



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Major Redevelopment of Sorell School

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

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council

Mr Valentine (Chair)
Ms Rattray

House of Assembly

Ms Butler
Mrs Petrusma
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1 INTRODUCTION

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

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

The Committee has investigated the following proposal:-

Major Redevelopment of Sorell School

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

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This reference recommended the Committee approve works to undertake a major redevelopment of Sorell School with the aim of consolidating the school as an integrated Kindergarten to Year 12 campus and providing contemporary learning environments for the school's students.
- 2.2 The main campus of the school is situated at 41 Gordon Street, Sorell. It is the only school that caters for high school aged students within the Sorell municipality. The school also includes an additional Kindergarten at Midway Point.
- 2.3 The school is in genuine and urgent need of renewal. Apart from the overall ageing and run-down appearance of the school buildings, the layout of the campus is confusing and not considered fit for purpose.
- 2.4 The history of past development at the Sorell School has created many congested building areas and a site layout which makes it difficult to deliver contemporary learning. Buildings have been added throughout the years independent of a long-term master plan. Colour schemes do not match and many of the building surfaces have not stood up to the elements well. This has resulted in a patchy look and feel in terms of building design and overall school layout.
- 2.5 The school is separated into primary and secondary campuses, with a large oval separating the campuses. This physical separation contributes to an operational and identity divide which is counter to the school's vision to create a united and cohesive school with an integrated organisational and learning environment.
- 2.6 The main vehicle access points are located behind the school, and whilst mobility and access around the Sorell Township is relatively easy, the school has no significant entry points from the main street or the shopping precinct. The front of the school has only one walk-in entrance, which is a service entrance for vehicles. Visitors accessing the school through the front entrance must park on the town's main street, where parking can be congested. The Administration building is not centrally located, suffers from a poor layout and does not have discrete parking for the school.

- 2.7 The vision supporting the redevelopment is to position the school as the centre for education and training for the southeast region of Tasmania. To facilitate this vision, the school will be reorganised into well-linked but discrete learning hubs:
- An Early Learning Hub that includes Kindergarten to Year 2 which will be closely connected to the separately funded Child & Family Learning Centre (CFLC);
 - A Years 3 to 6 Hub;
 - A Years 7 and 8 Hub; and
 - A Years 9 to 12 Hub with close alignment to the existing Trade Training Centre. The Trade Training Centre will retain its identity as an adult learning facility.
- 2.8 In tandem with planning for the major redevelopment, a strategic plan for the development of the school farm is also underway. The new strategic plan will seek to position the school as a centre of excellence in Agricultural Science and will align with the Tasmanian Agricultural Education Framework. The design of the Years 9 to 12 Senior Learning Hub will be sympathetic and add value to the development of the school farm.
- 2.9 The school has consulted widely to determine a program of works that reflects the needs and priorities of its students, teachers and the broader school community. This has resulted in a work program with the following elements:
- Area A – Years K to 2 Hub redeveloped in the building presently accommodating the high school library and associated learning areas. This will be adjacent to the current high school administration building which is planned for conversion into the Sorell CFLC;
 - Area B – a new administration building and support centre centrally positioned at the public approach to the school. This will become an attractive signature building and part of a new heart for the campus;
 - Area C – a new Years 3 to 6 Hub as an extension to some existing near new primary school General Learning Areas (GLAs);
 - Area D – a new Years 7 and 8 Hub in the primary school building which presently accommodates the primary school office, library, and many GLAs;
 - Area E – a new Years 9 and 10 Hub positioned centrally to provide access to the existing Materials, Design and Technology (MDT), Science, gymnasium and performing arts areas which are not planned for redevelopment at this time;
 - Area F – a new Food Hub strategically located near the heart of the campus to assist in community welcome and access by students;
 - Area H – a new Years 11 and 12 Hub positioned near the Years 9 & 10 Hub and in close proximity to the Trade Training Centre;
 - Area I – a redeveloped area in the existing primary school to become a senior art hub; and
 - Area J – a redeveloped area for alternative programs including a location for the ‘big picture’ individual learning program.

Area G (a new Gymnasium) and Area K (conversion of the current gymnasium to a performing arts learning hub) do not form part of this redevelopment but are part of the master plan, and have been highlighted for future development.

2.10 The proposed works aim to provide the following advantages and benefits:

- To transform the school as an attractive and welcoming facility with a sense of community ownership;
- To create one school by connecting all existing and new facilities;
- To create a contemporary, safe and welcoming learning environment from birth to adult;
- The consolidation of all facilities into one clearly identified educational and community precinct;
- To assist the school in its transition to a major regional education centre for south-east Tasmania; and
- To remove aged buildings and infrastructure, refurbish all existing facilities, and provide highly visible and welcoming new buildings.

3 PROJECT COSTS

- 3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is \$25.75 million.

The following table details the current overall cost estimates for the project:

Description	Budget Component (\$'000)
Construction, including construction contingency	18 700
Up-front expenses including statutory and consultants' fees	2 060
Furniture and Equipment	1 400
Contingency and Post-Occupancy	3 010
Art Work	80
Project Management costs & support	500
Total	25 750

4 EVIDENCE

4.1 The Committee commenced its inquiry on Monday 11 May last via videoconference, whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:

- Rob Williams, Deputy Secretary Corporate and Business Services, Department of Education;
- Jenny Cowling, Principal, Sorell School; and
- Paul Cockburn, HBV Architects.

Overview

4.2 Mr Williams and Ms Cowling provided an overview of the current issues with the school's facilities and layout and the works proposed to address these issues:

Mr WILLIAMS - ... Of all the recent projects for Education that have come to this committee for consideration, this one probably has the potential to have the most profound effect on the education of the students in the Tasman/Sorell area. As the committee is aware, Sorell is the largest growing area of Tasmania's residential growth, expanding quite rapidly. Quite a lot of the flow of traffic from the east coast and the Tasman Peninsula comes through, as well as the satellite suburbs of Dodges Ferry, Carlton and Primrose Sands.

