

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

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**WEST SOMERSET PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Ms DENISE FINLAY**, PRINCIPAL, SOMERSET PRIMARY SCHOOL, **Mr GREG LOVELL**, WEST SOMERSET PRIMARY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE, **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 CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Harriss) - Thank you very much to each of you. Malcolm, would you like to lead off your presentation.

**Mr WELLS** - I have a couple of brief opening comments. The formal DOE submission that you have captures the key points in the development of this project, but perhaps in some way only touches on the surface with respect to the significance of what has happened. By way of introduction, I want to say something about that in the sense that there have been two very distinct phases in the Somerset project. The first is really a consequence of leadership at school and community level. The school association chairpersons at that time, Greg Lovell and Cheri Nolan, I think would both openly acknowledge that each association was and is a very powerful group of people and very much focused on their children and they have demonstrated a capacity to think not only about their children now but everybody's children in that community into the future. I want to acknowledge the work by our principals, Andrew Starick, the Principal of West Somerset, and Denise Finlay, the Principal of Somerset Primary School, in working in support of the process as well.

As you can imagine, a lot of hard work goes into bringing two communities together and I think what is critical here is that these communities initiated this themselves. A really significant part of this project is that the work that was done at the start came off the back of two communities saying, 'This is what needs to happen in the best interests of our communities and of children in the community'. The key drivers for change were educational. If you look at all the minutes, in the end it came back to what was best for children's education in the community but it also took into account demographic change. You will have seen in our submission the numbers that clearly illustrate that there's an over-provision of public education in the community and the community had the initiative to respond to demographic change. In the submission and in what is planned for, there is a desire to add value to the community, so there is a community-building dimension.

The second phase is much more difficult. I think in many ways it captures the essence of it because both communities love their respective schools. We could all agree that one school was the way to go but which site once we knew we weren't going to have a greenfield site available. I think it is really important to think about two communities

collaboratively putting in a process, in this case an independent site assessment, stepping back from that and being prepared together to accept the outcome of that independent site assessment, and that is exactly what happened. I think the independent site assessment group's work is in our submission as well. At the end of it we ended up, as you know, with a decision to go to West Somerset as the preferred site. I think it is incredibly significant that at that potential tipping point the project didn't unravel, in fact quite the other way. Once the decision was made, people's energies have now been to invest in making sure that we get the best outcome for the community. I think that is a credit to that group of people I have referred to who have driven the project.

Finally, I think it is a bit superficial to come here and say to you that since 2007 it has all been plain sailing. It is pretty challenging work. It has been challenging, both in that first phase and it continues to present challenges when we look at issues around co-location in 2010 so that we can completely redevelop the West Somerset site. That will be challenging for everybody but when you look at the history, the capacity to get where we are now I think indicates that both communities have the capacity to meet those challenges and we will get a very good outcome.

I think that we are looking today at two very different projects in the way they have unfolded and for two communities to initiate this and drive it well before school futures issues, demographic issues that were publicly announced or BER funding - they simply said, 'There's something we need to do here' - I think is a really significant dimension of the project.

**Mrs NAPIER** - When you say the two communities came together, how was that initiated? How did that start and when?

**Mr WELLS** - Sue, it is probably, if you do not mind, a nice lead into what Denise was going to speak about because my overarching comment would be that the process unfolded, initiated by both schools through their school associations. But I know Denise has a little bit more detail on that and the consultation processes involved.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you, and thank you for this opportunity to come in today and share with you our journey so far, what we have achieved and our real excitement about our plans for the future.

At the start of this century - and it is really scary when you say things like that - there was a realisation in Somerset that something needed to be done, that we had two schools on either end of the town with a great imbalance in student numbers. At that time, Somerset Primary School had 270 students and West Somerset had 146. It was school councils at that time. School councils got together and they requested that the school zones be adjusted to try to even out student populations and also around that time there was a real commitment on both schools to start to explore ways that we could work together in Somerset.

As a result of the revised school zones, the Somerset Primary School's student population declined and during 2006 we really had to look at the falling enrolments and the future projections, what educational projections they presented and the challenges. For example, it became hard to do things like find a music teacher to come in one day a week, to find a physical education teacher to come in one day a week. Staffing presented

problems. There were problems in having less flexibility with a smaller school budget. There were problems with having one prep teacher. How could we cater for collaborative staff planning when there was just one prep teacher, one grade 4 teacher? All those things started to become more difficult.

The community of Somerset has great expectations of educational leaders, of school principals, and it became problematic when principals had to take on greater teaching roles and were not necessarily available to be there when the community expected us to be there.

We then got together and then it became school associations. The school associations explored all these issues and after a very positive meeting, they truly decided that one significantly better school was the answer for Somerset and that the opportunity to build the community around that one significantly better school was an opportunity not to be missed. As you know, that was when the school's future fund came out and so we were given that great opportunity.

We started the real mandate then, that we wanted the one significantly better school for Somerset, and we also wanted the second thing - we had the chance to unite the town. We started a mantra of one town, one school. That is what we wanted. We did not want split campuses, we wanted one town, one school.

