



# Multipurpose sport field and seating facilities Concept Test

## Research Report

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14 October 2020

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Background

# Background

- Concord High School P&C Association and its volunteers work to bring the school community together so that parents, carers, staff and community members can help meet the needs of the school community and contribute to decisions about the school
- We also assist in providing facilities and equipment for the school and promoting the recreation and welfare of the students at the school
- We've been working closely with the school leadership to help remediate shortfalls in facilities
- In October 2021, the P&C viewed Concepts (version b) commissioned by School Infrastructure's Asset Management Unit to upgrade the school oval and remediate shortfalls in outdoor seating
- In line with our purpose of bringing the school community together so that parents, carers, staff and community members can help meet the needs of the school community and contribute to decisions about the school, we committed in the October P&C Building sub-committee meeting to obtain community feedback about the Concepts (version b)
- Here's our approach, findings and recommendations

# Methodology

# Methodology

We've taken a qualitative approach so we can move forward with a human centred design approach

*Embracing human-centered design means believing that all problems, even the seemingly intractable ones like poverty, gender equality, and clean water, are solvable. Moreover, it means believing that the people who face those problems every day are the ones who hold the key to their answer. Human-centered design offers problem solvers of any stripe a chance to design with communities, to deeply understand the people they're looking to serve, to dream up scores of ideas, and to create innovative new solutions rooted in people's actual needs.* - IDEO

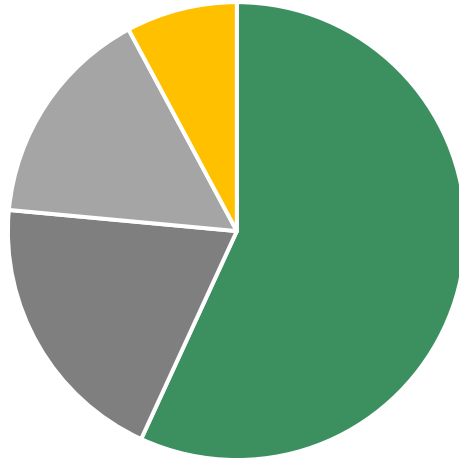
We then asked our community via three channels to let us know what they thought of the concepts in document B, allowing unprompted, open ended feedback

1. Our website [concordhspandc.com.au](http://concordhspandc.com.au)
2. Our Facebook page (98 members at the time of publishing)
3. Our database of 1,000+ via email

We collated every single comment/verbatim from the feedback and applied affinity clustering techniques to come up with key themes

# Results breakdown

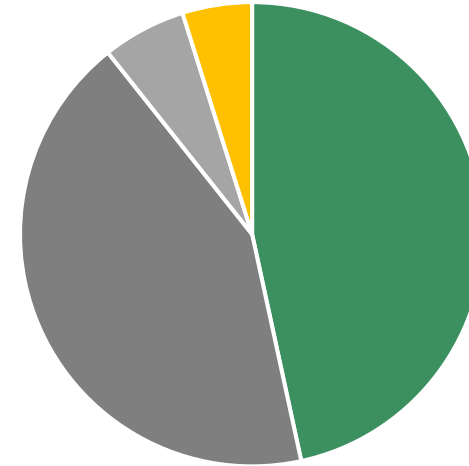
## We received feedback via four channels



n=102

■ Digital ■ Online web ■ Empathy interview ■ Facebook

## Covering parents, carers and students



n=102

■ Parent ■ Student ■ Anonymous ■ Carer

And parents commented reviewing these concepts was a meaningful way for them to connect with their child(ren) and the school

*“It would be great for as many parents to share with their kids as possible to get feedback. I would never have even noticed that the handball court was being replaced with seating if I hadn't shown my daughter. I also didn't know that she doesn't sit in the dedicated 'Senior's Courtyard' due to inadequate seating in that area. Only the kids really understand the 'lay of the land', their input is so valuable..”*

Parent

*“This was a really nice prompt to actively discuss issues at the school with the kids. We usually speak about homework and school work and friendships, not the condition of the school. I think the kids have been putting up with a lot and as a parent this was a really valuable exercise to represent the voice of my children.”*

Parent



# Key Themes

An architectural rendering of a school courtyard. The scene shows several wooden tables and benches arranged on a paved area. In the background, there are green trees and a building with a covered walkway. The overall atmosphere is bright and open.