The school has suffered for many decades from ad hoc building that has left it in a disjointed state. If you have had a chance to look at the video you will see there are corners of concrete, quadrangles with bars across and iron gates, and the school is disjointed. The movement of people around the school is difficult and does not flow. For access to the school everyone pulls up outside the science block where there is no public entrance. The whole thing is confusing. The flow through the school does not work.

This project gives us the opportunity to fix some of those fundamental flaws with the school site. The site itself is absolutely wonderful with the heritage museum and agricultural farm out the back, which is a great trade training centre. But the rest of the school is in the poorest condition, disjointed and difficult to manage. I am sure Jenny will talk about this later on.

This has been a long process of consultation because there are many options and variations of options available. The local mayor, Kerry Vincent, was on the working group as well as people from the school, the architect, facilities services, the school association, et cetera.

There has been a lot of debate about what is to be prioritised. While \$27 million sounds like a lot of money - it certainly is - we have had to be very careful how we get the best value for money out of this project by making sure we choose the priorities. Even though it is a significant amount of money, it doesn't buy everything you would have in a school if you started from scratch.

During the morning, I am sure somebody will discuss the fact that we have had to make a decision, or the working group has made the decision - and the department supports it - that at this stage the old gymnasium and old performing arts areas will remain, while the rest of the school is renewed. This basically involves knocking down a number of buildings because they are not fit for purpose. They can't be reused in many cases to create the school.

We also work with the council around access to the school. You will note from the plan that access to the school will be from Main Road going into the Sorell shopping district. That is a major change in the structure of the school. When you look at the plans, in the precinct areas (a) to (j) or (k), you will see the flow that happens. In the centre of the school is the administration area, the public and community access centre. That is really important because

at the moment it is a small area off Main Road. It is very nondescript, with no discrete parking for the school. It is on the street, and you come into a rabbit warren of an office. From there it is anybody's guess how you get to anywhere else in the school. It is a really difficult place to navigate.

This will give the school a heart. It will give the school a flow from the early years. It will provide the background and space for a child and family learning centre, which is mooted for the area. It will then provide great access all the way through the year groups, up to 11/12, being near the trade training centre.

One thing we have known over the years is that the school's reputation has waned. The education outcomes need a shake-up. The school can be an absolutely great school for a regional environment. We have the land for expansion, for agricultural studies, for apprenticeships - something we would love to see the school more strongly involved in.

So, in every way this project provides a renewal of this school. We have worked with the council on the traffic flow, which is why the entrance to the school is on Main Road. We know that many people pass this school to take their kids to schools in the city. Everyone who has been on the eastern shore in the morning knows there is a big drop-off at Rose Bay High as kids coming up the Tasman Highway get dropped off, having gone past Sorell School.

Later on, when we get to talk to Jenny Cowling about the philosophy of what we are trying to do here, that buildings don't make a school, but it is really hard to make people proud of a school if the buildings are not up to date, and the school is physically not great functionally.

So, when I say buildings don't make a school, it is really hard to make it a proud school if you don't at least have decent fit-for-purpose buildings, and in our view, these are not.

This is a great project, with huge potential for Sorell. We worked the capacity of the school, once finished, at about 1250. Currently, the projections are that the school will have a population of about 900, give or take a dozen or so over the years.

There is a real potential for that to change. We need that capacity, because a great hope is we will attract more students to this school. We have a great new school leader in Jenny Cowling. If we have this new project up and running, there is an opportunity to do everything we need to for Sorell, and the surrounding community, to make this a truly great regional school.

Ms COWLING - ... It is really timely because at the moment we are doing a lot of work on our new vision for the school. I started at Sorell this year and there was no documented vision or mission statement for the school, so this is really important work we are in the middle of now. We had 120 staff undertake a professional learning session on Thursday via Zoom, which was a really interesting experience. Over the weekend I put together some common themes and was heartened to see some of the key words that are coming out such as 'aspirational', 'respectful', 'connected', 'contributing' and 'life-long learners'. That was heartening because this needs to be our new vision for our school.

We are working really hard at the moment on having some very important student voice in what our new vision for our school is, but it certainly is going to be one school at the moment. Historically, the two campuses, which are separated by a big oval, have operated very separately. Part of our vision is to have one school from birth to adult. As Rob has already said, in the current plans that will flow beautifully starting with a child and family learning centre, through from Kinder right through to year 12 and then the trade training centre. It will be really great to have that.

I have been through this process before. I used to be principal at Mount Faulkner Primary School. When that school closed we built Windermere Primary.

I would like to echo what Rob said about that the building does not make the school but it really does facilitate that. I know from having been through that experience, when we first opened Windermere's doors we had a population of 430 students. When I left at the end of 2014 we had well over 500 and our outcomes have improved. Our student outcomes have improved because we were able to provide a better facility. This really did help engender better student learning outcomes and of course that is our job.

The outcomes at Sorell at the moment are not good whichever way you cut them. Our outcomes need to improve and we are on that journey collaborating with staff and these new buildings will make that even better.

The current buildings are really dark; a lot of the classrooms you cannot see into from outside. There is no way that students and teachers can collaborate together in the current environment. With the new building we will be able to move towards the new way of teaching and learning that needs to happen.

Sorell School Master Plan and the Prioritisation of Redevelopment Opportunities

4.3 The Committee understood the school had undertaken a master planning process to determine how best to renew the school. The Committee notes that the master plan was integral to determining the school community's priorities and from this, the scope of the proposed works and the potential for future developments. The Committee also notes the master plan encompasses more than the currently proposed works; it in fact establishes a clear strategic vision for the school and its future development.

4.4 The master plan aimed to develop a central heart and a flow through the school that currently does not exist. The Department of Education's submission highlights how the master plan will achieve these aims and provides a clear vision and pathway for the current and any future redevelopment:

The planned major redevelopment comprises a near total spatial reorganisation of the Sorell School.

