



Artist's impression Broadwater Public School (subject to change)

Broadwater Public School

Project update | May 2024

Dear parents/carers and staff,

The Department of Education is committed to rebuilding Broadwater Public School so that students can return as quickly as possible. The rebuilt school will include a raised building that will house three modern flexible classrooms, which is the same number as before the floods. The library, canteen and administration areas are also being replaced with modern, more flood resilient spaces.

Development approval

As previously communicated, a Development Application (DA) has been lodged with Richmond Valley Council. The public exhibition period for the DA closed on 5 April 2024.

As part of the review process, we met with the [Northern Region Planning Panel](#) and Richmond Valley Council during the school holidays (16 April 24) to discuss the project. In that initial briefing, the Panel and Council both asked a number of questions about the rebuild. This included questions about evacuation routes, water velocities and building heights, as well as threatened species. They also questioned whether alternative school sites have been investigated. [You can find the record of the meeting, as well as the DA documents and our supporting reports and on the NSW Government's Planning Portal.](#)

As part of the planning approval process, Richmond Valley Council have issued a series of RFI's (Requests for Information) and we expect to have submitted our responses by the end this month. Once Council has reviewed our RFIs, they may seek another meeting before the DA is determined.

The Department is continuing to work closely with the NSW Reconstruction Authority, the Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI), the Northern Region Planning Panel and Richmond Valley Council to resolve any issues that arise during the planning assessment phase so that work can begin as quickly as possible.

School rebuilding progress

- In parallel to the work being done to progress the statutory planning process, the Department has continued with the off-site manufacturing of the school buildings, and these are now 90% complete. This will allow us to establish the construction site and commence onsite assembly of the new school

very quickly following development approval. Photos of the new Broadwater school buildings are overleaf.

- Due to the position of the buildings on the school site, demolition can occur at the same time, or after construction. Once approvals are in place it will take six months to rebuild the school, weather permitting.
- Connecting with Country workshops and consultation have been held with the school. This is an important step towards incorporating the local Bundjalung culture and country into school landscaping and signage, along with items already identified as important to the school's story by the school community – for example, the Broadwater Public School bell and “pencil fence”.
- The Department and construction team will also work with the school to incorporate student artwork and projects into the new school buildings and grounds.

Frequently asked questions

The department met with the Broadwater P&C to update them on the progress of construction and planning for the school rebuild. Below are the answers to questions that were raised before and after the meeting.

Why was the REF considered and then a DA submitted?

An initial REF was considered and drafted, and a REF package letterbox dropped to neighbours in August 2023, as required.

However, changes to the PMF levels, coupled with the flooding framework changing considerably since the 2022 flooding, placed additional requirements on this planning pathway which had the possibility to trigger a State Significant Infrastructure Application. Based on our experience with other projects, this is a much lengthier process.

The department then determined that a DA process was the most appropriate pathway to build the school back as quickly as possible due to the risk of delays that could result from an SSI process.

Why were Empire Vale and Wardell Public Schools assessed as Review of Environmental Factors (REF), and not Broadwater?

There are significant complexities involved in developing on a floodplain, including recent changes to flood planning legislation after the 2022 floods. The Department is rebuilding 9 schools, each with its own unique site conditions. The planning pathway is determined by the site's complexity and development risk.

Of the 9 schools being rebuilt, only Empire Vale and Wardell are proceeding as REF's. The remaining 7 are being assessed as Development Applications (DA) through council, or as State Significant Infrastructure (SSI) or State Significant Development (SSD) applications, which are both assessed by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI).

The location and geography of the Broadwater Public School site makes rebuilding more challenging than Empire Vale and Wardell Public School. This is also why Richmond Valley Council and the Regional Planning Panel have requested further information about evacuation times, water velocity, building design, and the school's location, which we are responding to.



Why don't you withdraw the DA and lodge an REF?

There are ongoing discussions about all the options that may be available, however the DA assessment is currently well advanced with Council and the Regional Planning Panel.

Should a REF pathway be considered, it would need to factor in all recent comments raised by both Council and the Regional Planning Panel and go back out for public and authority exhibition.

Can the school be rebuilt on another site?

We are rebuilding the school in its own community with a flood resilient design that is engineered to be structurally robust and raised to minimise flood impacts with an appropriate evacuation strategy.

Our aim is to build Broadwater Public School back better so students can return to face-to-face learning at their own school as soon as possible.

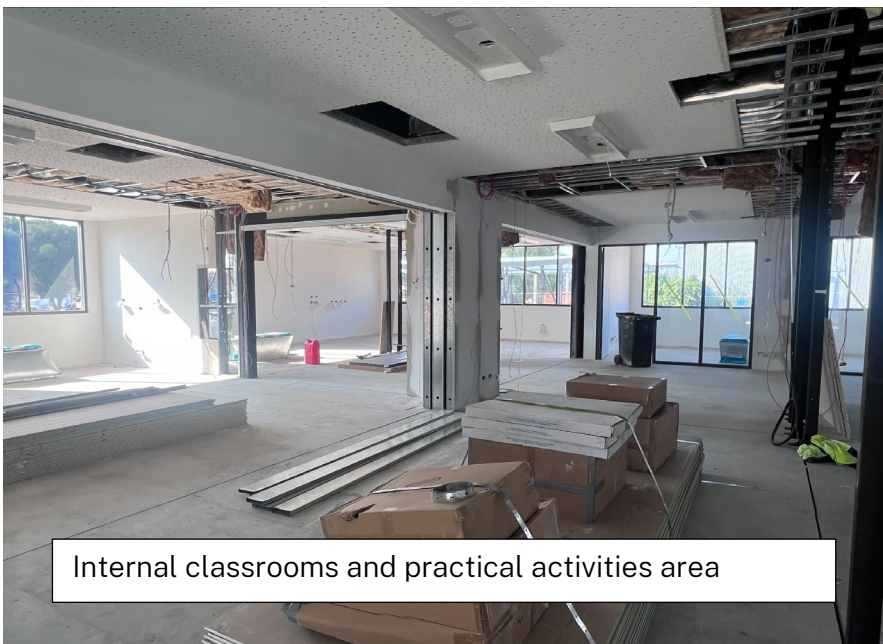
Keeping you informed

We understand how important it is to keep school parents and staff informed throughout all stages of rebuilding your school. We will provide regular updates through the school and our [Broadwater Public School Flood Recovery project page](#). If you have questions or concerns you can also contact us via 1300 482 651 or schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.gov.au





External- classroom building



Internal classrooms and practical activities area