We also had the problem of both schools having buildings that were run-down and no longer appropriate for contemporary teaching and learning.

Malcolm has talked to you about FES and how we formed that FES committee to look at HR issues and side issues, and also at the time we formed the ISAG Committee because we found that, as a group, we really could not make that decision about which site was better. There was not a greenfield site. Both school communities were very strong about thinking that their school site might have been the best site. We could not find that one strong lever to make that decision. The ISAG decision is down in your documents.

On 9 October 2008, we held a community forum at the Somerset Surf Club. It was well attended and it was chaired by our Mayor, Kevin Hyland. We presented all the information gained so far and sought community input. We asked for written responses about how people were feeling about the proposal at the end of that meeting and on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very negative and 10 being very positive, from that whole group we received two 5s. The majority were 7s and 8s but there were also quite a lot of 9s and 10s. We also put out those same questions in our newsletters and again received very positive responses and from that we believed that we had a very clear mandate that the community of Somerset really did want the one significantly better school for Somerset and were united around that proposal.

We have also kept our communities fully informed and involved with newsletter articles and surveys, and the community does really feel very informed. They are eagerly awaiting each newsletter where we have the new school update on the front page and it has become sought-after reading material each week.

One wet day in April this year we signed a memorandum of understanding with the chairpersons, with Greg and Cheri, up at Acton School. From there we asked that the

minister consider the proposal that the two schools would formally amalgamate. Since that time we have formed a Somerset School steering committee comprising both principals, a teacher, four parents, Bruce Cameron, the Manager of School Support and Tracey Bradley, Community Development Manager for Waratah-Wynyard Council and Peter Heathcote is our project officer.

Some of our major tasks so far have been to write the design brief, to select an architect - Artas and Heath - to ensure that the community is kept fully informed and involved, develop transition procedures, develop the identity of the new school. As a community, both school communities together, we have decided that Somerset Primary School is the preferred school, which for the school has great historical importance as well.

Currently we are working as a group exploring uniform and logo and motto. We have been working with the whole combined staff team, with the emphasis on whole-school approach to the teaching of literacy, numeracy and positive behaviour support.

To summarise the design brief, we wanted a really welcoming new school. We wanted it to feel like a new school, not a redeveloped school. We wanted it to have a wow factor and we wanted it to be the coolest place in town. We really want kids and families to feel as if this school is important. For so long, schools have not necessarily been that; they have been a bit shabby but we wanted ours to be really cool.

It needs to be really reflective of Somerset, which is a coastal village, with strong community networks, a sense of place and it must reflect and accommodate things like our very strong tradition in sport - we just won the North West Primary School Championships at the weekend and play for the State Championships later this year - and the active nature of the children. It must also be reflective of home environments - for example, fun and comfortable. We know that children learn best when they are comfortable, not sitting up straight in uncomfortable chairs in hot, stuffy classrooms.

Connections were really strong for us. We wanted it to be from birth to four to grade 6, that the learning spaces be connected, that the community would feel connected and united around the school, that there should be spaces for gathering, spaces for quiet play, for reading or reflection and that the school would become a community hub.

The school would have innovative learning, teaching and play spaces and this would facilitate staff collaboration and a sense of team. Flexibility is a key theme and that all spaces could be used for various activities - for example, inside and outside learning - and that the school would be a safe and secure place and have state-of-the-art ICT.

It would be environmentally sustainable and the school and the buildings would be teaching tools in themselves and help educate students to become responsible stewards of our fragile world.

The plans, which you have had a chance to look at, are really exciting. I believe they have not just fully met all the details of the very fulsome design brief which the group provided to Heath, but go beyond it to ensure that we are creating a school for twenty-first century learners with the student placed at the very heart of the design. Learners of today prefer active learning and need quick access to information. They are highly interactive and social and have a low tolerance of lecture-style teaching. Students must

be comfortable to learn well and this means considering things like ample daylight, fresh air and acoustics. These plans show a deep respect for our students and will build a sense of pride.

We have carefully considered the placement of the different age groups. As Heath explained, the first pod as you come in is for the younger children and then we go around. The easy navigation between the different spaces will build confidence and independence.

Schools have traditionally been made up of a series of individual rooms designed to hold a group of children and a teacher - private rooms behind closed doors where the teacher works in isolation, one class one room, where the idea of a classroom came from. Designs were lined up in rows facing a teacher. We now need to move away from the notion of one class per room, which is more suited to the industrial model of education but is no longer suited to twenty-first century learners. The flexible learning spaces that are in our design will meet the needs of this new generation. I firmly believe that this design will have a profound and positive effect on teaching and learning and will unite the community around one strong school.