## All respondents had a positive first response to the concepts

*“If the school did something like this it would show they care about us and people would even look after it” Student*

*“Looks amazing. Too good to be true.” Student*

*“The designs look great, something definitely needs to be done so thank you to everyone involved. ” Parent*

*“This is good. It would be good to see this happen. I go to the Library most recesses and lunches because it’s the only clean, comfortable part of the school” Student*

*“Anything to improve the school and the areas for the kids.” Parent*

*“Regarding the Proposed Plan for CHS. I think it looks wonderful. It would be a great place for our teens to connect.” Parent*

*“Yeah, the perfect school finally” Student*

**However there were genuine concerns this did not address the functionality of the existing COLA space, and that this might become an even more crowded, congested, noisy space**

*"[My children] believe will cause congestion with the queues for the canteen and the lines for the buses in the afternoon. This zone is a main thoroughfare space so when you add seats and plants that will block and congest the area." Parent*

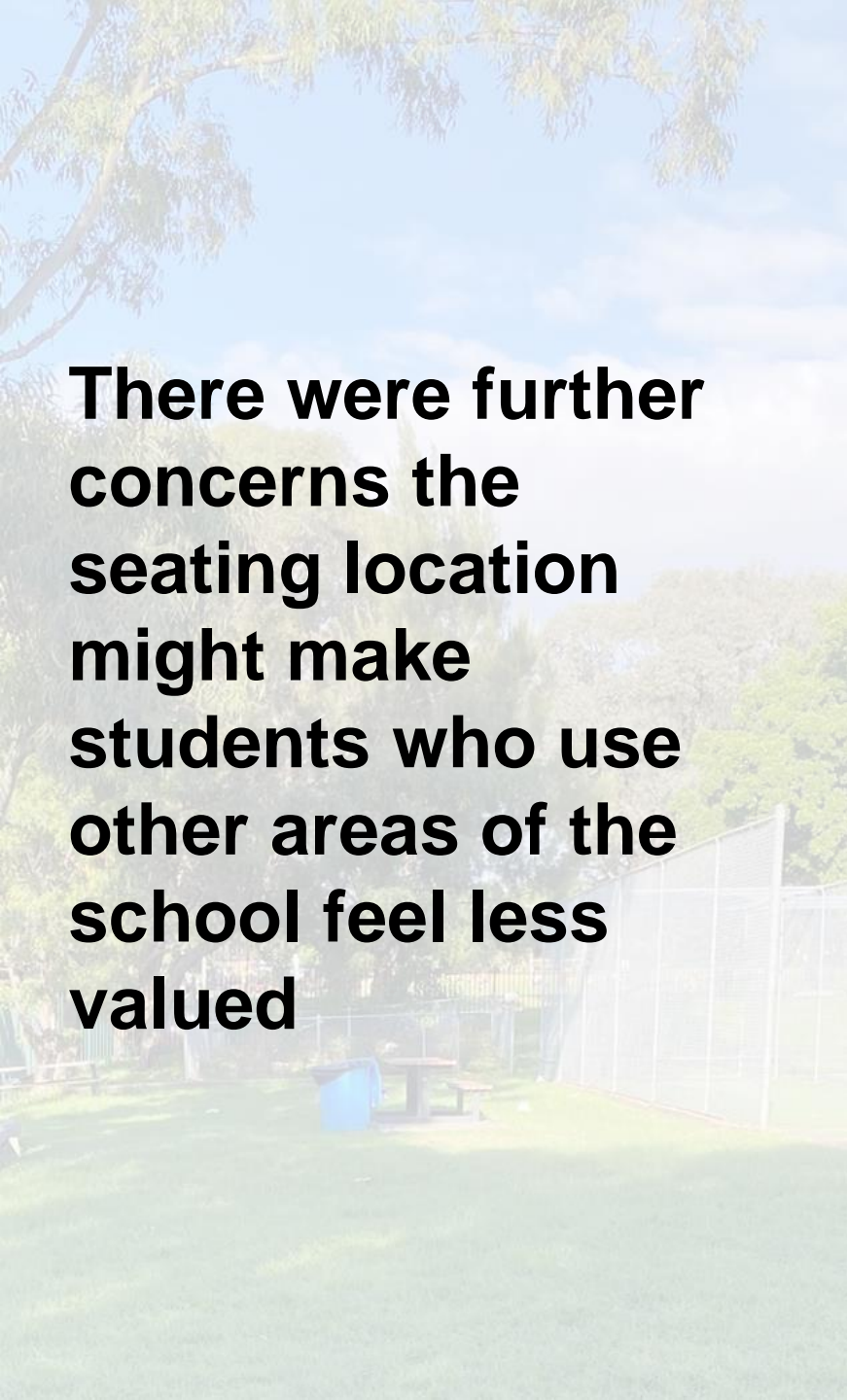
*"My son [Year 10] finds this seating area already way to overwhelming." Parent*

