

TRARALGON COLLEGE AND LA TROBE SPECIAL DEVELOPMENTAL SCHOOL REGENERATION



Engagement Report



As part of its \$3.8 billion investment in new school buildings and upgrades, the Victorian Government has allocated \$6 million for the first stage of the Traralgon Regeneration Project.

The project will work with local schools and the community to improve school buildings and facilities, as well as better connect education in Traralgon. Its first focus is the location and configuration of Traralgon College and Latrobe Special Developmental School.

The Hon. James Merlino
Minister for Education

To better understand local priorities for improvements, especially for Traralgon College and Latrobe Special Developmental School (SDS), we consulted people in the Traralgon community from 15 October to 5 November 2018 and asked: what do you like about the existing schools and what could be better? This report outlines the key findings.

Those findings will shape the next step in the project as we engage architects and other professionals (engineers, traffic management experts) to develop options – creating a vision of what could be achieved in Traralgon, while maintaining current strengths and responding to concerns about change.

Key outcomes

The community insight outlined in this report contributed to the Department's consideration of the solution to this project and assisted with refining the outcome.

The following options have been ruled out:

- given the specialist expertise delivered in each setting **there will be no merger between Latrobe SDS and Traralgon College**
- co-location of Traralgon College and Latrobe SDS at the Grey St (Traralgon College senior campus) site **is not an option due to limitations**, including maintenance of open space, traffic management and space for the schools to expand.

The Victorian Government has announced upgrades to Traralgon College's Grey St campus to address the key issues around condition of facilities and to relocate Latrobe SDS to a newly built, standalone facility located on the Liddiard Rd side of the Traralgon College's Shakespeare campus.

We are now working to engage architects to masterplan the delivery of modern, high quality education and expansion, while maintaining safe, nurturing and specialist facilities for all students. We will continue our engagement with the Traralgon education and broader community while completing this work.

Along with the appointments of executive principals at Traralgon College and Latrobe SDS, the regeneration plan provides both schools with an exciting opportunity to thrive into the future.

ABOUT THE ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with school and community

We engaged with people in the Traralgon community from 15 October to 5 November 2018 via:

- teacher workshops at Traralgon College and Latrobe Special Developmental School
- parents and friends' workshops at Traralgon College and Latrobe Special Developmental School
- a student workshop at Traralgon College
- an online survey.

Engagement snapshot



More than **150** people engaged



84 students and teachers attended workshops at the schools



29 parents and community members attended workshops



2500+ individual comments analysed



45 online survey responses



1200 postcards distributed



54% survey responses from parents



33,829 people reached through social media



What the community wants for the Traralgon region

It was apparent across the engagement that the community sees the opportunity to enhance local education. There is a real desire to ensure that young people living in Traralgon make Traralgon schools their first choice.

Most of the community feel that the state of facilities at Traralgon College and Latrobe SDS require significant investment to create a 21st century school space. In particular, the reputation of Traralgon College was discussed, with the community noting that it is not always a provider of choice for students and parents due to poor facilities. Many participants noted that local kids are travelling to nearby towns in order to attend other schools.

“Fund the whole redevelopment of Traralgon College and turn it into a school with university feeling...Sale Grammar and other schools have been taking students for too long when Traralgon needs to be catching up”

Online survey respondent

The idea of merging Traralgon College’s senior and junior campuses on the senior school site was widely supported. If this occurs, the community feels there is an opportunity for Latrobe SDS to move to the Traralgon College junior campus site, which has been upgraded recently.

“Move [Latrobe Special Developmental School] to Junior Traralgon College. Use some of the existing facilities and build on site. Close to town. Across the road from the primary school. Enough room to build a new school”

Latrobe Special Developmental School parents and friends’ workshop

There was sentiment in the community that a physical overhaul of Traralgon College could help drive a change in perception and establish it as a school of choice in the area.

Action: The Department’s brief to the prospective architects will include, the option of re-locating Latrobe SDS onto the junior campus of Traralgon College; and modernising the senior campus of Traralgon College with a longer-term aim of co-locating Traralgon College onto a single site.