The implementation is moving along really well. As Malcolm alluded to, of course there are challenges. It is a significant undertaking to take on, particularly since the building of the new school at West Somerset will now involve the site needing to be a clear site at the end of this year and for building to commence in 2010, so the students and staff are moving from West Somerset onto the Somerset site during 2010. Our goal is that we will be one new school from 2010. That is becoming a reality every day. We have terrapins being constructed on the Somerset site at the moment and the students at Somerset are seeing that. West Somerset students are coming over and visiting the school often and seeing what is happening. We are working on the motto. We have surveyed parents and the most prominent words were 'together' and 'learning'. We think the motto is going to be around something to do with learning together.

We are doing transition activity afternoons where the parent groups are working together. The school associations are having regular meetings together. We are starting to set up the teaching groups for 2010 when we are one new school. Currently we have 301 students; next year we will have just under 300. We are really proud of our innovative work and we are confident that what we are setting up will be of great benefit to the present and future children of Somerset.

**Mr HALL** - I am confused with the numbers and how they stack up. The report on page 2 says, 'predicted declining enrolments - 250 FTEs', and then on page 6 it says '280-300' and on page 7 it talks about building a school for an enrolment of 350 students, so I am a bit confused as to how all that fits together. Can someone explain why we seem to have three different sets of figures?

**Mr WELLS** - Some of those variations come from different documents developed at different stages in the process. We looked at numbers in 2007, so I think there might be a table in there that has its origins in that work. We need to be sure of around 300, given that in the Burnie-Somerset area, if there is any capacity in the future for housing growth, there is a bit more potential out on that western side, so we think 300 is where we need to be, at a minimum. There is a bit of increased capacity. Whilst the general classroom

model is for around 300, if it got a bit bigger we could handle that. There is the potential for population decline to end up around that 250-270 mark by 2015. There is a judgment call for us to make there, taking into account the demographic data we have, the current student numbers and, if we have a brand-new school, the impact that will have. We have tried to settle on a number around the 300-mark. I acknowledge the variations in the literature and I think they reflect different stages of work that we have done on it. But, in the end, I think the 300 total is around where it will settle. It could be on the low side, it could be on the high side.

**Mr HALL** - So, as it stands, it is being built to accommodate 350, you said.

**Mr WELLS** - Potentially, it could if it needed to, yes.

**Mr HALL** - If it needed to, yes. Is there much leakage out of Somerset at the moment to other schools, either east or west, that you are aware of?

**Mr LOVELL** - A small amount and, I guess, from the other schools around the area and to private education as well. One of the strategies was that if this is what we are hoping it is going to be then it may even reverse a little bit of that flow.

**Mr HALL** - Yes. That has sorted that matter out.

**Mr GREEN** - Obviously there has been a lot of discussion around education, but the schools these days are used by the community generally. Has there been any consultation with the wider community about the use of the school facilities on an ongoing basis?

**Ms FINLAY** - Yes. The groups that use our schools after school are already talking about where their things will be stored and things like that. So, yes, they are very keen to be still part of the one school.

We have requests for different groups to use our facilities that we are unable to accommodate at the moment due to not having the spaces. So, certainly, they want to be there, they want to be involved. Neighbourhood Watch is keen.

**Mr GREEN** - I was elected in 1998 and obviously there was a lot of discussion about the two campuses even right back then and, of course, whenever the subject was raised it was always raised in the context that there was a stand-off between the various parties. It came to a head, I think, when the boundaries were changed to a degree and all of a sudden things got quite heated there for a little while.

But since this process has been undertaken, I have not had one person come into my office or make any sort of representation to me about the process or the change that has been foreshadowed, so I would like to congratulate, personally, all those people who have been involved in this transition because it has been an extremely well thought-out process that has taken the community with it. I think it has been a fantastic effort, Greg. Would you pass on to all those people involved our thanks because I am sure it will make a big difference.

**Mr LOVELL** - Thanks.

**Mrs NAPIER** - For the record, we have looked at a couple of school designs, one of which builds the library facilities into the pod. Your school community has decided not to adopt that model but to have a major learning centre as part of your library. For the record, could you indicate how you would see that operating and why you wouldn't necessarily have pursued that pod design?

**Ms FINLAY** - In the pods themselves there are teacher resource areas so the materials that the kids need, day to day, will be based in the pods. There is also a central place to come to for people to access specialised equipment that might be in the library. It is a really great place for kids to go and interact in a different setting. There will be really lovely comfortable furniture in there so that kids get a sense of going to a special place and having some special activities as well.

But there will be places for literacy - if literacy is your main concern - for those resources to be very much in the classrooms when they are needed and the same with ICT. Kids will be able to get the information when they need it in the pods as well, in the general learning areas.

**Mrs NAPIER** - On site we had some discussion about teacher librarians. As I recall, you do not have a teacher librarian; you use a skilled teacher aide. To what extent might that influence a decision about that design or is it quite a separate issue?

**Ms FINLAY** - I think that is quite a separate issue. For example, our paraprofessional - our teacher assistant - who runs our library is a highly-skilled person but also our classroom teachers come in and take the library lessons as such. What they are doing during those times is teaching and extending their literacy programs into a different setting.