*"Having all the seating in one area may be very difficult for students who prefer space for themselves, and when it rains everyone will be crowded under the shelter, I'm worried this will be really noisy." Parent*

*"The kids said the furniture under the COLA is old and the space is overcrowded. So we weren't sure why the design didn't extend to the space under the COLA." Parent*

*"Under the cola seems crowded. And it looks like its still all old." Parent*

*"My main question is 'Why is the plan concentrating all the seating within an already overcrowded area?' " Parent*



**There were further concerns the seating location might make students who use other areas of the school feel less valued**

*“it would be really nice to have the shipping containers to be removed from the senior courtyard as it would make the space more welcoming and comfortable for the students and allow for more space for this new seating” Student*

*“My son likes going to the tree area and thought maybe more seats could be put up there? It’s an area where he feels safest and not too many kids go there.” Parent*

*“What is the school going to do to ensure the students in the trees area get the right seating?” Parent*

*“The seating in the trees and seniors area is also sparse, uncomfortable and falling apart. What are the plans for these spaces?” Parent*

*“How does this flow through to the seniors courtyard and the trees area?” Carer*

*“My son mostly sits in the trees area and has asked why the nice furniture isn’t going there too.” Parent*

*“I was also thinking alternatively they could put more tables/chairs in the trees area since there are a lot of open spaces that isn’t supposed to be used for running around or sports games. It isn’t really plausible to put seating in any other areas I can think of due to space and supervision issues.” Student*



**The mix of old and new items was considered aesthetically unpleasing, caused confusion and fears of exclusion**

*"I'm assuming everything in the artists impression is new including everything that was made white eg COLA and seating." Parent*

*"I like that they've added a new ceiling where the old COLA is and it will be good if it can help soften the noise, which will be good." Parent*


*"[I have] concern over the current seating, it looks like they are going to be covered up / rendered. This is not a long term solution, paint will flake off and look horrible again in a year's time. Parent*

*"I think it's reasonable to have these designs extended to all parts of the school, not just near the COLA area. How will the students forced to use the old furniture feel seeing other students able to access the beautiful new furniture in the same space?" Community leader*

*"How are students sitting on the old outdoor seating going to feel about students right next to them being able to use new outdoor seating? Cared for? I wouldn't expect that at work so the students shouldn't expect that either." Parent*

*"I don't like that they are keeping the old ground and then adding a new one next to it. The old ground is dirty and ugly and will look stupid next to a new ground." Student*

*"Not replacing old furniture or ground covers and making them look consistent with new ones will probably look ridiculous and how will some students feel having to sit on old furniture while others sit on new furniture? It will just cause segregation. Parent*



**More concerns emerged that this design did not allow for real social connection or provide spaces for students who wanted some respite**

