

Community consultation: Outcomes and next steps

WILLYAMA HIGH SCHOOL REBUILD

August 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Department of Education acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that contributed to the development of this consultation document.

Contributions

Content in this document is based on information collected by the Rural South and West Public Schools Directorate as part of a community consultation process.

The authors recognise the contribution of staff, students and community of Broken Hill and surrounds.

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Contents

1	Foreword.....	1
2	Introduction.....	2
2.1	Context.....	2
2.2	Consultation.....	2
2.2.1	Participation.....	2
2.2.2	Activities.....	2
2.3	Document purpose.....	3
3	Willyama High School rebuild.....	4
3.1	Key themes.....	4
3.1.1	Reflecting our uniqueness.....	4
3.1.3	Modern and well-designed.....	5
3.1.4	Enabling curriculum and student aspirations.....	5
3.1.5	Supporting student wellbeing.....	6
3.1.6	Comfortable, climate responsive and safe.....	6
3.2	Design feedback.....	7
3.2.1	School scope and size.....	7
3.2.2	Desired school facilities.....	8
4	Other feedback.....	9
4.1	Broken Hill High School.....	9
4.1.1	Supporting school success.....	9
4.2	Public secondary education in Broken Hill.....	9
4.2.1	Delivering continuous improvement.....	9
5	Next steps.....	10
5.1	Upcoming project activities.....	10
5.2	Keeping the community informed.....	10
5.2.1	Community Information Sessions.....	10

1 Foreword

I would like to thank the many students, teachers, parents, and stakeholder groups who took the time to come along to recent consultation sessions and share their thoughts and ideas about public education in Broken Hill.

Reflecting on the detailed feedback received, I continue to be inspired and humbled by the level of support for our public schools and the shared commitment to putting students first, no matter what challenges we face.

The unexpected closure of the Willyama High School site has been one of those challenging times and I want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of staff, students, and families from all schools in Broken Hill.

Your patience and understanding as we conducted early investigations and your adaptability and dedication during the transition to temporary facilities at Broken Hill High School has allowed learning to continue with minimal disruption.

I want to reaffirm the department's unwavering commitment to a full rebuild of Willyama High School on its original site. This decision stems from our understanding of the important role the school plays in the local community.

As we move through the planning and design phases for the rebuild, the insights gathered during consultation will guide our decisions. We will also continue to seek input so we can create a modern, well-designed and well-equipped school that reflects Broken Hill's unique character and education needs.

I look forward to our continued collaboration and to seeing the new Willyama High School become a reality.

Murat Dizdar

Secretary, NSW Department of Education



2 Introduction

2.1 Context

Following an independent hygienist report that 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, the NSW Government has committed to rebuilding Willyama High School to provide new permanent education facilities for the local community.

Students are currently learning from a temporary school on the grounds of Broken Hill High School and will continue to be there until new facilities are ready.

The NSW Department of Education is currently working through the infrastructure planning stage for the school rebuild while also preparing to remediate the Willyama High School site and demolish the existing buildings.

2.2 Consultation

Over 5 weeks, from 3 April 2024 to 10 May 2024, the department conducted a consultation process to give staff, student representatives and the Broken Hill community the opportunity to voice their thoughts and opinions regarding public secondary education provision in Broken Hill.

The consultation was also designed to hear a wide range of views about the facilities needed at the new Willyama High School to set the school up for future success.

2.2.1 Participation

The consultation enabled in-person engagement with approximately 280 students, staff, parents and carers, and community members.

The open nature of the consultation generated a large volume of comments reflecting a diverse range of thoughts, feelings, opinions and feedback.

2.2.2 Activities

A total of 128 separate, face-to-face consultation sessions were held at:

- Broken Hill Education Office (BHEO)
- Broken Hill High School (BHHS)
- Broken Hill North Public School (BHNPS)
- Morgan Street Public School (MSPS)
- Alma Public School (APS)
- Broken Hill Public School (BHPS)
- Burke Ward Public School (BWPS)
- Railway Town Public School (RTPS)
- School of The Air (SoTA).

Invitations to participate in the consultation forums were emailed to staff, parents and carers of all schools and provided via direct contact with local organisations, including:

- Broken Hill City Council
- Country University Centre Far West
- Regional Development Australia
- Maari Ma Health.