QUALITY EDUCATION

The consultation really highlighted that the educators and the community in Traralgon want each school to be very good at what they do.

There is a real desire for Traralgon College to be the first choice for local young people, and to offer great quality subjects across academic and vocational pathways.

The single most important issue highlighted in the consultation, was to ensure that the very particular and specialist offering at Latrobe SDS is maintained and enhanced. The consultation highlighted the specialist skills of the staff and the specialist facilities required to provide a great education for the young people attending Latrobe SDS.

Ensuring that the facilities at Latrobe SDS are specifically designed for the students, fit for purpose, and enable students to do their best was mentioned many times.

The students of Latrobe SDS have a variety of complex learning and developmental needs, which require specialist facilities (such as child-proof gates and fences to ensure students don't leave the school unsupervised), break-out spaces for overstimulated students, and specialist amenities such as toilets with hoists.

“Remember, in this case we are talking about kids with IQ under 50 - not mild disabilities. These kids require constant supervision, assistance with mobility, feeding, toileting and communication.”

Online survey respondent

Members of the Traralgon community were unsure how many facilities would be shared on a co-located site, but noted that shared facilities would need to be carefully managed. While there are good examples of how access to educational facilities and subjects can be expanded through co-location, these examples were not described through the consultation.

In short, the consultation revealed a strong desire to ensure that Traralgon College and Latrobe SDS maintain their individual strengths and get even better at delivering on their specific mission for their students.

Action: The Department's brief to the prospective architects ensures that development of facilities at each site are purpose-designed, reflect full entitlements, and that current best practice guides the design.



SAFETY, SECURITY AND WELLBEING

Providing safe spaces and ensuring student wellbeing for Latrobe Special Developmental School students is a critical priority for the community.

The current Latrobe SDS site has many disadvantages – it is disconnected from other education providers and organisations in the town, it is a difficult site to develop for SDS students due to the slope of the block, and the buildings are of poor quality. However, it is in a quiet location, feels safe and has limited traffic flows around it.

Parents and teachers of Latrobe SDS students strongly valued the quietness of their site, and felt that it helped manage stimulation levels for the students.

The sense of safety at Latrobe SDS is enhanced by disability-friendly spaces, child-proof gates and fenced play spaces. Parents also valued the low traffic flows around Latrobe SDS and felt that this increased the safety of the site – noting that occasionally Latrobe SDS students leave the site unsupervised.

Action: The Department’s brief to the prospective architects ensures that the current attributes of safety, security and wellbeing are maintained, especially at Latrobe SDS. Where required, specialist skills such as sound abatement and traffic management experts will guide the design to ensure that the current strengths are maintained and enhanced.

LOCATION

The consultation discussed the potential to co-locate Latrobe SDS and Traralgon College at the Grey St (Traralgon College senior campus) site – to create a strong education precinct and additional facilities to which the schools would not otherwise have access. Such an approach would be ambitious, but also complex.

The complexity comes from multiple angles.

The Department already has a series of joint-use agreements with the City of Latrobe at the site, and these agreements provide the community with access to open space.

While there are possible benefits from more strongly connecting schools in the area into a precinct, it also makes it more difficult to maintain space for future school expansion. The community noted that the area becomes very busy with traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times. The adjacent Lavalla College is planning to consolidate their junior and senior provision onto their Grey St site, which has significant potential to add to traffic congestion.

While there is strong support within the education and broader community to consolidate the two campuses of Traralgon College onto the Grey St site, there was not a desire to add to that by co-locating Latrobe SDS.

Based on the community feedback and the sheer complexity of the idea, co-locating Traralgon College and Latrobe SDS at Grey St can be ruled out and will not be among the planning options.

Action: The Department’s brief to the prospective architects will include, the option of re-locating Latrobe SDS onto the junior campus of Traralgon College; and modernising the senior campus of Traralgon College with a longer-term aim of co-locating Traralgon College onto a single site.