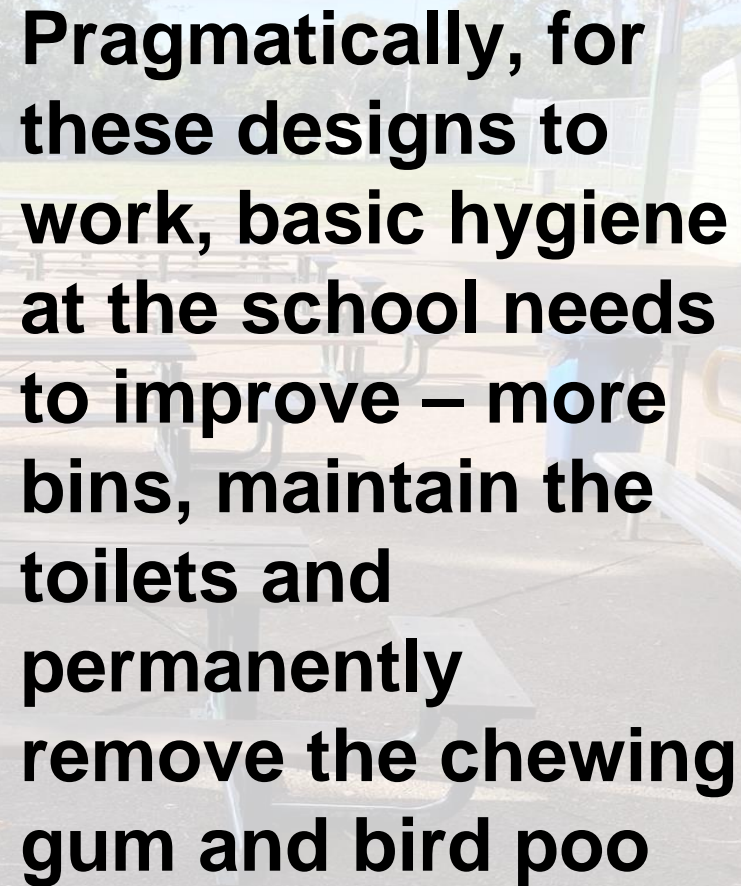
*“It looks lovely but looks like seating in the community or business quarter which is designed to allow strangers to sit comfortably near each other in singles or couples as they don’t face each other. In a school we want to encourage interaction and should prefer to have lots of seating that faces each other. (Although I know some kids may prefer to sit alone so a few of these outward facing options may be good for them). .” Parent*

*“I like the idea of more circular tables as well to open up the space so the kids could also work in groups maybe outside rather than in the classrooms.” Parent*

*“I’m presuming the existing seating is remaining from the plans - i’m unsure if this is working well however circular tables and seats promote greater interaction and engagement in group settings, decreased positional hierachy and if pedestrian paths are not the priority in this section than circular tables also decrease pedestrian focused action, increasing social awareness.” Parent*

*“Its not accessible (inclusive), it doesn’t enable informal interaction, it lacks natural environment installations and needs interesting shapes and objects where people can comfortably gather ( slightly outdate) but def a move in the right direction! So good for restless kids, outdoor classroom and sensory overload.” Parent*

*There’s a pedestrian path going very close through 4 bench seats up to the stairs which is just asking for social interaction trouble” Parent*



**Pragmatically, for these designs to work, basic hygiene at the school needs to improve – more bins, maintain the toilets and permanently remove the chewing gum and bird poo**

*“My [Year 9 student] was excited about it. One of the things [Year 9 student] always brings to my attention is the huge amount of pigeon poo in and around the whole of the cola area (I notice it as well) and how he never wants to sit in those areas to eat lunch. Have there been discussions on how to control and eliminate this if possible? The design looks fab but if the bird poo situation isn’t helped it unfortunately brings a great new looking area down. I get the feeling there’s not much care-factor when it comes to the poo. Well done on what the P&C are achieving.” Parent*


*“The amphitheatre area looks like it has the potential to be a great outdoor learning space, but it would need to be covered.” Parent*

*“I have had feedback from parents in the area who have considered Concord High complain about the amount of chewing gum throughout the walkways of the building and this has been a major turn off for them. Something to think about in the upgrade moving forward.” Parent*

*“Before you do any of this can you please fix the toilets. The doors are always falling off so there’s never enough toilets to use.” Student*

*“The COLA is disgusting beyond belief, full of bird feathers and poo, and students sit under it to eat their lunch. Its old and needs replacing as part of this project. The tables under the COLA are also covered in bird poo.” Parent*

*“I love the designs. We need more bins around the school” Student*



**Given the perceived lack of attention to maintenance at the school, many asked for a commitment to sustaining the new spaces**