Requests for individual meeting times were also accommodated and an email address was created to give staff, students, and community the opportunity to provide written feedback.

2.3 Document purpose

This document is intended to provide an overview of the key findings from consultation that are most relevant to the Willyama High School rebuild infrastructure project. It also provides some initial information about how the department is responding to this feedback and outlines the next steps for the project.

3 Willyama High School rebuild

3.1 Key themes

A review of the comments received across the 128 consultation sessions highlighted several community priorities the department is responding to as it moves forward with the scope and design of the Willyama High School rebuild.

3.1.1 Reflecting our uniqueness

Consultation participants noted that individual and unique areas had been created by students and staff over years at the original Willyama High School to meet the cultural, wellbeing and learning needs of the school community.

While it was noted that the department works from a standardised design and Education Facilities Standards and Guidelines (EFSG) when building a new school, there is a desire for school students and staff to play a role in personalising the school.

What we heard	How the department is responding
Retain or replicate some of what made the original Willyama High School unique.	The department acknowledges the significant impact that the loss of personal and historically significant items has had on the school community.
Reflect our diverse community, landscape, interests, location, climate, and cultural identity.	Prior to demolition of the original school, the department will work with school leaders to understand which features hold special significance and explore ways of honouring the sentimental value. While it is unlikely any physical items will be able to be transferred to the new school, there may be opportunities to document or replicate significant features in the new school.
Allow staff and students to have input into things like the school colour scheme.	The department's usual design consultation process allows for school input into some aspects, including the colour scheme. Locations can also be chosen where the school can install murals and display student artwork.
Provide opportunities for school murals and student artwork displays to build a sense of belonging.	<p>The Willyama High School rebuild project team will work through a consultative, <i>Connecting with Country</i> (CWC) process with the local Aboriginal community. This will make sure the school design appropriately reflects the local natural environment as well as Aboriginal culture and traditions.</p> <p>The CWC process is part of the usual design process for new or upgraded public schools in NSW. Consultation is usually led by an independent, culturally appropriate facilitator and includes engagement with representatives of the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC), Aboriginal students and families, and the Aboriginal community.</p>

3.1.3 Modern and well-designed

A common theme from consultation was the desire for a modern, well-designed school based on best evidence regarding learning environments and how young people learn best.

What we heard	How the department is responding
Ensure classrooms and specialist learning spaces are functional as well as visually engaging.	<p>All new schools in NSW are designed and built based on an evidence based, proven design approach.</p> <p>The new Willyama High School will be equipped with proper, distinct classrooms, so teachers can focus on teaching and students can concentrate on learning. The school will not include any classrooms that can't function as an individual space for a single class group. All classrooms will have appropriate sound and visual separation and integrated technology to support teaching and learning.</p> <p>Indoor and outdoor areas of the school will meet all accessibility requirements.</p> <p>The NSW Department of Education Commitment to Sustainability outlines the actions being taken to ensure the sustainable design and operation of schools. The rebuilt Willyama High School will include installation of an on-roof solar energy system and rainwater tanks. Once the rebuilt facilities are operational, the school will have the opportunity to reduce its environmental impact through energy reduction and waste management programs.</p>
Would prefer to avoid open plan classrooms.	
Incorporate technology to 'future proof' classrooms and specialist learning spaces.	
Provide a fully accessible school for all abilities and mobility levels.	
Build an environmentally friendly school with features like solar power, rainwater collection, and recycling.	

3.1.4 Enabling curriculum and student aspirations

Many consultation participants noted that secondary students in Broken Hill have a strong focus on practical subjects and vocational education, particularly in technology and applied studies (TAS) and there is a need for high quality facilities, resourcing and technology to support this.

This aligns with opportunities the community identified for stronger connections between the high schools and the local TAFE, universities, and the mining, trade, industrial and business context of Broken Hill.

What we heard	How the department is responding
Provide adequate specialist learning spaces to meet the timetable needs and the number of students completing practical courses.	<p>The department is committed to providing the facilities Willyama High School needs to continue delivering its subjects, including vocational education focus areas which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction • Primary industries • Hospitality <p>The new school will provide wood and metal workshops with new equipment and tools, a commercial kitchen for hospitality, and agricultural spaces.</p>
Provide industry standard wood and metalwork spaces and equipment and hospitality kitchen.	