**Mrs NAPIER** - I congratulate you on the successful bringing together of the community into one school, and I pay tribute to the fact that you have taken the time to do that. I have not received any complaints in relation to the process, and that is always a very big tick, I think, as to the way that the education profession has managed the issue and brought the community with it. I certainly endorse Mr Green's comments. Under the national Pathways there is a requirement for a hard or soft federation. Would the bringing together of the two school campuses meet the terms of that federation for consideration of national Pathways funding or is it envisaged that there would be a broader federation combined with Wynyard or Burnie that would be considered?

**Mr WELLS** - With national Partnership funding you would be referring to five or six elements and encouraging school federations is one element. It has not been a subject of discussion with respect to this. This is really the merger and the creation of one single school. Whether down the track that school looks to forge the kinds of links with other schools, whether it is in a Wynyard direction or in a Burnie direction, is probably something more for the future. Over the last five or six years, the Somerset schools have been working closely with the Burnie group of schools in a collaborative way across a range of endeavours but I do not think that at this stage there has been any real forward thinking about whether the new single Somerset school would align itself with any particular group of schools at either the eastern end or on the western edge. The actual process of amalgamating and creating one school wouldn't be an avenue to attract national Partnership funding for school federations under the requirements there because that would need to be part of a group of schools. At this point, being part of a federated

entity isn't on the agenda. Whether it is after the school is established and an individual entity in itself and starts to form relationships with other schools, that would be something into the future rather than now.

**Ms FINLAY** - We have really tried to be very focused on our goals of creating this one new school and building the new culture around that. That has been our really big focus for the last couple of years.

**Mr HALL** - In moving all the kids from West Somerset across to Somerset in the interim period whilst the construction and everything else is going on - and I may well have missed it in the budget for funding of project management - you are obviously putting temporary classrooms in there. Does that come out of the department's operational expenses? It is not included in the actual expenditure for this project?

**Mr FINCH** - We are putting up some demountable classrooms on the site and then using the existing site at Somerset, but at the moment we have it factored into the budget. With the overall budget -

**Mr HALL** - Not part of this?

**Mr FINCH** - Yes, it is.

**Mr HALL** - Okay, I couldn't see a line item for it.

**Mr FINCH** - No, it's not easily identifiable but it is factored into the budget. With the overall budget, like many of these projects, we are still subject to a tender outcome. We will be moving to a tender next month and then we have reassess the overall situation depending on how we go with the tender outcome. We have done our best to move to an estimate.

**Mr HALL** - What do you reckon the estimated cost is of moving everybody across?

**Mr FINCH** - We will come back to that one.

**Mr HALL** - You mentioned an asset sale of \$1 million; I presume that is for the old Somerset site?

**Mr FINCH** - That is right.

**Mr HALL** - Obviously that is zoned with Wynyard/Waratah as educational -

**Mr FINCH** - It is zoned as community use at the moment.

**Mr HALL** - So for somebody to pay \$1 million for that site - and you are expecting it to fall within that category - do you have any ideas where that might go?

**Mr FINCH** - No. We did have an official valuation, and that was the valuation as it is currently zoned. Obviously the department wants to move away, sell the site and get the funds as quickly as possible, given that they are part of this budget. That would be up to a prospective buyer. It will be put on the market and the buyer will have to think about



zoning, subdivision, and all those issues. The department does not get into that sort of property development process.

**Mr HALL** - Are you confident that it is a reasonably attractive site for a developer?

**Mr FINCH** - Definitely. Its location, right at the end of the town, will be a very attractive site. That is another aspect of the budget. If we get more we will look at more funds being released as part of the budget to cover any cost overruns. That has been a commitment to the community right from the start, that the full proceeds of the asset sale will be put into the project. I think that is important, given the good faith we have operated on with the community, that all those proceeds are put into the project. Of course at this stage we have to work on an estimate for the overall project, but as it moves forward and things get firmed up, we will look at that.

I now have this figure. There are a couple of components to it because we have to move the early childhood intervention service that we saw this morning. That has to move to Acton Primary because it is a temporary location at the moment. As we have said in the report, we need to think more about the permanent location for ECIS but there are a number of other things going on at the moment that do not allow us to decide the permanent location. Probably one key decision is the location of the child/family centre for the Burnie area. That still has to work through a number of community consultation processes, so we have chosen a temporary location at the moment. It is probably going to cost in the order of \$100 000 to move ECIS, and the move to Somerset would probably be in the order of \$150 000. Part of that is the relocation of terrapins, which are quite costly to move and set up, but there really isn't another solution at this point.

**Mr HALL** - On page 12 you have contingencies of \$250 000 and cost escalation of \$75 000. Wouldn't that normally be a couple of line items that you would combine under contingencies?

**Mr FINCH** - Yes, we could. I guess it is just the circumstances at the moment with the Building the Education Revolution projects, and some uncertainty at this stage, although the north-west coast market still has a fair bit of capacity in it, unlike the south of the State where it has probably been more buoyant. It really has just been the timing, given the uniqueness of the number of school projects being undertaken at the moment. That will be tested when we go to tender. Hopefully we will get a significant number of tenderers and it will be a competitive process and outcome.