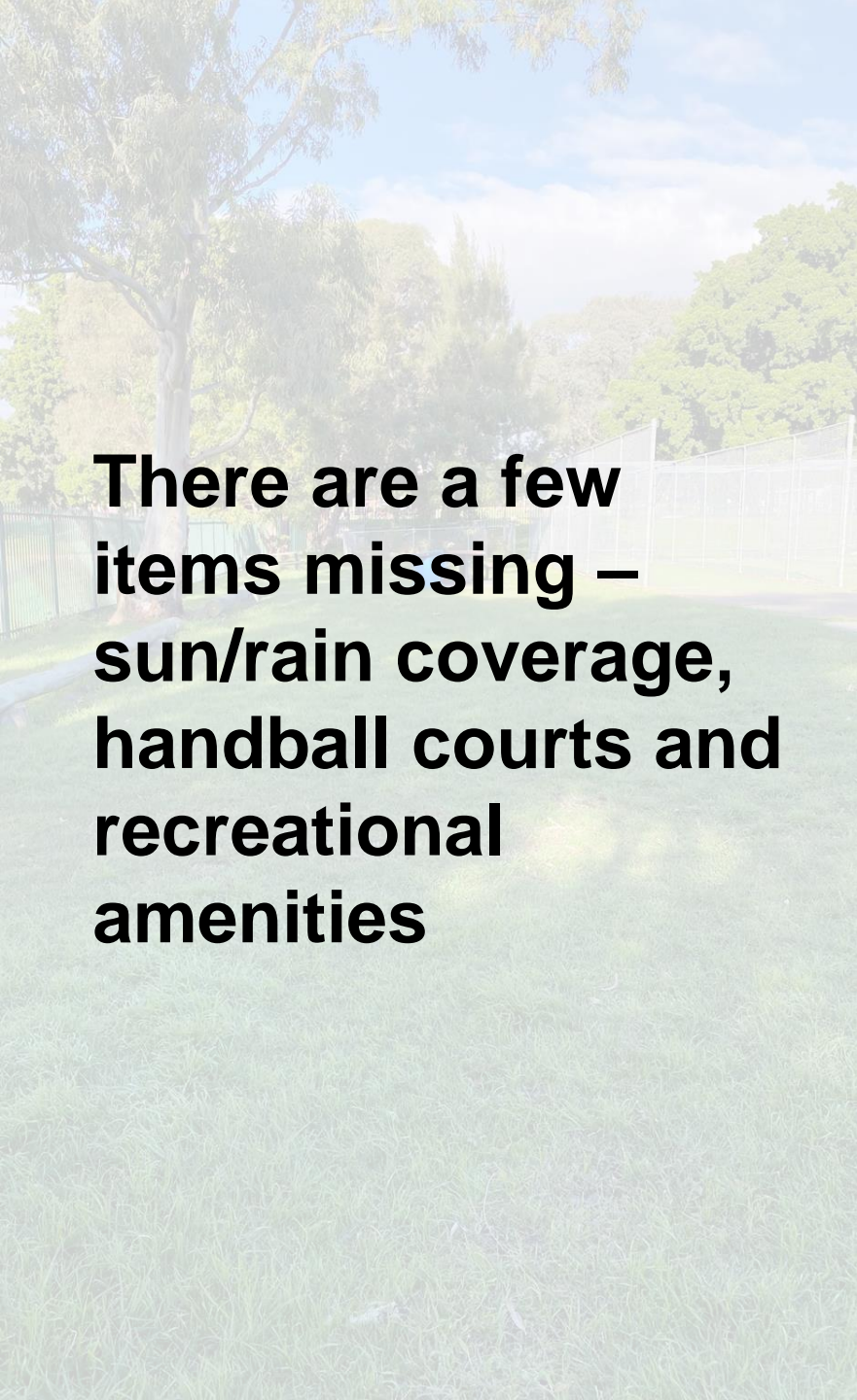
*‘The school is in a state of disrepair, it has just been left to deteriorate over years and years and years. For this to work there needs to be an ongoing commitment of ongoing funding to maintain this space. It’s hard to believe the shortages of toilets and seating. What did these kids do to cope with these shortages and how did it get so bad? There also needs to be some sort of commitment once its done needs to expand this design through the rest of the school to create other seating areas. Good start but a fair way to go to get all this done over the summer holidays as promised.’* Parent