In detail: Key findings

This section presents the detailed findings for each of the questions asked:

- Based on your experiences, what are the strengths of Traralgon College/Latrobe Special Developmental School?
- Considering Traralgon College / Latrobe Special Developmental School, what do you see as the improvement opportunities in the regeneration project?
- Do you have views on the location and configuration of Latrobe Special Developmental School / Traralgon College?
- What makes your community special? How could this be reflected in the regeneration project?
- Is there anything else you would like us to consider in planning for the regeneration project?

Based on your experiences, what are the strengths of Traralgon College / Latrobe Special Developmental School?

TRARALGON COLLEGE

The Traralgon College community feels that the strength of the school is the wide selection of subjects on offer for its students, including a comprehensive VCAL program and VCE subjects. The various hands-on learning initiatives run at the school, such as the student-run cafe and creative programs such as Wakakiri, are particularly important to the school community. In addition, the school's teaching and support staff are passionate, hardworking and helpful. Other strengths of the school include the amount of open space for play, relaxing and sports.

"Variety of subjects. Hands on and academic. VCAL"

Traralgon College teachers' workshop

"The school canteen and café run by students"

Traralgon College parents and friends' workshop

"The nice and helpful teachers that always when we are stuck then help us"

Traralgon College student workshop

LATROBE SPECIAL DEVELOPMENTAL SCHOOL

The Latrobe Special Developmental School community believes that the quiet location of the school suits its students. In addition the caring and highly skilled staff are specifically trained for the high needs of its students.

The supportive school culture was often discussed, with parents and friends finding comfort and help during challenging times that come with raising a child with a disability.

Lastly, providing specialised equipment and facilities for Latrobe SDS students is important, particularly the hydro therapy pool and in-ground trampoline.

"Size of the physical block having green area and separate play areas"

Latrobe Special Developmental School teachers' workshop

"[The] disability community is a small one, sometimes there is sadness. School helps through bad times, whether it's a student death or family separation."

Online survey respondent

"Hydro pool, inground trampolines, lots of outdoor space"

Latrobe Special Developmental

Considering Traralgon College / Latrobe Special Developmental School, what do you see as the improvement opportunities in the regeneration project?

The sentiment from the Traralgon College and Latrobe Special Developmental School community is that the quality of facilities at both schools is below standard and requires significant upgrades. Both school communities described important considerations for school upgrade opportunities.

“Both schools are old and are in need of upgrades but shouldn’t have to be at the expense of each other. They each need their own funding to best meet the need of their different student bodies.”

Online survey respondent

TRARALGON COLLEGE

In addition to upgrading the schools’ facilities, the Traralgon College community believes that providing modern spaces for its most popular programs would be beneficial. A dedicated performing arts space, commercial kitchen and STEAM facilities were some suggestions, as well as multipurpose spaces for flexible learning. Additionally, support services and behavioural programs were suggested to help students who are disengaged and experiencing challenging situations at home. Lastly, the Traralgon College community identified issues with the school’s reputation and suggested a cultural overhaul is needed to raise the school’s profile in the local area.

LATROBE SPECIAL DEVELOPMENTAL SCHOOL

Latrobe Special Developmental School requires specialist facilities to help reduce student overstimulation, provide physical therapy and exercise, as well as supporting families and staff. Popular suggestions for better amenities included bathrooms with ceiling hoists and larger cubicles, and locating them closer to classrooms.

Sensory and breakout rooms were also suggested, to allow students to reduce overstimulation in a safe and managed way. Amenities that serve both a play and therapy purpose were popular, including an indoor trampoline, swings and a gym to help obesity rates. Other important facilities suggested were better staff spaces that are larger, more secure and complete with lots of storage options.

“Auditorium/Performing arts building. Multipurpose use for performances and assemblies”

Traralgon College teachers’ workshop

“Commercial kitchen for VET hospitality and food tech classes and for canteen”

Traralgon College students’ workshop

“Connecting the junior and senior campuses would be important to build consistency of practice and give our junior students, senior role models”

Traralgon College teachers’ workshop

“Toilets off classroom. Access to playgrounds from classrooms”

Latrobe Special Developmental School parents and friends’ workshop

“Indoor playroom/trampoline/ swing”

Latrobe Special Developmental School teachers’ workshop

“Breakout areas for students to calm down”

Latrobe Special Developmental School parents and friends’ workshop

“Bigger staffroom. Quiet area for staff (private)”

Latrobe Special Developmental School teachers’ workshop

Do you have views on the location and configuration of Traralgon College / Latrobe Special Developmental School?

