



## KEY FINDINGS: ROMSEY EDUCATION REVIEW

The Department of Education and Training (DET) recently commissioned an independent review to plan for secondary education across Romsey.

This fact sheet provides a summary of key findings, the educational considerations that informed them and information requested by the community during consultation.

### BACKGROUND

The *Romsey Education Provision: Independent Educational Analysis* studied Romsey Primary School, Bolinda Primary School, Clarkefield Primary School, Heskett Primary School, Lancefield Primary School, Newham Primary School, Tooborac Primary School, St Mary's Primary School, Kyneton Secondary College and Gisborne Secondary College.

The findings were based on the following data sources:

- Community feedback from consultation with principals, teachers, students and community members carried out in Romsey and the surrounding area by the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) in September and October 2018<sup>[2]</sup>
- Population data, enrolment forecast data, school capacity data and the 'modelling of demand' for school places <sup>[1]</sup> <sup>[3]</sup>
- *Romsey Issues and Opportunities Macedon Ranges Shire Council Paper (2018)*.

### KEY FINDINGS

**No secondary school is required in Romsey in the short or medium term**

The review found that there are not enough students in the Romsey area to offer Years 7-9 at Romsey Primary School or Years 7-12 in the short or medium term. This is because the low number of students would not allow for a broad and quality curriculum.

However, DET will continue to monitor demand for secondary school places and keep options open for future use on the current Romsey Primary School site.

DET considered the secondary education options in Romsey as part of planning for secondary education in the overall Macedon Ranges area, using three education factors – access, demand and quality (see table 1).

**Table 1 Education considerations in planning for new secondary schools**

Ed Consideration	Description	What this includes
1 Access	How easy is it for students to attend a quality government secondary college?	zoning/catchment, transport, distance and travel time, physical barriers and capacity
2 Demand	Current and medium term demand for secondary places in the Romsey area and surrounding area. 'Modelling of demand' refers to actual enrolment numbers and patterns of student transition	enrolments, yield rates, reputation and preference
3 Quality	Ability of existing secondary schools to provide quality education for students.	curriculum, facilities, culture, perceptions and engagement

### New housing developments in Romsey do not significantly increase demand for secondary school places

The number of new houses visible to the community is not currently translating into student demand for secondary places.

New housing developments are generating approximately 15 secondary students per 100 households over the long term. This will maintain demand for government and private secondary school places at rates that are consistent with state-wide trends.

Projected and actual enrolment patterns tend to be less than those perceived by the community. Often this is due to the difference between the applications made by developers to council, those approved and those eventually built.<sup>[1] [3]</sup>

### The Romsey area has experienced slower population growth than the broader Macedon Ranges area

According to current population data (2018)<sup>[3]</sup> the Romsey study area has experienced slower growth than the broader Macedon Ranges – where substantial population growth has increased primary and secondary student numbers.

Demand for public secondary school places in the Romsey area was expected to be less than the earlier projections, and insufficient to consider planning for new secondary provision at this time. <sup>[1] [3]</sup>

Understanding that communities can develop quickly, DET will continue to monitor population data in the Romsey and Macedon Ranges area.

### Travel time to public secondary schools from Romsey is consistent with regional and urban travel times state-wide

Students in the Romsey area have access to two public secondary schools within a drive of approximately 30-minutes from the centre of Romsey, with bus travel taking longer.

This is considered to be a reasonable travel time in Victoria. Less than 40% of the total student population in the state's regional and rural areas live within a 20-minute drive of a public secondary school. It is also consistent with travel times experienced by students in urban areas, which can typically involve several types of transport to get to school.

DET will continue to monitor and strive to improve transport access and the experience for students who use bus travel in the Romsey area to public secondary schools in the region.

## KEY REASONS

### Factors considered in planning new secondary schools

DET considers a range of factors to assess where secondary schools are needed. This includes current and forecast population data, the number of primary students who transition to public secondary schools (yield rates) and the long-term enrolment numbers needed for viability.

While rural communities may have less enrolments than standard Year 7-12 schools in urban or growth areas, any proposed secondary school must meet specific educational requirements, including:

- specialist staffing to teach a broad secondary curriculum
- the Victorian curriculum's F-10 learning domains and capabilities
- teachers with specialist skills in languages, physical education, technology and the arts

- a variety of programs for differing rates of student progress
- increased opportunities for students to interact with a range of students of a similar age with similar interests and to with older and younger children
- professional learning, cooperative planning and moderation of assessment for teachers
- effective use of resources.

### The need to balance 'access' to secondary school with 'quality' education

There is a critical need for all students to access pathways at Year 10 that do not limit options leading into Years 11 and 12 and onto tertiary education and work opportunities. It is therefore important to balance reasonable access to secondary school with quality education. This applies to both the P-9 and Years 7-12 models.

### Student numbers needed for secondary school viability

Based on current and planned development, the Romsey area does not have the projected student enrolments needed to offer a quality curriculum for a Year 7-12 school.

The ability of a secondary school to provide a quality senior curriculum depends on having a large enough group at Years 7-10 engaged in all the learning areas. Around 450 students is needed at Years 7-9, or 600-700 at Years 7-10, to generate the 300+ students required at Years 11-12. Modelling of demand in the short and medium term- using very positive assumptions - would suggest no more than 200 students for Years 7-9 at a Romsey P-9.

It is also necessary to consider the impact on surrounding secondary colleges. Too many public secondary schools in a geographical area risks narrowing the range of programs being offered to students. This is because students mainly choose the business, mathematics and science areas. With less students, equally valuable programs in arts, languages, humanities and technologies become less available.

It's important that all secondary schools can provide students at Years 11 and 12 with:

- a range of studies that will cater for the broad academic, general and vocational needs of all students and ensure that they have access to a wide range of post-school pathways in tertiary education, training or work
- equal access for students wishing to undertake general programs or those with a particular depth or specialisation.

### P-9 model suitability for Romsey

A P-9 school can provide educational benefits such as grouping Years 5-8 as a stage of learning, engaging Year 9 students, community-building and transport convenience.

However, a Romsey P-9 is not a viable option at this time. This is due to insufficient projected student enrolments to provide a diverse and challenging secondary curriculum and the potential negative impact on the provision of quality education at surrounding public secondary schools where student enrolments may be affected.



### **NEXT STEPS**

- The VSBA has appointed Gray Puksand Architects to plan and design the Romsey Primary School regeneration works. This project will modernise the school's teaching and learning environments. We will keep the school community informed as plans progress.
- The capital works at Romsey Primary School will ensure that further curriculum enrichment, or adding Years 7-9, remains a future option on the existing site.
- DET will continue to monitor population growth and secondary school places for students in the Romsey and broader Macedon Ranges region to ensure all students have access to a quality and broad curriculum.
- DET will work with local primary schools and Kyneton and Gisborne secondary colleges to improve transition arrangements and transport access for students from the Romsey area.

### **References**

1. *Romsey Education Provision: Independent Educational Analysis*, December 2018
2. Victorian School Building Authority Community Engagement Report, December 2018
3. Spatial Vision Analysis (2013) and DET Demographic Update (2018)