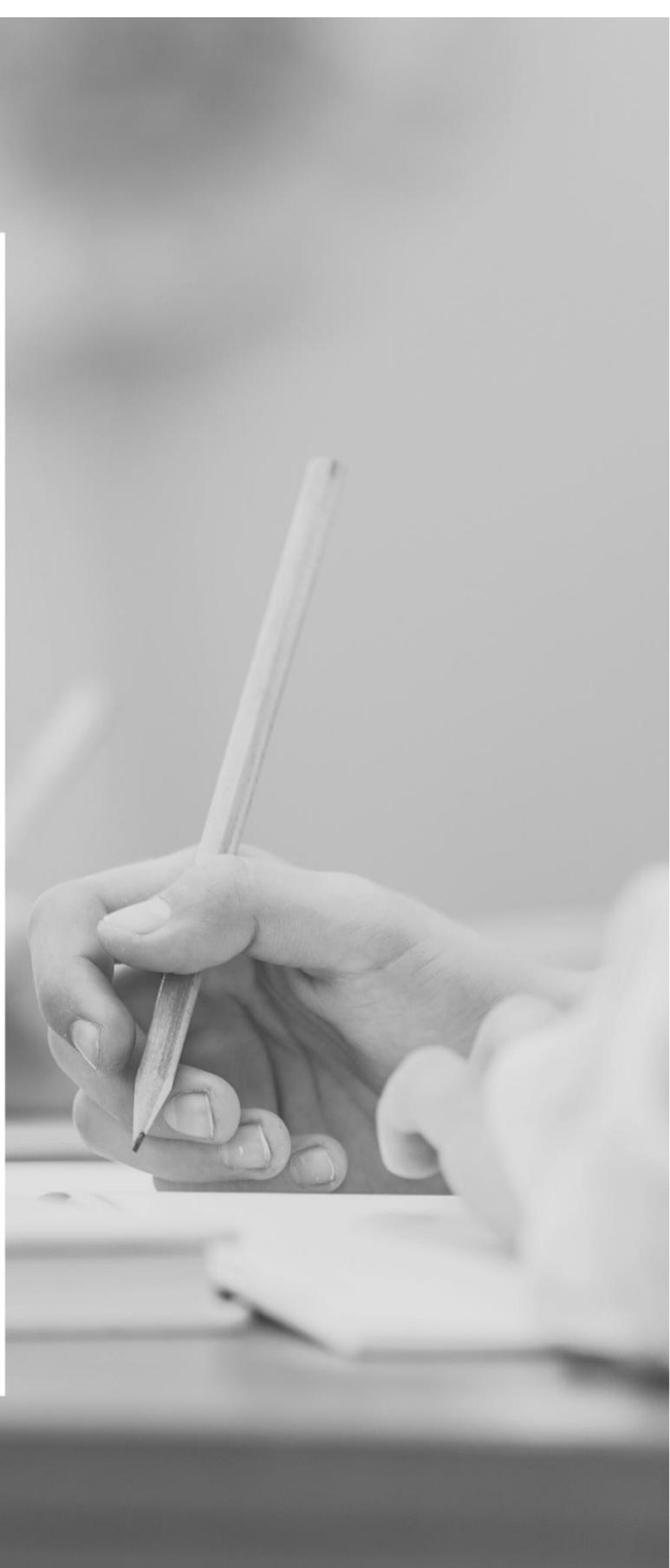


MAY 2020

# Springbank Secondary College Review

Submission on  
behalf of our  
local community



Submission prepared by:  
Carolyn Power MP, Member for Elder

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## Overview

In March 2020, the Minister for Education announced a Ministerial Review (Review) to “consider the best interests of current and future students living in the Springbank Secondary College zone, exploring the impact of closing the campus and merging the zone into Unley High School”<sup>1</sup>.

As the State Member of Parliament for the electorate of Elder, I am focussed on the best outcomes for students, parents and our community. Accordingly, I wanted to ensure members of our local community, and other key stakeholders, were aware of the Review and given the opportunity to have their say about this important matter. I also appreciate the sensitivities of school reviews and set about creating a safe, inclusive space in which people could express their views. This approach was effective as reflected in the diversity of views that I received.