*“I wonder about how the plants will be maintained if part of the seating plan. My fear is that they will not be looked after and will look terrible after a few months.”* Parent

*“Given maintenance at the school has been lacking, how do we get a commitment from the school this will be maintained and last students for years to come?”* Carer

*“How will this be maintained? I’d like some confidence the plantings and materials suggested will last the test of time and frankly the duration of the 6 week summer break”* Parent





**There are a few items missing – sun/rain coverage, handball courts and recreational amenities**

*“More shade is needed over the common seating spaces. It is too hot to sit in the sun most of the year. It would be good if the shade was waterproof also, as there is very little space for kids to go in wet weather so it would be good if some of this outdoor space could be used for that.” Parent*

*“There needs to be covered shelter all the way around the school, especially around the back demountables, the area is disgustingly muddy and slippery. Everyone will be crowded under the shelter in the rain, too many people. Student*

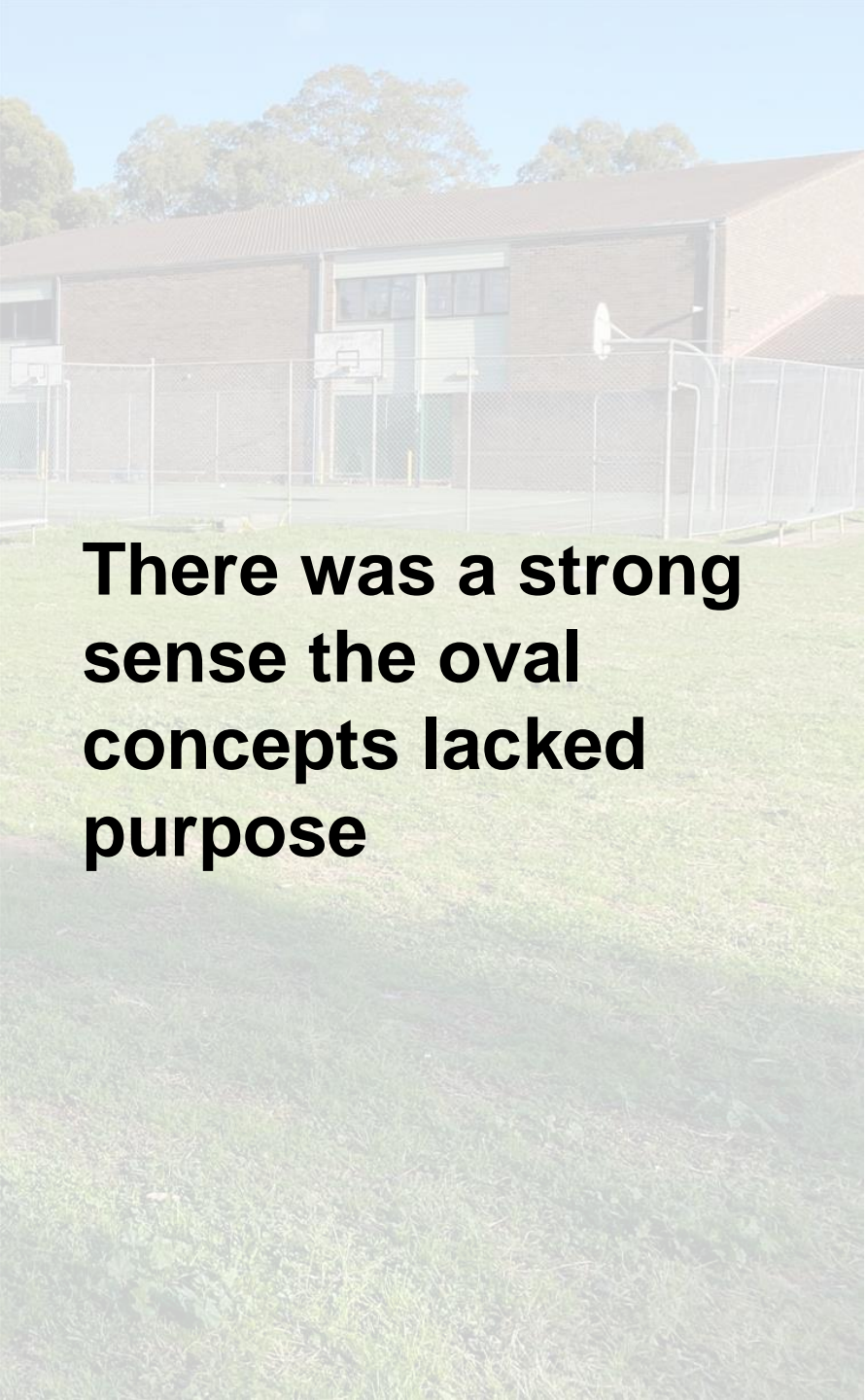
*“Looks good, I like the seating but think there needs to be more trees for natural shading. It feels too open. I feel like it needs more cover for when it rains, balance between too much cover and not enough” Student*