The design potential for reorganisation and option reiteration has been exhaustively analysed. The costed master plan represents a project outcome that finishes with the School in a strong position at the end of works using the available funds. Site areas have been planned for and strategically reserved for the future desired development of the gym and renovation of the former gym into a performing arts hub. The potential for the future growth of the grouped learning areas and their outdoor areas is also accommodated.

Significant strategies and outcomes from the master planning process include:

- *The original school site is retained as a historical source of community pride.*
- *Having community accessible buildings in the central zone of the campus and promoting community access and welcome (admin, gym, performing arts, food hub) with managed access beyond this zone.*

- Managing safety through visibility and having age appropriate learning zones with some years more protected from the community zone while maintaining an open community feeling.
- Co-locating birth to age 8 (CFLC & kindergarten to Year 2 Hub).
- Retaining a future opportunity for an Education and Care Centre.
- Bringing the Years 10 to 12 adjacent to the Trade Training Centre.
- Removing vehicle movements from the interior of the site and providing suitable visitor and staff parking away from the pedestrian core.
- Relocating access for parent car parking and drop-off to the Gordon Street roundabout to meet Council requirements.
- Bringing the separated campuses together with a new central administration, student support and food buildings connecting both the primary and high school buildings.
- Locating attractive new buildings in the most visible zone to signal the School's transformation.
- An organising spine for clear wayfinding and linkages to the main street of Sorell. This includes the placement of the CFLC.
- Spatial organisation to support the developmental progression of learners through the campus from the CFLC through to the Trade Training Centre.

Additionally, the State Government has also committed a CFLC for Sorell at the school. This project is separately funded and the master plan has taken into account the need for this Centre to have a front door presence on the Main Street together a strong connection to the early years area for the redeveloped school as well as parking for staff and visitors. With the inclusion of the CFLC into the site planning, a true birth to adult learning community opportunity has emerged.

The 'flow' of the school can thereby follow the developmental structures of the school within the new spatial organisation. The positioning of the CLFC at the northern (town centre) end of the campus is adjacent to the Kindergarten spaces, and then Prep to Year 12 can flow through the site in a logical and contiguous way. Importantly those elements needing to be closer to the community access points are also close to the welcome and community heart of the School master plan design.

At this new heart, a new central administration building located on the site of the existing secondary campus oval would be located in the centre of the campus physically and operationally. Access points would make use of the existing turning circle on Gordon Street, giving safe entry and exit from the campus. The access points currently at the rear of the school would be maintained but modified to improve student safety in the Early Childhood section of the campus. This flow of grades from the Northern end of the campus to the Southern end would place the Years 11 and 12 classrooms next

to the Trade Training Centre, which is ideal for students to make use of both facilities for their learning programs.¹

- 4.5 Noting this process, the Committee sought to understand how the proposed works had been prioritised over other elements of the master plan. The witnesses noted that all elements of the master plan could not be undertaken with the funding provided for the redevelopment. Given this constraint, the highest priorities were providing contemporary learning environments for the benefit of students and teachers and creating a central heart and logical flow through the school from Kinder to Year 12:

Ms BUTLER - Are you confident there is going to be enough money to actually do the whole masterplan?

Mr WILLIAMS - That's a good question. What is clear is that, after a long, drawn-out process of consultation and consideration, it was decided to leave the gym and the performing arts largely as they are, because that doesn't fit within the budget, and designing the new contemporary learning areas and the flow of the school is more of a priority. We could not leave some of those old classrooms as they were.

In that sense, no, we don't get everything that would be on the school's wish list. Clearly that is the case. They would like a new gym and they would like a performing arts centre.

But we have put contingency within this budget. It is up around 10 per cent, or \$3 million of contingency. I think we were wise to do that because in uncertain times we do not know about costs. With a project of this size, it is about right to have that sort of contingency available because you do not know what you will find until you stick the diggers in the ground and what is going to happen to supply chains for materials that come from various parts of the country under strain and stress.

The answer is yes, we are pretty confident we have enough. Quantity surveyor advice is we have enough for this job and enough contingency to do what we have set out in this plan, save for the gym and a new performing arts centre. I think that is right, Paul?

Mr COCKBURN - That is pretty right, Rob. You could also add the master plan takes into consideration those items if and when they actually happen, which has been a bit of a problem with this school as there has been no clear master plan, so a lot of the development over the years has been piecemeal.

Ms BUTLER -Is there is a staged approach with the master plan as which particular sections will be built first? Is there a prioritising in case of the lack of funds and you can adjust around the gymnasium and the performing arts centre? Is there a priority for classrooms, for instance?

Mr WILLIAMS - It will probably be best for Paul to take, but yes there is a priority because, as Jenny said, some of the areas have to be decanted in order to be knocked down to make new areas for a logical progress on site.

Mr COCKBURN - The first part of Jen's question was to do with what is actually costed in the master plan. Everything you see, excepting the future gym and the refurbishment of the existing performing arts centre, is costed. In terms of the staging of this thing - that forms in effect one stage. What we are talking about really is the decanting of this and we are not at this stage heavily involved in discussions about how that might pan out. I suspect it will be a

¹ *Major Redevelopment of Sorell School*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department of Education, 11 May 2020, pp 13-14.

case of building a new building first, keeping the school operational and when those buildings are finished we will hand them over and can transition in that particular manner.

- 4.6 The Department's submission also highlighted the highest priority was placed on providing upgraded learning environments for students:

The funding announcement for the major redevelopment referenced a Science Technology, Engineering and Maths facility to complement the existing Trade Training Centre and support the Year 11 and 12 extension program. The master planning process identified the option to retain the value of the existing Science Centre built with funding from the Building the Education Revolution (BER) program when prioritising of the competing objectives for the redevelopment works. The critical objectives identified were the creation of new or redeveloped key learning areas for all students for the main part of each day at School.