**Mrs NAPIER** - On the premise of tenders thus far let, and your comment about the south being a tighter market than the north-west, what are we running at in terms of building inflation?

**Mr FINCH** - We had that discussion a few weeks ago and I think we talked about 10 per cent. That is probably as good a figure as any at the moment.

**Mrs NAPIER** - So that would be more so for the south than up here?

**Mr FINCH** - That's right.

**Mr CLAYTON** - Firstly, Artas was fortunate to be selected to be the architects involved with this process. It is a unique opportunity to bring two schools together. It is a little bit different from when you traditionally walk into a school and it's just the development of the school and the betterment of the school. We were working with two different school communities, balancing up the requirements of both.

As Denise touched on, there was an extensive design brief put forward to us. It was really a substantial document. Whilst it looks pretty daunting in the first instance, it is a very positive thing because it meant that the users were very focused on what they wanted. It was very good for us because we knew where they wanted to go and how they wanted to get there and what the outcomes were.

The design response is directly related to the underpinning strategies initiated by the Somerset School steering committee to provide a significantly better school for the Somerset community. A continued approach with all stakeholders involved in the project has resulted in a shared vision for a new educational facility that responds to best practice and teaching and learning principles.

The project will provide new and refurbished accommodation for up to 350 students at the existing West Somerset Primary School site. The new buildings include three learning pods, providing 12 general learning areas, complete with access to wet activities, shared studio space and external learning spaces. The existing buildings to be retained and refurbished include building 2, which is a single story that will accommodate visitors' entry and reception and the other functions of student services, a library and early learning centre. Building 3, which is the existing multipurpose hall, is a double-height space and will accommodate a new discovery centre, stores and the canteen. External works include extension to the existing car park, new drop-off zones, safe student access, outdoor learning spaces, student social zones, covered walkways and extension of active playgrounds. The design proposal is for the student services building to provide a formal entry for visitors and the school community and links directly to the parking and drop-off zones. The building retains the single-storey volume but provides street presence with an increased height of the entry canopy and this creates a vibrant and directional marker as the first point of call as you enter the site.

The student common centre, or 'town square', is the social hub of the design. It is located centrally in the north-east location with access to light and protection from wind. This space has direct links to the learning and resource room, otherwise known as the library, and other general learning areas. It provides the connection between indoor and outdoor learning and has access to student services, the multipurpose spaces and discovery centre. The town square provides both hard and soft landscaping elements able to support a creative setting for innovative teaching and outdoor learning, outdoor communal dining and links to the canteen, as well as a place for gathering and playing in large and small groups.

Articulation of the larger built facade is broken down into smaller elements, providing a sense of human scale and proportion. Materials have been chosen for the ease of maintenance, longevity and sustainability. Building heights and floor areas are appropriate for the function and fit an educational facility size determined by the department.

One of the key aspects within this process was to create a new identity. When amalgamating the two schools, a new identity was an important factor in our consideration. The new identity is achieved by significant changes to both the built and natural environment that is able to celebrate and support a new beginning as a united school community. The town square and learning resources are arranged around the central space for student activities. The location of the learning pods has a direct link to this social hub and provides an environment that is safe, supportive and cooperative and reflects the idea of the village community, which is a strong underlying factor that was reinforced in the design brief; also, as Denise touched on earlier, to make it a fun space and somewhere the kids want to be and make it, not only when they are at school but also after-hours and on weekends, a place where they can come and gather.

The finishes and colours of the building materials are reflective and accentuate the school colours and enhances a sense of pride and ownership, connecting students to the built environment. In consultation with the school, elements from each school will be located within and adjacent to the social hub.

The master planning solution that we came up with was to provide a student social space in an area that was not only secure but also had managed supervision - to allow for managed supervision throughout the site. The learning pod is spread out from the social hub with the learning resource centre acting as the village centre. This social hub has covered-ways and landscaping elements to encourage students to engage in their environment in a caring, responsible and inclusive manner. The covered-way is an organic shell-like structure and connects each learning pod through the social hub and directly into each of the learning resource centre and multipurpose halls.

External spaces provide play and social areas that challenge the senses whilst maintaining safety and efficient supervision. The variety of spaces can provide for small and large group play, both internal and external.

The proposed landscaping treatments are designed to meet functionality, aesthetics and environmental criteria. The design theme responds to the school's location, adjacent to the coastline. In terms of landform, low grassy and planted mounds, reflective of low dunes, help to define the spaces whilst maintaining view lines critical for supervision of the school grounds. The proposed planting colour draws heavily on indigenous coastal vegetation. However, some non-local, Australian natives and exotic trees and shrubs will be proposed for specific reasons. All plants are selected for their low water use and minimal maintenance requirements. Planting is designed to provide structure, seasonal colour and interesting textures with minimal maintenance requirements. Some lawns in high-traffic areas will be maintained with summer irrigation.

