



Artist impression of Wee Waa High School. Indicative only.

# Wee Waa High School redevelopment

Project update

June 2021

## Investing in our schools

The NSW Government is investing \$7.9 billion over the next four years, continuing its program to deliver 215 new and upgraded schools to support communities across NSW. This is the largest investment in public education infrastructure in the history of NSW.

The NSW Department of Education is committed to delivering new and upgraded schools for communities across NSW. The delivery of these important projects is essential to the future learning needs of our students and supports growth in the local economy.

## Project overview

An announcement has been made to redevelop Wee Waa High School. The project has been through an early planning phase and we have received approval to proceed. We will now develop the design and continue consultation to deliver a new high school for the community.

The project will deliver new learning spaces, core facilities, agricultural plot, sports courts and open spaces.

## Progress summary and next steps

Early planning for a new high school in Wee Waa has been underway since late 2020. This has included master planning, due diligence studies, site investigations, design work, and transport analysis.

Comprehensive assessments are continuing and a preferred location for the redeveloped Wee Waa High School has been identified.

## We want your feedback

We are committed to working together with our school communities and other stakeholders to deliver the best possible learning facilities for students.

Share with us what's important to you by completing our online survey between 23 June and 7 July 2021.



The QR code will take you to the survey or go online to: <https://forms.gle/9MCz4GrHwCA8w1rD8>

## For more information contact:

School Infrastructure NSW  
Email: [schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:schoolinfrastructure@det.nsw.edu.au)  
Phone: 1300 482 651  
[www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au](http://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au)

## Frequently asked questions

### What is the project?

Wee Waa High School is being redeveloped. The project will deliver new learning spaces, core facilities, an agricultural and environment centre, sports fields and an Aboriginal Learning Centre

Subject to securing a site and obtaining planning approvals, construction could start by early 2022.

The temporary high school will continue to operate from the temporary set up at Wee Waa Public School until the project is completed.

### How will the school be built?

We will be combining the manufacture of building components, such as walls and facades, in a safe, clean and efficient factory environment off-site with onsite assembly. The parts will be transported to the school site on trucks and then assembled into place.

This approach can reduce on-site construction assembly time by up to 30 percent which reduces impacts on the school and local community.

### How was the site chosen?

School Infrastructure NSW (SINSW) has a comprehensive option assessment process for all school projects, which considers three main factors; Location, Local knowledge and Education outcomes.

A number of potential site options were analysed and presented to the school leadership team and key community representatives. Based on this analysis, the site adjacent to Wee Waa Public School has been chosen as the preferred site.

#### 1. Location

The site adjacent to Wee Waa Public School on Mitchell Street provides an opportunity to create a central location for all schooling needs in Wee Waa. Building a school in the

town centre could facilitate partnership opportunities for the broader community, and provides an opportunity for Wee Waa Public School students to access new facilities such as sports fields, agriculture and environment centre and build connections with staff at the high school.

#### 2. Local Knowledge

Consultation with the Project Reference Group (PRG) helped to identify challenges and opportunities of each option. Taking into consideration the local context, these were analysed in conjunction with site investigation reports to inform the decision on the preferred site.

#### 3. Education outcomes

School leadership teams identified that the new proposed site will increase positive student experience and outcomes for both schools. Leadership teams have agreed to continue to work closely once the new school is built, ensuring that both schools can benefit from new classrooms, modern learning spaces, and agricultural and sports facilities.

### Is the current high school site not suitable?

The current high school site is one of a number of sites assessed as part of our due diligence.

Independent expert assessments have not provided a clear link between health-related concerns and the existing high school site.

Structural reports, detailed surveys and hydrologist reports have found engineering and age to be a major factor in the moisture levels of some buildings, which fluctuate due to changing environmental events.

Extensive geotechnical analysis of the existing high school site has confirmed that the soil quality at the site is consistent with that throughout the Wee Waa township and poses no health-related risks.

Feedback from stakeholders suggested a

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new site for the redevelopment of Wee Waa High School would be the preferred option.

Regardless of the final site, appropriate modern engineering solutions will be implemented to safeguard against any possible moisture penetrations or other incursions.

The Department's health and safety directorate will continue to investigate any health-related concerns.