The Project Working Group recognises that the collective approach to the teaching of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is of great value to Sorell School for several reasons. Primarily, a strong and robust STEM program would contribute greatly to the school's aspiration to be a Centre of Excellence for Learning in the region. Secondly, a key feature of the school's current and future mission is to create positive pathways for the diversity of learners. STEM does indeed cater for those students who thrive in these learning areas and want to go deeper with their knowledge, skills and understanding. Thirdly, there are genuine learning benefits from this program. It was acknowledged that STEM is not reliant on one or two buildings to exist, but that STEM primarily is a program.

The built value conserved by planning for senior students to continue to use the existing Science as well as the MDT, music and gymnasium buildings has also shaped the plan outcome. Rebuilding these facilities could not be afforded within the budget unless the more highly prioritised transformational upgrading of all the core learning spaces for every age group was not delivered. This is a value for money recommendation as evidenced by the cost estimate for a replacement Science building to be \$3 500 000.²

- 4.7 The Committee noted the desire to have a logical flow throughout the school, but also noted that the early years hub would be quite separate from the primary hub, which seemed counter to the school's vision. This concern was also raised during the consultation process. The Committee sought an explanation as to how these apparent conflicts had been reconciled and how this had led to the planned configuration of the learning hubs:

Mrs PETRUSMA - Chair, in regard to page 10. I noticed that four submissions specifically highlighted concerns with the proposed separation of early years from the primary learning years areas. Just for the record, can it be explained how that was addressed in the final design, please?

² Ibid, page 12

Mr WILLIAMS - I think that might be something Ms Cowling could give us some more detail on. This is one of the complex issues that was raised, about how to give the school a heart, and wide access from the road, et cetera. Certainly there was an alternate option available, or available to consider, which was to put the 3 to 6 area along the 1 to 2 area. It didn't fit the planning, but there are also some broader planning needs that the design we ended up with meet as well.

Ms COWLING - That's right. The separation of those two buildings was raised as a concern during that involved consultation phase, and we discussed this at length, both through the project working group, and with our school association. Really, what it came down to in the end was that we would be able to manage this at a school level.

Yes, I guess in an ideal world it would be nice to have them a bit closer, but in the absence of a money tree, we really just had to go with the best option we could. There were three different options presented for consultation. After lengthy consultation, this plan we have gone with was the preferred option, and the School Association did agree and sign off. The K-2 area does present a natural separation point, and in fact, in some schools, such as Sandy Bay Infant School, they are completely separate schools.

So, to align with a one-school vision, and that is what we're working towards, we are confident that can be managed with this plan and it was the best option of the three options presented.

Improving the School's Image

- 4.8 The Committee understood the school's reputation and image in the community had suffered for a number of reasons, primarily related to the look and disjointed nature of the school, coupled with poor student outcomes. The Committee sought to understand how the redevelopment might contribute to improving the school's image and making it a more attractive public school offering for the community:

Ms BUTLER - Currently 55 per cent of traffic bypasses Sorell School and also adds to traffic congestion of area. Stigma is a pretty big problem. That is what I often hear back as a local member. There is a lot of stigma. Whether it is correct or incorrect, it is irrelevant. Will the school look any different, do you believe, after this redevelopment? Will the school present differently to the public?

Mr WILLIAMS - Absolutely. I think Jenny and Paul could elaborate on that. That whole front entrance and access to the centre, to the admin heart of the school, is a radical transformation of the way the school will look.

Mr COCKBURN - You're right, Rob. The key thing there is that the entry is really vital. It doesn't have one at the moment. You will notice that from the entry, which is shown on the front cover of the report, that pretty much most of the new buildings are in that entry forecourt. So, whilst they are reusing a lot of existing buildings on the peripheral side, in terms of new build that forecourt will impact and be highly visible from the roundabout at Sorell.

Ms COWLING - I certainly echo that, Paul. As you say, if you look at the front cover, the image is so different to the image that people see now when they drive up to Sorell School.

Concurrently, we are doing a lot of work in the school, as I already mentioned, on our vision, Another thing we are currently reviewing is our school uniform. We really wanted to get a voice into that. A lot of things in the community currently have a bit of a negative perception and we are working really hard to change those things as well.

Ms BUTLER - I have another question which I hope it ties into that, but I should have asked in your overview. Have you factored in school numbers and the demand for enrolments, as the

new catholic school does receive in the area? Is that a potential threat to enrolment numbers for this school?

Mr WILLIAMS - *I don't know whether we have gone into that sort of future scenario planning. Our aim here is that we make sure the public school offering in the area is the absolute best it can be, and would hope to see an increase in participation there. In one sense, we don't want to compete with the Catholics as such. We want to make sure that the option is there for an absolute first-class public education offering.*

You are absolutely right, Jen. There is a common conversation about the reputation of Sorell School not being as good as it should be. We are going to address that. To that extent, it is not just the new building. Our most senior education leaders in the state have gone into that school because we really want to give it the boost that community deserves.

- 4.9 The Committee recognised that improving the look of the school would contribute to improving the school's image. The Committee questioned the witnesses on how the propose works would improve the aesthetics of the school:

Ms RATTRAY - *I have a question, regarding the reference about the patchy look of the school, and how colour schemes don't match. Any buildings that aren't to be redeveloped, if you like, will have a new colour scheme to blend in with what has been chosen for the new buildings out of the re-development fund.*

Mr WILLIAMS - *The ones that are redeveloped will be redeveloped in a scheme across the school. The others, obviously will be knocked down.*

Ms RATTRAY - *Everything will be redeveloped and will have a new colour scheme and if it is not it will be gone?*

Mr WILLIAMS - *Pretty much, yes. I think that is right, Paul?*

Mr COCKBURN - *That is right, Rob, yes.*

Ms RATTRAY - *I think all members will agree it was a real patchwork of exterior across the entire video.*

CHAIR - *The primary school looked like it had a little more air and space about it than the high school sections, if I'm not mistaken. A development like this would improve the light and airiness of the whole site, wouldn't it be fair to say, Paul?*

Mr COCKBURN - *I think so, Rob. I think that's absolutely right.*

- 4.10 The Committee understood that the existing gym would not be redeveloped and sought to understand if any minor works would be done to the gym to complement the aesthetics of the redevelopment:

Ms RATTRAY - *You are not doing the existing gym? That will still have some redevelopment around it?*

Mr COCKBURN - *No, that is not quite true. In this current costed master plan we are doing no work to the existing gym.*

Ms RATTRAY - *Right. So, that will still have its old facade and will not blend in with the new colour scheme?*

Mr COCKBURN - *That is correct.*

Ms RATTRAY - That was my question. That is going to look like a bit of an ugly duckling. Won't there be enough paint left over to make that blend in?