TRARALGON COLLEGE

The Traralgon community would like to see a merged Traralgon College campus with updated facilities for junior and senior students. The preferred site for a combined Traralgon College campus is the current senior campus location on Grey Street in Traralgon. Suggestions from the community on a potential design for this site included sustainable, multi-storey buildings, large open spaces and sporting facilities.

“One school. Designed to cater for good pedagogy and ready for future change. Open Space and environmentally friendly”

Traralgon College teachers' workshop

“Use all available space in the Grey Street area, maybe 2 story buildings... with full size sporting and performance spaces, playgrounds, educational and quiet areas and big canteen”

Online survey respondent

LATROBE SPECIAL DEVELOPMENTAL SCHOOL

The Latrobe Special Developmental School community also wishes to remain separate from Traralgon College. There was support across the engagement for the Latrobe SDS to relocate to the Traralgon College junior campus site if Traralgon College is merged onto the site at Grey Street. The community feels strongly about important aspects of the Latrobe SDS's location, preferring to remain in a quiet area, with access to public transport, walking tracks and the rail reserve if possible.

“I believe that they should be separate schools. The current location of Traralgon College junior campus would be an ideal place to start from scratch for Latrobe Special Developmental School”

Online survey respondent

“We require more open grass area for students to safely and freely explore/roam”

Latrobe Special Developmental School teachers' workshop

Is there anything else you would like us to consider in planning for the regeneration project?

TRARALGON COLLEGE

The Traralgon College community consider sustainability as important in the regeneration project. In particular, they'd like to see environmentally-friendly design such as solar panels, rain water tanks and recycling facilities. Additionally, the community feels there is an opportunity to include sustainability in the school curriculum. The community would also like to see a functional school design, which considers lighting, blinds and temperature control. Most importantly, the school design should consider future needs, both in terms of student numbers as well as modern and evolving teaching methods.

“Cooling, heating, lighting done environmentally friendly e.g. skylights with shutters”

Traralgon College teachers' workshop

“It would be great to see solar panels to make the school sustainable and for the design and fit out to be best practice.”

Online survey respondent

“Make sure future learning is considered, and ways to engage students”

Traralgon College teachers' workshop

LATROBE SPECIAL DEVELOPMENTAL SCHOOL

The Latrobe Special Developmental School community identified a number of design aspects to consider in the regeneration. A multi-sensory garden that incorporates a bike/traffic school that could be used to teach students traffic safety was a popular suggestion. Amenities were also discussed, including washing machines, well-designed bathrooms and wet areas.

There was wide support for having allied health services on-site, including small meeting rooms for parents to talk with skilled professionals and other parents.

“We want a traffic bike area with an environmental garden”

Latrobe Special Developmental School teachers' workshop

“Parent zone for pick up/drop off and meetings/get together”

Latrobe Special Developmental School parents and friends' workshop

“Allied Health resource room”

Latrobe Special Developmental School teachers' workshop

What makes your community special? How could this be reflected in the regeneration project?

The Traralgon community feels its strengths lie in the support and care that locals from this rural area have for one another. Latrobe Special Developmental School students travel from various surrounding towns, bringing together families from more isolated areas. We heard that the Traralgon community feels the area's natural landscapes, agricultural heritage and industrial economy is important and that these aspects could be reflected in the design through open spaces and curriculum.

It is also clear that the Traralgon community values sports and outdoor recreation. We heard that the schools should have spacious and various sports facilities for students and the community to use outside of school hours.

"The community is special because we have a very close town that always bands together in times of need"

Traralgon College students' workshop

"It is a growing and inclusive community, which has an outdoors focus on sports and activities. Include good outdoor facilities at both schools."

Online survey respondent

"Lots of open spaces, filled with lots of greenery, to reflect the country side"

Latrobe Special Developmental School parents and friends' workshop

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