

NHS Boho South Campus Frequently Asked Questions



**NORTHCOTE
HIGH SCHOOL**

What is the Boho South campus?

Northcote High School (NHS) is one of the few remaining Government schools in the State to have its own camp site, which is a campus of the school – The Boho South Campus. Boho South has been used by Northcote High School as a camp site since August 1979.

The site is located approximately 20km east of Euroa, on approximately a quarter of an acre on the outskirts of the Boho South township. It is bounded by farmland, which is off-limits to students and staff. The site includes a basic amenities block, an old schoolhouse (including kitchen, with storage), a recreation room (fire refuge), and several large, platform canvas tents.

Who uses Boho?

In 2019 two camps utilised the Boho South Campus:

- Year 8 Camp – multiple groups of 2 classes attended the camp for 4 days at a time, across various weeks throughout Term 1 (whole of cohort camp)
- Landcare Camp – up to 20 students planted trees over one weekend (voluntary – co-curricular group)

How has usage changed over time?

The campus has been used with diminishing frequency based on the following trends:

1. changes to compliance and regulatory requirements throughout the decades since the 1970s
2. significant growth in student population from cohorts of 100 to now cohorts of 300+
3. increasing socio-economic status of families and their access to enriching experiences for their children.

The International Student Program no longer attends the Boho South Campus for its camp, due to the lack of activities readily available for students to participate in at the site, and suitably qualified staff to run challenging, outdoor educational, team building activities.

The Year 7 camp moved from the Boho South Campus around 2014/5 to be a 3-day camp to Philip Island Adventure Resort, at the end of Term 1, with a theme of Transition. This camp provides students who have been focused on developing relationships within their class/tutorial group with opportunity to extend their relationships beyond the smaller group. Exposure to as many other Year 7s as possible is required for this. The cohort of 300+ attend the Phillip Island Camp in 2 groups of 150 students.

In 2020 Year 8 will attend a 3-day, 2-night, expedition style camp in small groups of 15 - 20, facilitated by Halls Outdoor Education. This camp will include: mountain biking, rock climbing, abseiling, bushwalking, sleeping in tents, cooking their own meals, navigating between campsites.

What activities are undertaken when camping at Boho?

The site has a range of accommodation and amenities facilities and is surrounded by farmland.

The main activity at the site itself is the 4 hour (return) hike to the creek. On the current major camp that uses the campus (Year 8), an overnight stay is undertaken at the creek in tents transported to the creek via vehicle. This activity is weather dependent and does not happen if there is rain.

Other activities undertaken on the Year 8 camp are all done offsite and require travel by bus to and from the site to other locations including trips to Shepparton, Benalla, Polly McQuinns, Nagambie and Mansfield.

What do students who have been on a camp at the Boho South Campus say they value most about the experience?

The small groups of students and the peaceful surroundings, alongside the opportunity to have some unstructured time. The school leadership have ensured that the camp in 2020 with Halls Outdoor Education preserves these elements.

Why is a change being considered now?

The School Council is considering whether maintaining a second campus is in the best interests of the school community, particularly given the decline in use and the ongoing costs to maintain the site. The costs of running the camp activities and maintaining the site outweighs the income generated from such activities.

What are the financial concerns with maintaining a separate campus?

As the socio-economic status of families of Northcote High School students has increased over time, government funding has decreased. At the same time, the building and infrastructure demands at the main campus are pressing, given the heritage of the buildings and new building infrastructure required to replace portables.

School Council has concerns regarding the need to spend human and financial resources on a secondary campus. School Council is also concerned that the site will soon need a significant investment to upgrade the facilities. In particular, the bathroom amenities are in a poor state.

Alternate opportunities exist for a vibrant and challenging camping program for students in a manner that is cost neutral to the school.

A comparison of the types of considerations necessary for running camps at a second campus versus by an external provider are set out here. A key point is that there are various additional costs (responsibilities) not covered by camp fees from students/parents, including maintenance, capital works, compliance, registrations etc.

School Council responsibilities for camps run at Northcote High Schools' Boho South Campus

	School-owned camp	External camp provider
Facilities infrastructure	✓	
Maintenance	✓	
Compliance – registration, fire regulations	✓	
Liabilities	✓	
Ongoing resource allocation	✓	
Staffing	Supervisory and expert	Supervisory
Catering	✓	
Activities management	✓	
Transport	✓	✓
Risk management	Site and activities	Activities Only

What are the costs for the School?