Mr COCKBURN - It depends very much on the nature of that building and future use. If we are looking at that building for the future being performing arts, that may take on a different tone of the look of the building and an existing gym. If we are talking just simply paint, Tania, then we could certainly look at that.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes. Given it was highlighted everything is a mismatch. I did see the video provided and only had one look at it.... but noticed that there were lots of different types of bricks and they all look a bit different. Then there was some cladding and with all due respect it is a bit all over the show. If we are going to spend \$25 million and then on the side one building everyone will see because it is where the buses pull up, looking drab and ordinary. Wouldn't it be sensible to make it blend in with the rest, even though we are not doing any re-development?

Mr WILLIAMS -We could certainly take that on board and put that on the list for the contingency fund if we have some of that left over. That would be something we could consider if there are funds available.

Mr COCKBURN - The other thing, Tania, is what we have looked closely at, and you can probably see it on the master plan, is this covered circulation right throughout the entire school which seeks to tie all these slightly disparate elements together. I suspect where the existing gym is, given we have got Buckley's there and would look to develop a covered area as a waiting area. So, attaching new building elements to that existing building with covered ways and that sort of thing, is going to help a lot.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, but the covered way is at the other end of the building. I am looking at the back end and side here which are quite visible from the street.

Mr COCKBURN - The intention is to provide some covered way or sheltered areas outside that existing gym for those people waiting for buses. It is challenging, as you can see.

Flexibility within the Learning Hubs

- 4.11 The Committee noted the school's capacity post the redevelopment would greatly exceed the school's projected population for a number of years. The Committee sought to understand the degree of flexibility the hubs would provide, to cater for a changing school population across educational cohorts:

Mrs PETRUSMA - On page 6, my question is with regard to the four learning hub areas. We know there's a total capacity of 1250. Do the different hubs allow the rooms to flex up or flex down? I notice that the numbers in some years - if we look at year 7, it is 108 and then it drops down to 80 - there's a bit of a flow-through. Even in the early years, it flexes up and down. If we go through the early learning hub, and then the 3 to 6 hub, and then the 7 to 8 hub and the 9 to 10 hub, how much flex is available in all those areas to allow for flexing up and flexing down?

Mr COCKBURN - It's a very good question. It's something we've been discussing through the PWG meetings-

CHAIR - What is PWG?

Mr COCKBURN - Project Working Group,..... We have looked at it in terms of year groups - the cohorts for years 3 to 6, years 7 to 8, years 11 to 12 and the early years. Part of the discussion has been around, yes, we're designing the school for those numbers at present, and yes, they

do change from year to year, and we have to do it in such a way that those hubs can be flexible to the point where, if you end up with four groups of year 3 for example and two of year 4, can that be accommodated? The simple answer is yes, because we have good connections between hubs and general learning areas. The other thing to keep in mind is that this master plan - and you can see it there - allows for expansion in the future. That is not publicly part of this current set up. In terms of flexibility, it's been high on the agenda through these meetings.

Mr WILLIAMS - It's fair to say that with the way we design schools in this contemporary age, they are very much based around flexible learning spaces - spaces which can be joined or collapsed; transparent soundproof walls which can open and shut to allow one teacher to take two classes while the second teacher deals with individual learning needs. The sort of tandem teaching where we have a senior teacher mentoring a junior teacher - that all builds into the whole design of how these classrooms work on common spaces, as opposed to the 50 square-metre boxes with one door that we live with in our legacy schools.

Complementing the School's Agricultural and Trade Training Focus

4.12 The Committee noted the school's strong focus on agricultural and trade training and sought to understand how the redevelopment and master planning process would complement, influence and support these areas and vice versa:

Mrs PETRUSMA - Thanks, Chair. My first question is in regards to page 3 where it talks about a strategic plan for the development of a school farm being currently under way. When did you expect that strategic plan to be finished? Will that strategic plan affect the final design of this school at all? Or is what has already been designed for the school is what's helping the development of the strategic plan? I want to know how they are going to work alongside each other.

Mr WILLIAMS - My sense is that this supports the plan for the future use of the agricultural area. You see on the maps that there's a significant piece of land that is vacant. That is over on the side near the pioneer village where there's also some agricultural areas to the right of the map. Also, having the years 11 and 12 and trade training centre on that side of the property gives direct access to the free land. I think the general concept supports any future plans by having the more senior school and agricultural students. You would have to see this school work as a centre for some agricultural training.

Certainly, part of the aim of the tegana Collective on the eastern shore but Sorell has a trade training and agricultural focus available to it to contribute to a broader collective.

Ms COWLING - That is correct. One of the real strengths of Sorell School at the moment is the trade training centre and the VET programs that we offer in agriculture, particularly farm and animal studies. That is a real strength and we will certainly be doing everything to promote that further. That is very much a really important part of our future.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Further to that, I see in conjunction to that on page 4 it talks about the Southern Regional Workforce planning report. So, apart from agriculture, what other industry sectors are SERDA [South East Regional Development Authority] seeking to work alongside the school with, especially with this new exciting development? Just to get a better understanding of what sort of school-based apprenticeships, for example, you are thinking may be in place at the school. What other industry sectors in the area do you see the school as helping to benefit?