*“I agree with [son in Year 11 who made the above comment] about the trees, I think it’s one of the best things about Concord High so would be good to highlight that. Maybe have some of those fixed umbrellas on the stand along seating like they have at Domremy to soften the look and help with shading and wet weather.” Parent of above student*

*“The handball courts are gone. I like watching the others play handball, it gives me something to do. There is nothing to do at recess and lunch so everyone just sits on their phones. It’s depressing.” Student*

*“Where will the handball courts (currently beside the COLA) be now? This is an important space for year 7 as it provides a space that is similar to primary school and makes it easier to transition. It’s also active play rather than passive for kids especially years 7-9. So what active play spaces are there in the design etc.” Parent*

*“The oval and seats are good but we need more things to do, more basketball courts, more handball courts. Just things to do at lunch” Student*



**There was a strong sense the oval concepts lacked purpose**

*“Concord West Public School had artificial turf that was installed as a small soccer field. My daughter found that it is very hot to sit or stand on in summer and heats your shoes and feet. The small rubber pieces that are spread between the "blades" of grass to improve the feel end up in your shoes. In addition when you fall on it in sport etc it is quite painful compared to natural grass. So it would depend on the style of this artificial turf and how hot it gets and how comfortable it is to sit on.” Parent*

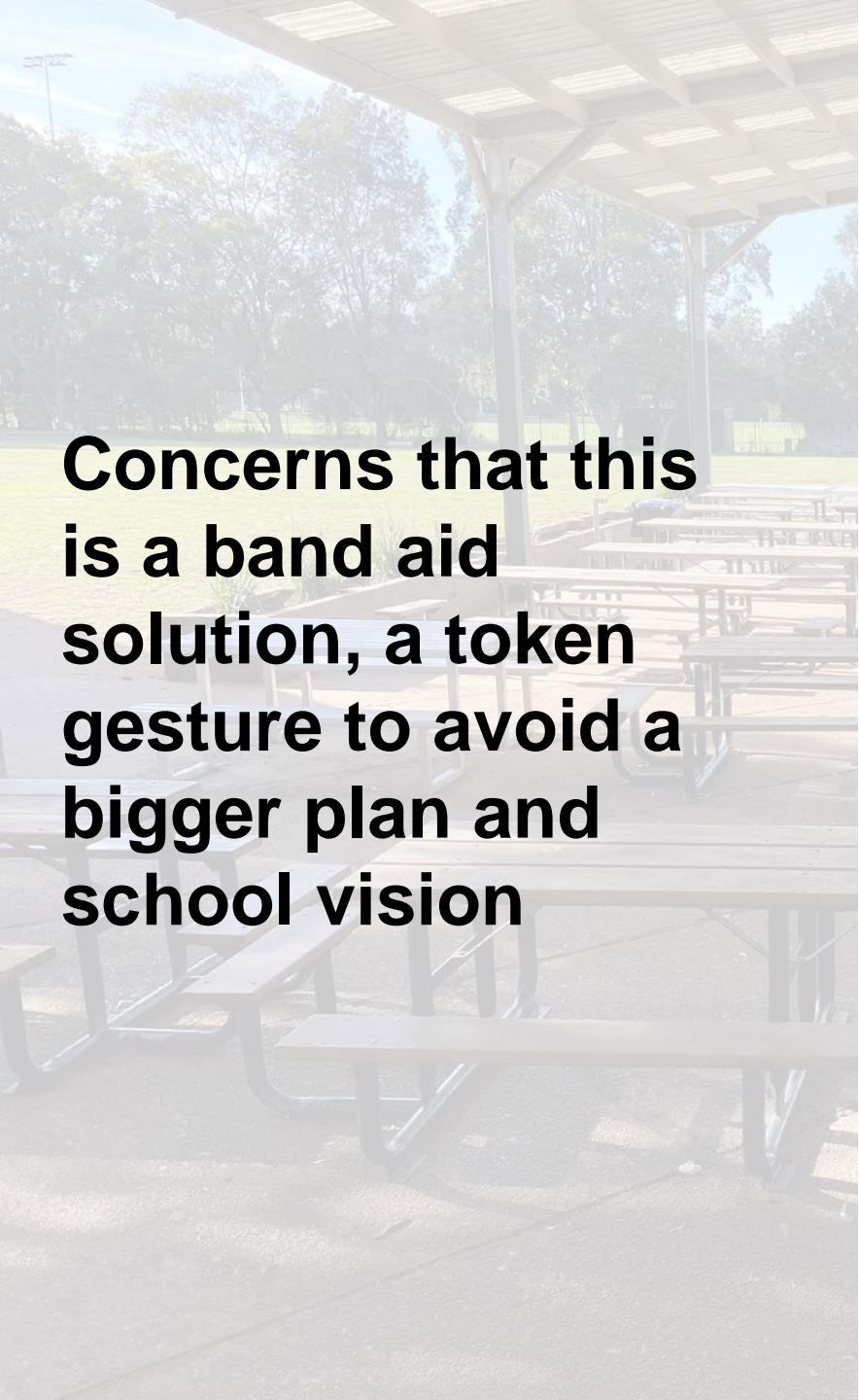
*“We know that natural turf is impossible to maintain in a school but it feels more natural and healthy and more inviting to sit on. The "inspiration" photos of the artificial turf are not inspiring; they look harsh and competitive - although if it is meant to be the school sports field then the athletic images make sense.” Parent*