Each learning pod provides for four connected general learning areas. Each learning area accommodates the flexibility for team teaching, small group learning, shared studio and break-out spaces, wet area activity, project-based activities and individual work areas. Each learning area has an individual teacher resource room and an independent work area. The learning area is connected to full ICT access, interactive smart boards and areas for display. The space is appropriately sized and provides access to light, views, natural ventilation as well as visual and acoustic privacy.

The early childhood centre is a general learning area provided for a shared teaching space with additionally large wet areas, their own toilets and a connected, secure outdoor play area. Each learning area has its own resource area and independent teacher work bench. The wet area has a bench suitable for staff as well as a sink and bench area suitable for students of kinder age. It has been located directly adjacent to one of the new car parks for ease of drop-off and pick-up. It also has one of the fundamental facts that was really stressed upon us, the location. Traditionally, the kindergarten has been the forgotten area of a school and has been located off to the side because we need to protect our kindergarten kids. A real driving point was to make it the hub because for the parents who are involved with the kindergarten area, it is their first introduction to the school and, as you would have seen when we were walking around, we are trying to encourage the parents and the families to be heavily involved with the school. So providing the kindergarten adjacent to the central hub enables the parents to be involved right from day one and then the idea is to continue their involvement right through to the end of grade 6.

The student services building accommodates the entry, visitor waiting, reception and general administration. It has direct access to a large meeting room. The meeting room is also linked to the staff room through a divisible wall, which allows flexibility to accommodate staff development and larger meetings and forums. Students can easily access the staff room, senior staff officers, plus specialist consulting rooms and IT area, directly from the social hub. The resource centre caters for both students and staff. It provides a new library reference area, IT connected, casual seating, flexible learning options and large teacher resources in a central location.

The existing multipurpose hall is an adaptable space for sporting activities, performing arts and community events. It has its own independent entry located near the new car park for after-hours access. It also provides three independent store-rooms, so that different groups can have access to different areas. A new discovery centre is proposed adjacent to this, which will also open within the existing multipurpose area. This will be a specialised learning area for science, construction, technology, food technology, music, drama production and the arts. Basically, it is just a flexible learning area. This space can also accommodate after-school care with a dedicated store-room, music room and tea-making facilities.

The canteen is also located adjacent to this building so in wet weather the discovery room can be used to serve the canteen and in fine weather it opens directly onto the social hub. The canteen can also be used as part of the community access to the multipurpose hall.

The project will be designed to meet Australian Design Standards for access and mobility in all areas. Some key environmental concepts include energy conservation, resource and waste management recycling, which includes retaining and reusing existing buildings. We are looking at using toxic-free materials, specifying renewable resources, as well as using local materials where possible.

Some sustainable building design strategies include the use of thermally efficient windows and doors to reduce air and heat loss and solar gain in the summer. We are looking at maximising reflective and bulk insulation in walls and ceilings. We are using concrete slab on the ground with perimeter installation to maximise thermal mass. We

are maximising the natural light into the building whilst providing shading devices specifically to the sun paths.

We will be utilising solar hot water throughout the site and we are looking to capture the natural air patterns through the building with openings in opposite corners to maximise natural ventilation. We will be installing operable vents and highlight windows to dump hot air and expel any indoor air pollutants. We will be planting dense landscape to the west to protect from the cold winter winds and summer heat.

We will be collecting and harvesting water from the roof and connecting the downpipes to the existing tank storage and providing new storage. All gutters will be fitted with leaf guards so the water that goes into the tanks is filtered. We will be integrating water efficient landscapes and extending the existing irrigated scheme. We will be selecting other energy-saving devices such as lights and so forth.

We have the existing car park that is located on the site and which has caused a few dramas over the years. We are looking at modifying this and providing some new access in and out. There is the existing road with the two entrances in and out of the site.

**Mr GREEN** - We all went out the wrong one.

**Mr CLAYTON** - We all did, yes.

**Mr GREEN** - I thought that was a drama.

**Mr CLAYTON** - Yes. We are in discussions with council at the moment, one of the good things in having Tracey on the steering committee. There is currently a traffic impact assessment being done on the site at the request of the council and we are looking at rationalising the entry. There is new signposting to reinforce the entry and exit, and also dedicated staff parking areas and then a visitor parking area over next to the early childhood centre. We have the existing car parks there which would be used by staff and administration persons but we will try to encourage the visitors to use the new car park that would be adjacent to the early childhood centre so we can reinforce bringing them in and accessing the school through a central point.

**Mr GREEN** - Pick up and drop off?

**Mr CLAYTON** - Yes. Where we walked today there is the existing footpath and that will be extended and have bus parking and drop-off areas. When students get dropped off, either by car or bus, they will not have to cross the road, which they currently would have to do. I think we have accommodation for a couple of buses and about four or five cars to drop off at any one time.