Ms COWLING - VET construction is another one of our really popular programs. Just last week I had a meeting with Dr Karin Mathison, who is currently the CEO of the Tasmanian Building and Construction Industry Training Board. We had a really productive meeting talking about how we can promote further apprenticeships, pursuits and pathways for our students in that space.

There is a lot of work that is in early stages. We do have a really strong relationship with SERDA and we are looking at more opportunities all the time to further extend those programs. Again, we see that school concept of Sorell in the one school very much from the birth to adult in the trade training centre on our farm and all the opportunities that exist in that space is really important for the whole south east.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It looks like a very exciting development. I can see a lot of work's gone into that. What sort of relationship does the school have with the trade training centre to strengthen those connections?

Ms COWLING - We work with Rick Birch, the manager of the trade training centre. I am his line manager so we work very closely together. He communicates frequently with me. He has been fabulous for the trade training centre. He is very well known and respected in the broader community. We are working very closely together. For example, Rick joined the professional learning session that I mentioned on Thursday night. He's part of our staff, he's part of that visioning for our new school. He's very much part of the staff. We work very closely together.

Improving Accessibility

4.13 Noting the disjointed nature of the school, the Committee was interested to understand how accessibility for students with disability would be improved in the redevelopment:

Ms BUTLER - If you could run through the report, the Disability Act that would be part of the design, making sure that appropriate access for people that would be within that area.

Mr COCKBURN - The site is fairly level, as you can see. Everything is on one level, and there are no two-storey buildings in this development. From an accessibility point of view it's quite simple to deal with, which is nice for a change. So, everything will be accessed equally.

Mr WILLIAMS - For the record, we always make sure that we build to the building code standards in all respects in relation to accessibility on any major public development, and this will be the case with this building.

CHAIR - Can I ask a corollary question? Obviously wheelchair access has been considered. Are you also considering the installation of Braille plates, for instance, if a student might be blind? Could you give a bit of an indication as to what other features might be incorporated to assist with people with a disability?

Mr COCKBURN - We would definitely look at Braille plates for signage and other matters. In my experience we have had to incorporate that in the past with school projects.

In terms of the circulation of the school, which is what we're talking about in terms of accessibility between buildings and areas - and you will notice it on there - there is a big difference between the two existing schools and some of the travel distances are reasonably large. What we've got to try to do in this school is to provide refuge along the way, along that level access path. It is something that is probably not mentioned in the report, but it's something we're intending to do - providing a journey through the school that is comfortable for people of all abilities.

Ms COWLING - That's correct. A really good example of that is that if we had a student in wheelchair on the primary campus, there's no way they could currently actually travel from the primary campus to the secondary campus, or vice versa, because there is no level easy access. Whereas, with the new development with all those covered walkways, they would be able to travel all around the school.

Closure of the Midway Point Kindergarten

- 4.14 The Committee was aware that the Midway Point Kindergarten would be closed with Kindergarten classes for the area consolidated at the Sorell School site. The Committee questioned the witnesses on the rationale and support for the consolidation of Kindergarten classes at Sorell School:

CHAIR -I note that you are basically moving the kindergarten, early childhood situation, from Midway Point through to Sorell.

I know that there weren't a heap of submissions that came in from members of the public on this particular aspect, but I always remember Swanston Street Kindergarten closing and New Town Primary taking over that particular function and how it impacted on the local community of New Town east. It was a connection point for families. They got to know each other in the district, and those sorts of things.

I am wondering whether any consideration was given to what it might actually do to that area over there, where there are very few facilities and very few meeting places for the local community to connect with and become - well, I suppose, become a community?

Do you have any comment on that side of it in terms of what's happening here with this project?

Ms COWLING - The current situation is that when parents enrol their children, we ask the question whether they prefer the Midway Point kinder or the Sorell kinder. In fact, most parents opt for the Sorell campus because a lot of parents have children of both kinder age and the older grades, so it's actually a lot easier for them to do a drop-off in one place than have to do it in two places.

The other thing is it does create some potential safety issues, I suppose. At Midway Point Kinder we have one teacher and a teacher assistant. They are there by themselves. So, if they ever need support in a hurry, it can be problematic. It takes quite a while to get there from this campus.

One of the people who was its strongest advocate is the senior teacher, an AST [Advanced Skills Teacher], who currently is the person that teaches at the Midway Point Kinder. She loves it there. It is a very idyllic setting. But she was one of the biggest advocates for moving all kinder students to the one site, which again really aligns with a one-school vision. She said they need to be here and mixing with the other students, and it makes a much easier transition as they move to prep.

So, for lots of reasons, it seems we have everyone on the one side. At the moment we have one kinder class at Midway Point, and two kinder classes at Sorell. They really do need to be all together.

Project Funding and Cost Estimates

- 4.15 The Committee expressed some concern regarding the potential for cost estimates to increase, which could have a negative impact on what could be achieved within the redevelopment budget. The Committee sought to explore how this risk would be managed:

CHAIR -Reading that 'WT Partnership (Quantity Surveyors) provide a cost estimate, et cetera' in the next paragraph down. Is this being brought forward a little too early? When you look at what some of the things that are unresolved at this point, you wonder whether

maybe it's a little early in the piece to be dealing with this at this point in time. Does someone want to address that?

Mr WILLIAMS - It might be a combination of being balanced about getting the best advice at the time and managing any risk. I don't think there's anything unusually unplanned or unknown for this project that would mean we're not ready to be doing what we're doing.

I think there's always a series of things that you don't know. You don't know until you put a spade in the ground whether you've got problems like sitting on a nasty dolomite outcrop. Your costs go up. I guess the other side of the coin is the Government's been really strong on wanting us to go forward on projects. We use them to boost the economy. You might have seen recently in the paper the Government has allocated \$10 million for education for additional school refurbishments. The Government's really keen for us to keep these projects going forward as fast as we can.