Enable continuation of the Aurora distance education program for learning extension.	The Aurora program will be accommodated in the spaces that the new school will provide.
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3.1.5 Supporting student wellbeing

Feedback reinforced the important role the school plays in supporting student wellbeing and a desire for spaces that will allow this to continue and be enhanced.

Important spaces included the wellbeing hub, a culturally sensitive space for Aboriginal students, families and community members, and facilities for students needing additional learning support. Willyama High School students in particular identified that indoor and outdoor areas for students to sit and socialise as well as facilities that would support more participation in sport would contribute to positive wellbeing.

What we heard	How the department is responding
Provide modern, well-designed facilities for students with additional support or learning needs.	The scope of work for the Willyama High School rebuild will include provision of new purpose-designed and built classrooms, outdoor area and associated facilities to accommodate and meet the needs of the existing school support unit.
Enable the OASIS wellbeing hub to be reestablished and expand support with more visiting professionals.	The department will work with school leadership to identify spaces within the new school design that can be allocated for the wellbeing and/or cultural uses which were available in the old school building.
Provide a culturally safe space for Aboriginal students and families.	The landscape plan for the new school will include an outdoor multi sports court and student seating areas as well as green spaces. The <i>Connecting with Country</i> process offers the opportunity to identify landscape features that respond to local Aboriginal culture and heritage.
Students would like social and seating spaces for break time as well as sporting facilities.	

3.1.6 Comfortable, climate responsive and safe

Stakeholders identified the need for the school to be comfortable, climate-responsive and safe. This includes incorporating adequate heating and cooling systems as well as windows that allow for natural ventilation and lighting.

What we heard	How the department is responding
Need adequate heating and cooling for the local climate as well as windows to provide ventilation and natural light.	As with all new school builds, the rebuilt Willyama High School will include air conditioning and openable windows for all classrooms and specialist learning spaces. It is also standard to provide covered walkways to all buildings and a large covered outdoor learning area, usually outside the school hall.

Desire for covered walkways, shaded outdoor areas and green space.	<p>Consideration will be given to what might be needed, over and above the standard Education Facilities Standards and Guidelines, to improve climate responsiveness.</p> <p>The department adopts a consistent approach to ensure safety and security at all new and upgraded schools. This involves consultation with the school and the department's security advisors to understand and address and specific security concerns in the school design.</p>
Desire for indoor as well as outdoor spaces for recreation due to extreme heat.	
Student amenities to be designed with privacy and safety in mind.	
Desire for appropriate school security.	

3.2 Design feedback

Consultation participants, and Willyama High School staff in particular, provided extensive, detailed feedback related to the scope and design of the new school.

This feedback has been documented and is being considered as the department works through the planning and design of the school rebuild. There will be ongoing engagement with local educational leaders and staff representatives as the design process progresses.

3.2.1 School scope and size

Feedback included comments about the desired size of the school as well as the number, type and size of classrooms, specialist learning spaces and facilities which will be provided at the school.

What we heard	How the department is responding
Desire for the new school to replicate the original school footprint and size.	<p>The new Willyama High School will be sized appropriately to meet current and projected demand for student places. The site will also be master planned for a larger future capacity, ensuring the school can expand in response to any growth not currently factored into projections.</p> <p>The expectation is that it will be a two-storey school. This will be confirmed through master planning.</p> <p>The new school will provide enough classrooms, learning support, and specialist learning spaces to meet the school's enrolment needs and deliver the curriculum, including specialist vocational education courses in construction, hospitality and primary industries.</p> <p>School facilities like the hall and library will comply with the department's education facilities standards and guidelines (EFSG) which ensure equity for new school builds across NSW.</p> <p>The master plan for the school will identify areas where more classrooms or expanded facilities could be added in future if required due to increase in student enrolments.</p>
Preference for a one or two storey main school building.	
Feedback regarding the number, type, size and design of specialist learning spaces and facilities.	

	The department will work with teaching and support staff throughout the design process to understand priorities and ideas for adjustments that could improve functionality.
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3.2.2 Desired school facilities

Throughout the consultation participants mentioned various facilities that are either important now, or that people would like to see added to the future school.