**Mrs NAPIER** - What allowance is there for covered walkways? Are they the grey ones?

**Mr CLAYTON** - Yes, the darker grey area. I think it is fair to say that it was a hotly discussed concept through the design process. We had the dilemma between providing an open space, this coastal-type environment, and then shutting it all down by cutting off all the open areas with covered ways. We have come up with a compromise which follows the paths - the dark shaded area - which is covered and links in a semi-circular

manner back around to the central pod and then links in. If you look on the elevation, there is the wave-shaped covered way in front of each learning pod that wraps around the other way.

**Mrs NAPIER** - So you can walk along in front of the classrooms?

**Mr CLAYTON** - Yes, you can walk along. They are extensions to the learning areas so they become outdoor learning areas and a covered way. Once again, we have tried to create multi-useable spaces and then we have the one link across to the library resource and to the central pod. It will be covered completely on top and have an open back. We are looking at growing plants or having some sort of landscaping shelter from the south-westerly wind that hits the Somerset site.

**Mrs NAPIER** - What is the configuration for the toilets? One of the attractions I have for the pod design is that the design tries to discourage bullying or places for bullying.

**Mr CLAYTON** - That is probably one of the things we are doing a lot at the moment, getting rid of the traditional toilet block. In between each learning pod there is a little toilet block. When I say 'toilet block', it is three independent toilets that can be locked down. It has an open-meshed front -

**Mrs NAPIER** - So they are in between the buildings?

**Mr CLAYTON** - Yes. They are accessed through the covered way, so you can get to them under cover. They are opened up at the start of school and then it is just like going into a public toilet which has a door, its own hand basin and toilet. You shut yourself in and then you access out from there.

**Mrs NAPIER** - Straight into the open?

**Mr CLAYTON** - Yes.

**Mrs NAPIER** - That is good. Is that enough - the two blocks?

**Mr CLAYTON** - Yes, that will be six toilets in total. There are also three toilets located off the multipurpose hall, so that will be nine. There is also the disabled facility behind the library resource area. The kindergarten has its own four toilets dedicated for kindergarten.

**Mrs NAPIER** - So that's built into the kindergarten area?

**Mr CLAYTON** - Yes, they have their own because they need to have a supervised toilet area.

**Mrs NAPIER** - So that's why you've got two blocks and not three?

**Mr CLAYTON** - Yes. When the bell goes they go to the toilet. None of the students seems to want to go to the toilet in their own time, so there is the big rush at the end of recess and lunch, so it has been designed to accommodate their coming back into the pods. Also, we have located toilets with the multipurpose hall so if they are on the oval having

a run around they can quite easily come back and use those toilets. If they are in the social hub, they can come in and use those toilets without having to go back in through the classroom spaces.

**Mr FINCH** - After we put up all the plans - the master plan, the concept plan - parents' feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The two things they presented as concerns were the lack of covered walkways at that stage and wanting small toilet blocks, not a big toilet block but just a few together. The parents were very happy that we have taken on board that feedback and that has all been integrated into the plans. Our communities feel that everything that they have had issues about we have taken to the architect and Heath has been able to incorporate those into the plans. They really feel as if they have had a real contribution to the development of the school plans.

**Mrs NAPIER** - Thank you. I am really pleased to see that we are trying to build bullying out, by the way we design buildings. This is a four-star green design, I think?

**Mr CLAYTON** - No, this one is not a green-star rated building. We are utilising ESD principles to give us best outcomes but this one is not a green-star rated project.

**Mrs NAPIER** - Given that this is almost a full rebuild, a substantial component of it, why would wouldn't we be applying green-star principles to all of our rebuilds?

**Mr FINCH** - Even right through the BER projects, with the briefs we have given architects involved in that, in every project there has been environmental sustainability design principles. We made a policy decision at the start around only pursuing the official Green Building Council of Australia rating on new schools. We will have three new primary schools - two in the south and one here - and Kingston High School. So we will be putting those four schools through the official rating, but for any other project we would not go for an official rating. It is quite a detailed process to get an official rating. It a process that is still maturing. In fact Kingston will probably be the first school in Australia to be rated as a five-star school. That shows that the process is evolving. It is very detailed and very costly. So we did make that policy decision to only pursue the official rating for the four new schools, rather than schools that had a partial refurbishment and partial new build or significant refurbishment like the ones under the Building the Education Revolution project.

**Mrs NAPIER** - What does that do to the cost on a project such as this?

**Mr FINCH** - It is time and effort.

**Mrs NAPIER** - So it is more the paperwork than it is the design?

**Mr CLAYTON** - It is quite a cumbersome process to go through and you have a specialist green-star consultant you have to engage to do the process. That being said, we have a responsibility in our industry to do the best that we can environmentally and sustainably. We bring across a lot of the green-star criteria but we are not applying it in a formal manner which Green Star makes you do. We have two or three lever-arch files worth of material that we have had to keep and record as part of the green-star process. It is evolving. The Green Council still have not given final criteria and how they are going to assess education facilities. It is still evolving. They have to make a ruling because

Tasmania is going to have some, so they will have to finally say how they will rate them. Are they individual buildings or is it one whole site? Lots of things are moving, so it is a very complex and detailed process that we go through.

