

Prue Car

Deputy Premier of New South Wales
Minister for Education and Early Learning
Minister for Western Sydney

**Media Release****NSW Government commits to full rebuild of Willyama High School, with works guided by community consultation**

Tuesday, 19 March 2024

The NSW Government has committed to a full rebuild of Willyama High School, after an independent hygienist found an extensive mould outbreak would be difficult to remediate and, even if remediated, posed a potential risk of harm to the school community into the future.

In a report detailing the investigation, the independent occupational hygienist said the mould outbreak that began in the 2023-24 summer holidays was the most severe classification, known as a Condition 3.

Two types of mould, *Aspergillus* and *Penicillium* spp, dangerous human pathogens, were among the mould detected throughout the school buildings, according to the report.

The report found the mould outbreak was likely caused by a combination of factors including the moisture from the school's air conditioning which was left running, end-of-year carpet cleaning, Broken Hill experiencing an unseasonably wet summer, and storage issues impacting routine cleaning.

Unless the issues at the school are permanently resolved, "even after remediation works the reoccurrence of mould growth is likely," the report says.

In light of the advice, the Department of Education has recommended a complete rebuild of Willyama High School, removing the risk of a return of the mould.

The NSW Government has approved the plan to rebuild Willyama High School at the same site, and by the end of Term 1 will begin a consultation with the school's staff, students and families on the educational needs of the Broken Hill community.

Willyama High School students and staff are currently learning across three sites - Broken Hill High School, Broken Hill North Public School and Morgan Street Public School.

The students will reunite at a pop-up school Willyama High School on the grounds of Broken Hill High School from the start of Term 2 on Monday, 29 April. The pop-up school will provide students with high-quality facilities and materials, ensuring Willyama retains its own identity while the school is rebuilt.

The pop-up school will provide students access to specialist and subject-specific facilities.

The Broken Hill community will receive further information about the consultation process shortly as the program of events and meetings is finalised.

Minister for Education and Early Learning Prue Car wrote to local teachers on Friday to reiterate her commitment to retaining two public high schools in Broken Hill.

Work is also due to begin on identifying personal belongings from the school which can be safely returned to teachers, students and the school community.

The independent report will be made available at the Department of Education website.

NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Education Prue Car said:

“The NSW Labor Government is committed to a full rebuild of Willyama High School.

“During my recent visit to Broken Hill I heard from many locals about the important role that Willyama plays in the community.

“While today’s news is not ideal, I want to assure the people of Broken Hill that we will be with you for as long as it takes to rebuild this school.

“I hope that those involved in the consultation can use the process to tell us about the facilities they need at the new Willyama High School, to set Broken Hill up for future success.

“There have already been strong representations from parts of the community and it’s important that every student, staff member and parent can have their say.”

Member for Barwon Roy Butler:

“I am pleased to see the NSW Labor Government has committed to a rebuild of Willyama High School.

“This school plays a crucial role in Broken Hill’s educational community, and it is heartening to see the Minister’s decision to retain it.

“While this outbreak is not what anybody wanted, I hope the community of Broken Hill can come together and look to the future as we rebuild Willyama High School.”

Department of Education Western NSW Director of Education Leadership Peter Macbeth said:

“A key job for us now is to identify which personal belongings from the school can be returned to their owners and what will need to be replaced.

“The Willyama community has been so resilient during an incredibly challenging time.

“I also want to acknowledge the incredible hospitality and support of Broken Hill High School, Broken Hill North and Morgan Street primary schools throughout this process.”

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