CHAIR - ... I totally appreciate that but I guess there's two edges to it. It is important that we keep it going but of course it's also important that we get the budgeting right, rather than causing an overrun and complications that might present. It's okay; I'm interested in the comments. I noticed that there were a number of things. Obviously, you don't have the tenders back, so you don't know exactly how that's going to run in the end. I suppose it's all about risk.

Mr COCKBURN - Rob, one thing we've got up our sleeve is that a significant part of all this is the refurbishment of existing buildings. Depending on how your budget situation is, it's something you can retract back into to reduce the scope but still have an operational school if you've got budget issues. If it's a 100 per cent new build that becomes a bit more difficult. In terms of a contingency, a lot of those existing buildings and the refurbishment of them form a contingency in their own right.

CHAIR - That's fair enough. I guess as long as you can give enough lead time to Jenny, because she has to run the school while this is going on. No doubt there are issues in how you handle a construction site alongside kids being in a learning situation. It must be difficult but with this one, it's not just one segment of the K to year 2 or even K to year 6, it's right through the whole spectrum, isn't it? That must be a difficult thing to handle, so getting a bit of a heads up when it comes to what may or may not end up being in the project is pretty important, as is lead time, for those who have to run the school.

Mr WILLIAMS - As we saw in our Taroona High project, when we got the tenders back we didn't end up with the same the estimate and we had to go again. It can happen, but we haven't done anything in this process that we wouldn't normally do in terms of managing risk and monitoring the estimate as we go forward.

- 4.16 The Committee understood that part of the redevelopment was contingent on the proceeds of sale of the Midway Point Kindergarten, however, the Committee also noted there was an anticipated shortfall. The Committee sought an assurance that this shortfall would be met, and questioned how it would be met:

Mrs PETRUSMA - With regard to years 7 and 8 learning hub, I see where it is going to be part-funded by the Midway Point kindergarten site but also there's going to be about a \$440 000 shortfall. Just to confirm - and it says a little bit on page 16 as well - that the remaining \$440 000 will be funded either from the years 11 and 12 extension program or from DoE allocation of funding. Is that correct?

Mr WILLIAMS - That is correct. Basically, the Department has factored in that, subject to the sale of Midway Point, if they need to find the money for that gap. It is suggested the years 11-12 extension program might be where we would allocate funds from.

- 4.17 Noting that any shortfall may come from the years 11-12 extension program funding, the Committee sought an assurance from the witnesses that the years 11-12 extension program in other schools would not suffer as a result of any shortfall being allocated from this funding source:

Ms RATTRAY - Does that mean one of the schools earmarked for extension might get pushed back because say they do not reach the \$750 000 estimated value of the current kindergarten site when it goes for sale and the shortfall and then if you are taking it out of the year 11 and 12 extension fund, does that mean they will be possibly pushed back?

Mr WILLIAMS - It is hard to say. The aim is not, because Sorell itself is an extension school entitled to have that extension cost covered from that fund. In one sense in a closed system, yes, you could spend more of that money elsewhere if you did not have to spend it here, but Sorell itself is one of the schools available for a contribution with capital cost for extension.

Ms RATTRAY - I agree, but there is a very firm plan in place as far as the Government and the department for which schools go to year 11 and 12 and the allocation of funds to make that happen. I am interested in what impact it might have if you are pulling funds out of that budget on the extension of those schools to 11 and 12. Perhaps it is a discussion for another time and not on this committee inquiry.

Mr WILLIAMS - Yes, in one sense it is a separate issue but in another we have brought it into this issue and I do not think any other schools will not have their needs met because of this decision.

Sourcing Materials for the Redevelopment

- 4.18 The Committee noted that the impact of, and response to, the current coronavirus pandemic was having significant community and economic impacts. The Committee sought to understand how these impacts may flow through and affect the capacity to source materials for the redevelopment. The witnesses noted the intention to source materials locally which would ameliorate this issue, however they did indicate that building services may be more difficult to source:

Ms RATTRAY - Chair, I have a question in regard to the constraints and we already heard from Mr Williams there could possibly be some issues around sourcing materials. I have already heard in my own circle people who have been intending to build have had to change product because some things are not available at the moment. Perhaps, Paul in his capacity has some idea whether there are constraints on products and items you would need in this build.

Mr COCKBURN - I am sure there will be, Tania. We will try to use locally sourced materials but some things simply are not made here. We would have to look at what those issues surrounding supply of certain items are and what alternatives there are for those in due course. It is a bit hard to know without getting detailed design and feedback from suppliers.

Ms RATTRAY - I agree. I do not think anyone has a true understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on any area at the moment. It is all quite a bit of unknown.

Mr COCKBURN - It is, but I suspect it is mainly building services we are talking about that may have some issues in terms of supplier.

Ms RATTRAY - Okay, not so much product.

Mr COCKBURN - Not so much product in terms of construction generally. We will try to keep this built in a manner that relies heavily on local materials where we can - bricks, timber, those sorts of things. Building services can be difficult.

Child and Family Learning Centre and Early Childhood Education and Care Centre

- 4.19 The Committee was aware that the CFLC did not form part of the current reference before the Committee, but was part of the school's masterplan and would be funded separately. The Committee was also aware that project planning had identified that a redundant building adjacent to the proposed CFLC could be repurposed in future to provide an Early Childhood Education and Care Centre in partnership with a care provider.
- 4.20 Recognising the school's vision to position itself as a 'birth to adult' leaning facility for the south-eastern region, the Committee sought further information on these facilities, their certainty and timing:

Mr WILLIAMS - Chair, you picked up a really important point focusing on the K to 12 journey that kids can see themselves going on from the time they enter a school, and as they progress through the school, to see where the big kids are going, and have that draw through a school.

The additional concept here is the child and family centres. These have been enormously successful in engaging parents who otherwise were not necessarily engaged in traditional school approaches, but they will go into child and family centres and continue working with them.