**Mr FINCH** - It is about accumulating points, and you get points for everything. You get points for a bike rack, lighting and heating and so on. If you have a builder who is officially green-star qualified or accredited, you get an extra point for that. But then of course through a tender process you limit your capacity on who -

**Mrs NAPIER** - Who is eligible?

**Mr FINCH** - Yes, on how many builders you can get access to. It is just one of those balancing acts, again, right through the whole management and balancing the budget for a project. So that is why we decided to do it just for the new ones.

**Mrs NAPIER** - Further to that, my question was about the extent to which there will be readable monitoring available for integration into the school curriculum as it relates to water and energy use in particular.

**Mr CLAYTON** - We are not looking at putting in a building management system that you would need to do under a green-star requirement. We will look at putting in possible usage meters, which is purely a manual read per building and would be used as a teaching tool more than a building management system. I think Denise touched on the fact that it can be used as a teaching tool.

**Mrs NAPIER** - Will there be usage tools so there can be read-outs? Water and solar, particularly, seem to come up in the context of the school system and overall energy usage, which can be quite logically built into the curriculum. Is that in the design?

**Mr CLAYTON** - It is not presently, no. Somerset has been successful in getting a solar grant through the Federal -

**Mrs NAPIER** - Good, it didn't miss out.

**Mr CLAYTON** - No, I'm hoping it is still coming through. As part of that process there is the ability to read the energy generated from those solar panels. I suppose when you are looking at capturing rainwater and then using it, it is very hard to meter between what is town water and what is tank water because you are re-using tank water in the first instance through toilets and things like that. We can use check meters for energy consumption on each building. It basically comes into the building from the main feed and highlights the amount of energy used in that building from a set point.

**Mrs NAPIER** - That would even help staff understand the cost of electricity and energy, let alone get the message to the kids. It would be good to get an idea on whether there is a feeling that community consultation has been constructive, what has been taken on board and what are the little issues that you might like picked up that probably haven't been picked up yet.

**Mr LOVELL** - I have been involved in this process from the very first combined school association meeting where we looked at the future of education in Somerset. All along,



one of the biggest issues I have dealt with and had feedback about is the amalgamation process of two separate student bodies and two separate school communities. The big concern was that someone along the way was going to step up and say, 'No, you can't do this; this is not the right thing'. As Malcolm mentioned previously, there was very much a general consensus across both school communities that one new, improved and latest and greatest school is the best goal to aim for, but getting to that point proved to be a little hard.

I guess we were over-cautious in some regard to the community feedback and were very concerned that we didn't want all of a sudden a runaway call saying, 'No, you can't do this; you're ruining the history of this school', or, 'We don't want to be involved with that school', or whatever their particular argument was. So we took very gradual and gentle steps and tried to maintain as best we could information going out at each step along the way, which really culminated in the meeting we held at the Somerset Surf Club, which was basically an open forum where I, Malcolm and I think Denise may have presented different aspects of the process at that particular stage. We then set out some questions to try to generate feedback from those people. I was very unsure how positive or negative that feedback would be at that stage, because we were dealing with a lot of people's history and a lot of the community people had gone through those two schools. Every school breeds loyalty in its students and the general community towards that school. In this instance we wanted to break down that loyalty a little bit to enable them to blend together. We were a little unsure but it was a great reassurance to myself and everybody else involved on that particular night that there was overwhelmingly positive feedback that we were going in the right direction for the future of the students in Somerset.

Short-term potential issues we had to deal with included the combining of the two school bodies and living for the coming 12 months on the one site. For the overall future gain of Somerset and Somerset students, it is a small price to pay for where we will hopefully get to. Generally the feedback from parents, students and general community has been more positive than I thought it might be.

**Mrs NAPIER** - How old is the old Somerset school?

**Mr LOVELL** - I think we are looking at 100 years-plus.

**Mrs NAPIER** - What thoughts do you have about how you carry that on?

**Mr LOVELL** - It is very important that we don't lose the history of either school, though obviously the Somerset school has the longer history. We're hoping to take some of the parts of that school - like a set of very old doors that were part of the original Somerset school building - and incorporate those into the new building, as well as some of the other features of that school and maintain a little part of that history. Even though the West Somerset school doesn't have that longevity behind it, it is still important to people who have gone through that school that parts of it are also included in the new design. In reality that West Somerset school will be just as new a school to the current West Somerset students as it will be to the Somerset students at the start of 2011.

**Mrs NAPIER** - Art works are always allowed for in these projects. Is there a thought about how the art works allocation might be part of that or is there some other idea in mind?

**Mr LOVELL** - Some of the art works will be in that community area but we haven't yet got to that level of detail. There are significant art works and mosaics from the current schools that will be featured in the new school as part of the uniting process.

**CHAIR** - That has been a very commendable community exercise, probably embracing the broader community than just the school communities. That will show through as time goes on with the development of the school.

**Mr LOVELL** - One of the side benefits to this process is that it will make a tighter and more united Somerset community.

**CHAIR** - Thank you all very much for your time.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**