### **What will happen to the current high school and site?**

As part of the Wee Waa High School redevelopment plan, a budget has been allocated to demolish existing buildings and ensure the safe removal of all material, including any soil and debris located at the current high school site.

School Infrastructure NSW will work with Narrabri Shire Council to address the site's water management plan and incorporate into the broader water management plan for the town.

Should the redeveloped school be built on another site, the Department will consult the school leadership, local Aboriginal stakeholders and the broader community on any potential options for the future usage of the current high school site.

### **Is the preferred site flood prone?**

The town of Wee Waa is prone to flooding and surrounded by a protective levee intended to mitigate the impact of potential inundation. Narrabri Shire Council is working to maintain the levee effectiveness which will impact the entire town including the new high school. School Infrastructure NSW is commissioning further investigations at all site options to develop a flood mitigation strategy for the new high school.

SINSW has also engaged civil and geotechnical engineering experts to conduct a range of preliminary site

investigations. From these preliminary findings SINSW is confident that the new high school will provide a safe learning environment for years to come. SINSW is employing building materials and engineering strategies that have been proven to successfully reduce moisture retention in buildings that will ensure a maintenance management strategy is in place once the new school is built.

### **What are the considerations for construction and the proposed site?**

**Geotechnical Engineering** – The new high school will incorporate engineering solutions that take into consideration the reactive soil type and geotechnical conditions typical of the township.

**Civil Engineering** – Engineering plans for the new high school will focus on drainage solutions, water management systems, building ventilation and flood mitigation measures.

**Construction materials used** – We are investigating materials used successfully to manage moisture in buildings. It is proven that modular technology can help keep buildings dry in humid conditions. We will be analysing all options and ensure that we use materials appropriate for local weather conditions.

### **When can we expect the new school to be completed?**

Given the temporary co-location of Wee Waa High School at Wee Waa Public School, the project team has been working to fast track the early planning processes and is aiming to continue this approach throughout delivery of the project.

The project is expected to be completed in late 2022, subject to planning approvals, site conditions and weather permitting.

The community will be updated throughout the project and our website will be updated to reflect any works occurring.

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## **Will the agricultural plot remain as part of the school?**

The scope and proposed design for the new school provides a space for the agricultural plot to be included in the school grounds. It is estimated that the space allocated to the new agricultural plot will be slightly larger than the plot at the current high school.

SINSW is consulting with the Wee Waa High School leadership team, agriculture teacher, and local industry experts to ensure the new facilities can provide learning facilities designed for future focused operational models of agriculture.

We understand the importance of this element in the new school and we will continue to work with the school leadership team and the community to co-design a modern fit for purpose agricultural facility within the school grounds with a focus on student outcomes and experience.

## **What are Innovative Learning Environments?**

Innovative Learning Environments (ILEs) feature space, furniture and technology to support greater collaboration and improved learning outcomes.

The flexible design of ILEs helps teachers provide a broad range of learning experiences.

The spaces help empower students to learn at their own pace and support their learning in different ways.

Designed with students at the centre, ILEs allow for teaching that suits individual needs and interests.

## **What consultation has been done and how will it continue?**

A Project Reference Group (PRG) has been established to inform the planning process and ensure the proposal is informed by local context.

Monthly PRG meetings have been

held since February 2021 and a value management workshop was conducted on 3 March 2021. The PRG includes representatives from both school leadership teams as well as representatives from the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), both High School and Public School P&C, and Narrabri Shire Council.

The Department is committed to consulting the wider community and feedback is welcomed throughout the planning and delivery of the project.

The community will be invited to complete a survey to provide feedback on what is most important to them about a new school.

A PRG for the delivery phase will be established to include architects, planners and design professionals, and Department of Education, Wee Waa High School, and P&C leadership representatives.

## **What are the next steps?**

Next steps include the development of the Concept Design as well as progression of the statutory planning pathway.

The project has requested the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs), and as part of the State Significant Development Application (SSDA), further environmental, technical and design reviews and reports will be employed, as well as further stakeholder consultation.

After the SSDA is lodged with DPIE, the project will be placed on public exhibition, allowing the community and other stakeholders to make comments. We expect this will be later in 2021. Once the development application has been approved, construction work can start.

The project will have community engagement opportunities moving forward, including ongoing engagement with local Aboriginal stakeholders, and consultation with the school community and local authorities.

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