What we heard	How the department is responding
<p>Core facilities required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hall • Library • Oval • Outdoor spaces 	<p>The scope of work for the rebuilt Willyama High School is still being developed and the facilities provided will be based on the Educational Facilities Standards and Guidelines.</p> <p>All required core and specialist facilities will be delivered as part of the rebuild, and additional facilities will be provided to allow the continued delivery of the VET courses in construction, hospitality and primary industries.</p>
<p>Specialised facilities requested</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing hub • Food tech rooms • Ag plot • Kitchen gardens • Photography darkroom 	<p>In the near-term, the department will work with the school to identify spaces within the design that can be used for performing arts, dance and for cultural purposes. Once the school is operational, the school principal can explore opportunities for making facilities available for community use outside of school hours.</p>
<p>Future aspirations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multipurpose centre • Performing arts centre • Dance hall • Cultural Hub • Community access spaces • Hubs for learning about health, trades and environmental sciences • Facilities to support students from remote areas 	<p>Future aspirations of the community have been documented and noted as opportunities that may be explored in future, once the core facilities have been delivered and the school is operational.</p>

4 Other feedback

4.1 Broken Hill High School

4.1.1 Supporting school success

The community expressed the need to support Broken Hill High School while Willyama High School benefits from new facilities.

It was noted that large numbers of students in Broken Hill go on to pursue apprenticeships so access to new technical learning spaces, equipment and tools that meet current industry standards would be a drawcard for student enrolments.

How the department is responding

The NSW Government is committed to improving facilities at Broken Hill High School to support the sustainable future of both schools.

The most urgent priority for the Broken Hill community is to plan and deliver the rebuild of Willyama High School so that students can return to their original site.

While that work is underway the department will inspect Broken Hill High School, work with the school leadership to understand priorities and look for ways to deliver improvements. Once Willyama High School is rebuilt, the scope of works for Broken Hill High School can be progressed.

4.2 Public secondary education in Broken Hill

4.2.1 Delivering continuous improvement

It is important to note that, as well as exploring the future of Willyama High School, the consultation process also invited participants to share their aspirations for public secondary educational in Broken Hill more broadly.

Parents, carers and community members had many ideas to share and the following are themes were identified:

- Engagement and retention to Year 12
- Student aspirations and attendance
- Teaching and learning
- Sense of belonging
- Equity across schools
- Transitions.

How the department is responding

All feedback about education provision has been documented by the Rural South and West Public Schools Directorate. This provides local educational leaders with school and community feedback to drive continuous school improvement in Broken Hill supported by the Department of Education's Service Delivery Team.

5 Next steps

The department is currently working through the infrastructure planning stage for the school rebuild and preparing to remediate the Willyama High School site and demolish the existing buildings.

5.1 Upcoming project activities

During Term 3 2024:

- Site investigations necessary for planning and designing the Willyama High School rebuild will continue.
- Internal teams will start work on the first of four design phases – master planning – which will look at the best footprint and location of buildings on the site and identify areas suitable for expansion if the school were to grow in the future.

Before the end of 2024 it is expected that:

- A contractor will be engaged to fully remediate the Willyama High School site and the existing buildings will be safely demolished.
- The school design will be progressed and work will begin to prepare the documentation needed for planning approval.

During 2025

- Work will continue to engage a construction contractor, secure planning approvals and begin construction as soon as possible.
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5.2 Keeping the community informed

The department is committed to keeping the community informed about the progress of the Willyama High School rebuild.

- A project web page has been established to provide a single point of reference for the local community <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/projects/w/willyama-high-school-rebuild.html>
- Project updates will be published to the library section of the web page at least once per school Term or more frequently when required. Updates will also be distributed through school communication channels.
- The community can also ask questions or provide feedback by emailing schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au or calling 1300 482 651. These community contact lines are attended during business hours and all enquiries are responded to as soon as possible or within 10 days.

5.2.1 Community Information Sessions

Before the end of Term 3 2024, the department will host public information sessions for the local community.

The drop-in sessions will be held in person at Broken Hill so that students, staff, parents and carers, interested community members and stakeholders including the Willyama High School P&C and local AECG, can find out more about project progress and speak to the team managing the rebuild project.

NSW Department of Education

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