Shaping the next stage of the
FOOTSCRAY LEARNING PRECINCT

Phase Two
Community Engagement Report

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The Footscray Learning Precinct is a vision to provide innovative and world-leading education from early years to adulthood. It will create and link state-of-the-art facilities that are embedded within Melbourne’s inner-west community.

**Engagement approach**

Throughout August 2017, the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) engaged with local students, teachers, parents and community members to ensure that their hopes, aspirations and concerns were identified and included in the design of the Footscray Learning Precinct.

We asked for input into the design of the education precinct, transition arrangements for students, community use of facilities and the shared learning framework.

We shared the challenges of delivering the precinct and asked for feedback on how to approach these. We asked community members to participate in an online survey or to attend a community engagement workshop.

**How we engaged**

To drive the engagement we distributed postcards to 19,000 homes, ran a Facebook campaign that reached 90,000 people, organised local school principals to send an email and newsletter updates to their school communities and distributed material through the local library network. We held a community workshop at Footscray Town Hall on 17 August 2017, and used the website to capture community views from 31 July to 22 August 2017.

Overall, we found participants were excited about the concepts of the precinct, keen to be involved, wanted to find out more and have their say.
CHALLENGE 1

Designing an education precinct that delivers world-leading education and is embedded within the community

We asked the community:

- how the designs should reflect their community
- to identify their priorities for spaces
- how links between sites could be created
- for ideas on community use of the precinct and school use of community assets.

Community feedback was provided to Hayball architects to help them develop a master plan for the precinct.

WHAT WE HEARD

Respondents advocated for the precinct to enhance and maintain community connections, create a sense of community and support teacher collaboration.

Most (75%) of survey respondents stated a clear preference for walking or cycling to school. Connecting existing walking and cycling paths to the schools, and ensuring these connections between schools in the precinct, was mentioned across all discussions.

Unique local aspects such as street art, multiculturalism, the river and wetlands and the area’s historical industrial setting were seen as important when designing the precinct.

Participants ranked spaces in order of perceived importance for student learning. The most important spaces were ranked as hands-on learning in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and safe and easy access to transport. Here is the top five:

**Priority for spaces**

1. Hands-on projects in STEM
2. Safe and easy access to transport
3. Social and play spaces
4. Physical activity
5. Creative arts

The most prominent suggestion for community shared spaces was to include a multi-purpose function and performing arts centre. Participants noted the community’s strengths in the arts and the potential for maximising use of existing community facilities.

Respondents raised the need for indoor sport and recreation facilities to be available for community use. A number of participants commented on the available facilities in the area, such as those at Victoria University and Whitten Oval.

‘Multi-purpose indoor facilities that provide courts for basketball games and larger venues for school and community events.’

Online survey participant

Respondents were keen to ensure schools would include play spaces suitable for children of all ages that would be accessible during and after school hours.

‘Open space – such as use of grounds at Footscray City Primary School for students at Seddon Campus, use of Yarraville Gardens for PE classes.’

Online survey participant

Responses indicated that schools could act as a ‘community hub’. They could foster lifelong learning by proving adult education classes and community programs. They could also provide extra-curricular learning for students and community services, such as health and wellbeing, childcare and before and after school programs.

A large proportion of respondents highlighted the value of the skills and experiences of the people within the local community and suggested the schools should draw on this expertise.
A shared learning framework is a vision of how teaching and learning will operate across the precinct. To create a shared learning framework a committee has been established including school principals, Department of Education (DET) South Western Region personnel and educational experts.

This group has identified five values/aspirations for learning across the precinct. Learners who are:

- literate and numerate
- capable and resilient
- curious and creative
- locally and globally competent, and
- healthy and physically active.

We asked the community if these reflected their priorities and asked if they had anything to add. This feedback is outlined below. Community feedback will help refine these values/aspirations.

Participants suggested that central to developing these qualities and skills in students is the harnessing of individuals’ strengths. Taking an individualised approach to teaching will maximise student learning and development.

‘One of the things that I love about FCPS [Footscray City Primary School] is the focus on individual learning, that is assessing where each child is at, and teaching from that point, rather than a one size fits all approach. I think it is important to support high achievers to grow too.’

Online survey participant

The notion of ‘a love of learning’ was common across all aspirations – ensuring education is engaging and that learners are motivated to learn for life. Comments relating to this theme also touched on the role of educators in motivating and engaging students, to foster this passion for learning.

‘Curious could be expanded or reworded to reinforce that learners will be motivated in their learning.’

Online survey participant

Participants commented on the notion of a broad definition of health. They extended this to helping kids learn how to be healthy for life, and the link between healthy bodies and healthy minds.
New model

A detailed transition plan will be developed to support current students and ensure parents know what is happening at their local schools.

We are proposing a governance model that complements the existing structure. This proposed model is to create one secondary school with three campuses. The primary schools will remain independent with the addition of an early learning centre at Footscray City Primary School.

The new secondary model would include:

- a senior secondary campus at a refurbished Footscray City College for Years 10-12
- a new junior secondary school campus in Seddon for Years 7-9
- a reconfigured co-educational junior secondary school campus for Years 7-9 at a refurbished Gilmore College.

Transition

DET, in conjunction with local principals and the school community, has identified the following priorities for transition between years:

- Sharing student information with education providers and teachers across early years, primary and secondary, so they can better support students in their new place of learning.
- Sharing facilities, so students are used to learning in different parts of the precinct.
- Developing a shared learning framework.
- Creating warm and inclusive environments where everyone feels valued.
- Improving links between schools to make it easier for students to move around the precinct.

All community feedback will help develop the best ways to support students.

WHAT WE HEARD

A shared learning framework and strong physical links between the campuses came through as the most important aspects for delivering a smooth transition for students. Respondents advocated for:

- a clear transition plan, early communication and consultation with parents, students and families - these were seen as critical to managing the transition of current students
- supporting individual student needs – mentoring and support services should be available throughout the process so that student needs ‘don’t get lost’ in the new precinct
- shared curriculum and pedagogy – all students need to be involved in shared activities as much as possible, e.g. cluster schools music program, sports festivals, choirs
- equity between sites – ensuring all students get the same opportunities for academic and co-curricular activities.
- the need to attract the highest quality teachers at all schools to ensure seamless learning experiences
- accommodating students transitioning from schools outside the precinct.

Some participants commented that minimising the number of times students transition would help to make the process easier, as would transitioning with friends.

‘Have plans for transition that are communicated to students and families well in advance.’

   Online survey participant

Access and transport emerged as a crucial aspect for ensuring the smooth transition of students through the different stages of learning across the precinct.

‘A purpose built, bike and pedestrian-only, pathway through and around Footscray especially between the schools would be AMAZING. We could create a Copenhagen-kind of feel to the whole place then.’

   Online survey participant

Having a clear orientation program for students to become familiar with the precinct was also suggested, particularly for those coming from schools outside the precinct.

‘How will children who are [at other primary schools] transition to precinct?’

   Community workshop participant
What is happening now?

The Victorian Government has committed $15 million for the first stage of the precinct. This stage includes master planning and developing advanced designs for the precinct, including the new junior secondary campus to be built in Seddon. Hayball architects are delivering the master plan and advanced designs in conjunction with the VSBA. This stage will also include initial redevelopment works at Gilmore College and Footscray City Primary School to expand capacity in the school system at primary and secondary levels. Construction is expected to commence at Gilmore College and Footscray City Primary School in 2018, and finish at these two sites prior to Term 1, 2020.

Our commitment

By the end of this year, DET will clarify how current students will transition to the new precinct, update the community on the governance model, and report progress on developing the shared learning framework.

Find out more

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