directed for students and their learning, not on maintaining buildings in a number of cases.

CHAIR - Thanks very much, Heath. Does that raise any questions from members? This is a fairly familiar design, given what we saw in the south only a couple of weeks ago, so the design and the whole concept of the central focus to the development is pretty much familiar to the committee. Is there anything particular to this site that any committee wishes to raise at the moment?

Mrs NAPIER - I have a question in relation to the geothermal system, with which I am familiar. In your submission on page 17 you said you are going to reverse-cycle heat pump systems. I cannot remember that as being a feature of the previous designs down south - and maybe it was - but I am trying to take into account the fact that at the other school site we said that reverse-cycle heat pump systems can be expensive because they can be set too high.

Mr CLAYTON - There are a couple of components to that question. The geothermal component is the equivalent to the outdoor unit of a heat pump system. Internally, the indoor unit is exactly the same as a traditional electric-based heat pump or airconditioning system and the geothermal is the box you normally see outside with the big fan on it. So what we are doing is replacing that with a geothermal, which basically has no running costs associated with it. It is a small box that pulls the heat or the cooling out of the earth centre -

Mrs NAPIER - That is your distributor system.

Mr CLAYTON - Yes - and then it blows it through what is a traditional internal-type unit.

When we are talking about running costs, I think I mentioned a couple when we were walking around when we went into one of the rooms at Somerset when there was an airconditioner just blowing away. The requirement through green star is to have a built-in management system, which will control a lot of these things, connected to thermostats. For example, it won't be enabled to run on continuously. At the end of the night when the cleaners leave, when the security system is armed all the heaters, all the lights - everything - get shut down automatically. When the first person comes back the next day they arm up the building, everything returns to the previous setting and things like that.

Back on the geothermal, without knowing the exact science behind the whole process, it is an extremely efficient way of being able to do it and it is basically what has enabled us to achieve five stars. Without using geothermal, it would have been very difficult to achieve five-star rating, from all the information we have been told.

Mrs NAPIER - That will provide read-out capacity for the schools to obtain information and incorporate it into their curriculum?

Mr CLAYTON - Yes. What we are proposing to do is have our building management system, which is a central database where everything is collected and can be printed out, and as part of the green-star requirements, the reports can be fed out of that automated response.

One of the features that we are also talking about is having displayed in each of the pods what each of the building's energy and water consumption is relative to the others. So it will be a splash screen like a screen saver that will actually show the water and energy consumption of each pod and that is a simple linking back to each of the pods that are displayed. It is what is standard in the building management system but it is something that we have spoken about with the schools and the users so they can use that as an education tool.

Mrs NAPIER - Do we have some idea of what the cost of providing that feedback system might be?

Mr CLAYTON - I do not have a direct cost associated with it and you cannot just pull a number out because there are a lot of integrated processes associated with what encompasses a building management system. So it is hard to put a dollar figure on it off the top of my head.

Mrs NAPIER - But as I recall, although the geothermal system is more expensive to put in in the first place in regard to capital cost, it would contribute to a significantly reduced recurrent cost of operating for the school. If we can take into account the recurrent costs as well as the capital costs, maybe it is better to spend a bit more on building the school in the first place with those features than necessarily doing this for this school but not doing it for, say, the earlier schools.

Mr CLAYTON - We have been able, by combining three schools on a similar design basis, to facilitate a good deal on a geothermal system because it is so similar. To do a one-off school, the cost is extremely high. We said to this company, through our consultants, that we have three schools that are fundamentally the same. They have the same pod designs, the same requirements, but are across three sites, so what can you do. We were able to get pricing that was as competitive as traditional airconditioning but we did get the added benefit of considerable green-star requirements that we needed to be five star.

Mrs NAPIER - So if we tendered all future schools to have this environmentally friendly and educationally advantageous feature, it would be better value to do that for all schools than not?

Mr CLAYTON - It is probably not my position to comment on that.

Mrs NAPIER - We cannot say that either but I am sure Andrew could take it on board in his specifications.

Mr CLAYTON - Every school is not the same and it is very rare that you get the opportunity to have three schools with a similar design. That is what has enabled us to get the deal which gives us the payback very much quicker.

CHAIR - Thank you all for your presentations, your time spent with us and the hospitality at the school earlier this morning.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.