Putting one of those on the site creates a draw for kids and parents into the school precinct. We want that to create the connection, so we don't have to worry about the kids wanting to come to school. They already see it. They know where they are going. They know the area, they know the people. This concept of having the child and family centre placed in this master plan gives us great access on a quiet street, which is what you need for people bringing young kids in, and is separate from the main access to the school.

Having a child and family learning centre predesigned into the plan would create a great opportunity, not only for the social gains of engaging parents in their kids' welfare and learning at an early age, but the transition for those kids, who can simply move from where they were in a child and family centre, where they are comfortable, through kindergarten and onwards.

Ms RATTRAY - I want to first ask about the Child and Family Learning Centre.... .. the Child and Family Centre is not there yet. Is that correct?

Mr WILLIAMS - That's correct. The money has been allocated but it hasn't progressed to being built yet. So, that's the project in the pipeline that has been budgeted for. This plan clearly puts a footprint and a master plan design view over this school to accommodate that.

Ms RATTRAY - Right. So, given that there has been quite a bit of focus on that initial engagement with families right through to the trade training centre and years 11 and 12, when is that likely to take place? What's the time frame for building that?

Mr WILLIAMS - I'll get those details for you in a moment, Tania. It's a budget cashflow situation.

Ms COWLING - The other consideration is the plan for where the Child and Family Learning Centre is going to go, is actually into our current admin building, which is obviously going to be modified and made much better. We have to get out of this building first, to change that into a child and family learning centre.

Ms RATTRAY - That is why it is not going to happen at the same time as the redevelopment, if this redevelopment is approved at Sorell?

Ms COWLING - It is an issue of decanting, and we have to manage that process.

Mr WILLIAMS - ... To go back to the question earlier on the child and family learning centres timing, we expect that to be built in the 2022-23 year. So, that funding is out, and as we explained earlier, that is because we need to get the school up and running so we can re-use that old admin area to facilitate the CFLC.

Mrs PETRUSMA - At the bottom, where it talks about an Early Childhood Education and Care Centre 'Child care will be provided in partnership with a care provider'. When do you expect to advertise for expressions of interest? How many places do you expect the new centre to cater for? What is the need in Sorell for a new centre?

Mr WILLIAMS - We haven't done the detailed planning on that one. The funding for the major build of that doesn't start until 2022-23, so it's still some time away. There's absolutely been a crying need in Sorell for a new Child and Family Centre. The Government's model is to work in partnership with -

Mrs PETRUSMA - Sorry, Rob, this is with regard to the Child Care Centre - the Education and Care Centre - not the Child and Family Centre.

Mr WILLIAMS - My understanding is that'll be at the same time as the Child and Family Learning Centre, which is not until 2022-23. The terminology should state that the CLFC which is in that broader concept includes the child care centre. We'll build it and ask the provider to run it as part of the partnership.

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

4.21 In assessing any proposed public work, the Committee seeks an assurance that each project is a good use of public funds and meets identified needs in an efficient and effective manner. The Chair sought and received an assurance from the witnesses that the proposed works were addressing an identified need in a cost effective manner, would be fit-for-purpose and were a good use of public funds:

CHAIR - ... There are the standard questions we also like to ask and make sure we have a response on. First being - does the proposed works meet and identified need or needs or solve a recognisable problem?

Mr WILLIAMS - Yes, to a very high degree as I started out in the overview to the committee, Chair, this school is in desperate need of contemporary learning spaces and a lift in pride to help with new leadership and teaching methods and to really lift the spirits of the school to where it should be.

CHAIR - Thank you. The proposed work is the best solution to meet identified needs or solve a recognised problem within the allocated budget?

Mr WILLIAMS - To the best of our ability using the expertise of our architect, quantity surveyors, our in-house facilities team and the school community the answer is - yes, as we have been really upfront through the report and hopefully today. There are some things we have not been able to accommodate within the budget the school would definitely like. They are in the master plan and the costs for those things are listed. Yes, within those constraints this is a very good outcome and many different conversations were had around different options, the working group considered these options.

CHAIR - Thank you. Are the proposed works fit for purpose?

Mr WILLIAMS - Yes, I believe they are and perhaps Paul or Jenny can comment.

Ms COWLING - Yes, definitely. We are so excited we cannot wait. Our students deserve a new learning environment. The current facility really is not okay. It is a shame you could not come, but that video gave you a bit of a glimpse. If you had been able to come you would be able to see so much better. Absolutely, with the new design we will be fit for purpose. I cannot wait.

CHAIR - Do the proposed works provide value for money?

Mr WILLIAMS - To the best of our ability and once again with the advice of our facilities team, quantity surveyor, architect and the school community with the lens of what they need, we believe this is a value for money proposition.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Are the proposed works a good use of public funds?

Mr WILLIAMS - I do not think there can be a better use than on this being education and facilities to do it in.

5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE

5.1 The following documents were taken into evidence and considered by the Committee:

- *Major Redevelopment of Sorell School*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department of Education, 11 May 2020;
- Sorell Diagrams;
- Sorell Schematic Design ADMIN & FOOD;
- Sorell Schematic Design 3-6;
- Sorell Schematic Design 7-8;
- Sorell Schematic Design 9-12; and
- Sorell Schematic Design EARLY YEARS.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The Committee is satisfied that the need for the proposed works has been established. Once completed the proposed works will provide contemporary learning facilities for students and teachers alike, and will provide a central heart and logical flow through the school, while providing significant opportunity for future redevelopment in line with the school's master plan and strategic vision.
- 6.2 The Committee acknowledges that the proposed works will address many significant issues resulting from the school's age, current configuration and facilities, with the benefits of a contemporary, efficient and cohesive environment to be enjoyed by students, staff and the broader school community into the future.
- 6.3 Accordingly, the Committee recommends the Major Redevelopment of Sorell School, at an estimated cost of \$25.75 million, in accordance with the documentation submitted.

**Parliament House
Hobart
11 June 2020**

**Hon. Rob Valentine MLC
Chair**