*“It just looks like someone has Googled sports fields and put those pics in the proposal. What is the intent of the sports oval?” Parent*

*“Why is the new sports facility designed around the demountables? I’d like to see some more practical thinking here - move the demountable to make more space for the students to have an even better sports facility. It’s nuts to spend all this money on a permanent, multipurpose sports facility only to pull a demountable down in a few years and leave a bare, useless space.” Parent*

*“For the multipurpose sports facility I was expecting something more state-of-the-art with lines for different sporting activities, and some sort of shelter over the space so it could be used in all weather conditions given the school hall cannot accommodate the entire school population.” Parent*

*“I’m not convinced with the tiger grass. We need green, natural space. Why can the school be surrounded by naturally grassed sporting fields but we can’t have that at our school? It would be good to get some feedback from other schools about how this tiger grass performs.” Parent*



**Concerns that this  
is a band aid  
solution, a token  
gesture to avoid a  
bigger plan and  
school vision**

*“I was walking past Russell Lea Public School the other day wondering why Concord High School wasn’t receiving any improvements. I hope there’s more to come because this proposal looks tokenistic.” Parent*

*“In the 8 years I've had students at the school I cannot recall a single improvement. I worry the designs are a bandaid solution, not addressing the real issues of overcrowding. .” Parent*

*“The school vision states every child is cared for but the condition of our school is not delivering the vision, and the condition of the school gets worse every year so the school moves further and further away from delivering its vision..” Parent*

*“This looks like a great starting point. It would be good to see the overall vision and how this design will translate to other areas of the school such as the seniors area?” Parent*

*“While this is a great start, the school needs a vision so meaningful improvements can happen.” Parent*

*“This is a great start, but I’d like to see how this fits into a whole-of-school plan. Where’s the vision? How does this flow through to the seniors courtyard and the trees area?” Carer*

*“If they leave the buildings, hallways and classrooms the same and just do up the outside, it would be like putting lipstick on a pig.” Parent*



# Recommendations

How might we collaborate to...

1. Deliver as much as we can over the Summer holidays?
2. Create a best practice community consultation process that the DoE sets as the gold standard?
3. Ensure all future projects are scoped with a timeline at the beginning of the project

Other

1. Better understand landscaping costs? Retaining wall vs seating costs?
2. Get a Masterplan inflight?

# Thank You

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