The management of the Boho South Campus has three major costs to the school:

- **Human** – a part-time staff member to coordinate and manage the increasing compliance aspects of site, as well as attend to campus maintenance activities
- **Facilities and Maintenance** – bushfire readiness and other occupational health and safety requirements. Some specific examples include:
 - Tree maintenance. There are large, heritage oak trees which may also impact on the main school-house structure in the future.
 - Toilet/shower block – it is in need of repair/upgrade
 - School house maintenance
 - Ongoing maintenance of fixed tents
 - Storage maintenance and upkeep of camping equipment
 - Grass cutting and fire readiness
 - Utilities: phone line, gas supply and electricity
 - Registration as a campsite with the Victorian Tourism Authority
- **Capital investment** – in the near future, a significant investment is likely to be required to upgrade the facilities. In the past the recreation room was upgraded to become compliant as a fire refuge.

What is involved in re-registration as a Camp?

The State Government announced in 2018 that all school camps must take place with a registered camp provider, via Tourism Victoria. The Boho South campus is registered as a camp. A full inspection takes place every four years; in the intervening years, an online module update is required. The most recent full inspection took place in Term 3 on 18th July 2019.

Who does the site belong to?

The Boho Camp site is leased from, and ultimately belongs to, the Department of Education (DET).

Who is responsible for decisions about camps and campuses?

In DET schools, decisions about camping experiences and locations are the responsibility of school leadership teams and ultimately the Principal. In relation to specific camping experiences, School Council approves camps when they demonstrate that they meet the regulatory and compliance standards set out by DET.

Any decision about school facilities and campuses is the responsibility of School Councils.

A significant change to a school site or campus, such as is being considered here, is ultimately decided by the Minister for Education.

What decisions has School Council already taken?

In following the process required by DET regarding decisions about school sites/campuses, at the December 2018 meeting, School Council made an in-principle motion to release the site back to the Department of Education. This in-principle decision triggered community consultation regarding the campus.

The current consultation aims to inform this in-principle decision before Council makes a final recommendation.

If the final recommendation is to release the campus back to DET, that recommendation is made to the Minister of Education, who makes the final decision.

What scope is there for students, teachers and parents to input to the final recommendation? What kind of influence can views have on the School Council's decision and recommendation to the Minister for Education?

The final recommendation of whether to hand the site back to DET rests with School Council.

Before making a final recommendation, the School Council is keen to understand the views of students, teachers and families regarding the ongoing management, maintenance and use of the Boho South campus.

The decision making process is set out here.

When?	Who?	What?
Late 2018 / early-mid 2019	Northcote High School (NHS) – School Council	In principle decision on future of campus
	NHS School Council	Makes recommendation to Department of Education (DET) Regional Office
October 2019	DET Regional Office	Prepares brief for Minister
Late 2019 / early 2020	Minister for Education	Makes decision on campus

We are here – seeking inputs from community – students, parents, staff

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Who has the final say on the future use and operation of the site?

It is the Minister for Education's final decision to close a campus or not.

What is the community being asked to input on?

School Council is seeking to understand community views on the following:

- Whether the educational benefit students and the school community receive by holding the Boho South Campus outweighs the ongoing cost of maintaining the campus (financial, human resource, organisational and compliance requirements)
- Whether campus facilities meet community expectations

Separately, but connected to the questions about maintaining the facility:

- Whether the camps that can be provided at the Boho South Campus provide the educational enrichment experience for students in a way that could not be delivered by another camp/experience cost neutral to the school? In other words, what makes Boho unique in comparison to other potential camp opportunities and experiences?

The School Council is interested in assessing the community views about the types of costs, benefits and opportunities provided by the Boho South campus, as compared to potential opportunities elsewhere.

Consultation will take the form of:

- 'Listening posts' at various forums throughout Term 3. See separate 'Share Your Thoughts' leaflet for details
- Community survey – distributed via Facebook/on the NHS webpage, in the Newsletter, or by hard copy at reception
- Multiple student focus groups (mainly focused on current and recent Year 8 students)
- 1-1 interviews with teachers, students and past staff with key site involvement
- Whole of staff workshop

Boho South Campus