The majority of the Springbank Secondary College zone is located in the Elder electorate. Suburbs zoned for the school in the Elder electorate are: Clapham, Colonel Light Gardens, Cumberland Park, Daw Park, part of Hawthorn, Lower Mitcham, Melrose Park, Panorama, Pasadena, St Marys and Westbourne Park<sup>2</sup>.

Residents have long expressed their disappointment and frustration at the previous review of the school (then known as Pasadena High School), by the former Labor Government. This sentiment was illustrated by one parents comment: *“This has caused us much angst over what to do for our children with secondary schooling as we want them to have a high class education like other children in neighbouring suburbs are able to access at their local public high schools. We were very disappointed when a small group of parents at Pasadena High was able to vote to keep it open a few years ago but as future parents of high schoolers, we were not given a voice in the decision.”*<sup>3</sup>

I received significant feedback from the community that they were thrilled to be able to have a say on the future of the school, and zoning for our area, despite not being current parents of students at Springbank Secondary College. As such I have heard from many parents of primary school aged students and local community members.

I have supported the school in its rebranding and transformation efforts and spoken positively about the school, including in the South Australian Parliament. A copy of my speech delivered in Parliament in 2019 is provided in Appendix 2.

This submission provides an overview of the feedback I have received since the Review was announced, giving a voice to the members of the community who have shared their views with me. As you will see, there are a diverse range of views within our community.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites-and-facilities/education-and-care-locations/springbank-educational-review>

<sup>2</sup> Suburbs outside the Elder electorate which are also zoned for Springbank Secondary College are: Clarence Gardens, Clarence Park, part of Forestville and part of Millswood.

<sup>3</sup> Local parent of primary school child

## Community feedback

To ensure members of our local community and other key stakeholders were both aware of the Review, and given the opportunity to have their say about this important matter, I sent out a survey to homes within my electorate which fall within the Springbank Secondary College zone.

The suburbs which received a hardcopy of the survey were:

- Clapham
- Colonel Light Gardens
- Cumberland Park
- Daw Park
- Part of Hawthorn
- Part of Lower Mitcham
- Melrose Park
- Panorama
- Pasadena
- St Marys
- Westbourne Park.

This survey (Appendix 1) encouraged all those in the community to let me know their views. An online survey was also hosted on my website and I shared this on social media to encourage those interested in this issue to likewise share their thoughts. This included hearing the views of people outside my electorate.

I had a significant uptake of this survey, with both parents and local community members sharing passionate views on the topic. Unsurprisingly, of those who indicated, the majority of respondents were parents, with the second most prominent group being community members. Teachers, students and 'other' made up the remainder.

I have had many people comment that my survey provided a safe, easy and inclusive way for them to have their say, particularly as many in favour of rezoning and/or closing the school felt that voicing such an opinion publicly would be frowned upon by some.

The survey was just one of the many methods that the community were able to express their views to me. I have also personally spoken with locals and key stakeholders, including speaking with all the public primary school principals in the zone, which are feeder schools to Springbank Secondary College and meeting with the Springbank Secondary College principal following the review being announced by the Minister. I also attended a Friends of Springbank Community Meeting and Springbank Secondary College AGM where many parents shared their views about the Review, the school and zoning for our area.

Additionally I received detailed correspondence from parents and community members.

The key themes that emerged from community feedback were:

- Support from the community for the rezoning of the area to Unley High School
- The need for students to be exposed to a broad range of subjects
- Support for the disability unit and inclusive education model at Springbank Secondary College
- Support for the closure of Springbank Secondary College
- Support for Springbank Secondary College in its current form
- The benefits of a small school

## Key themes – In the words of the community

To best illustrate the themes which emerged from the community feedback I have included some of the comments I received. These comments are indicative of the wider sentiment of the surveys and provide a snapshot. Notably the comments reflect a variety of voices and opinions based on the key themes identified. Please note I have quoted feedback as they were presented to me – including their punctuation, spelling and spacing.

## Support from the community for the rezoning of the area to Unley High School

“We are currently in the Springbank Zone and have three children. I will not be sending any of my children to Springbank College. We would very much welcome the rezoning to be included in Unley high.”

“We have a young child and given the low student numbers and likely reduced capacity of Springbank college to offer a full curriculum, we would be seeking to enrol our child out of zone to Unley High School if Springbank remains open.”

“please rezone this area (5042) to Unley High School, spring bank secondary school can close due to low enrolment ,so we can invest that money to other local facilities for to help communities around this area or even unly high school.”

“As a parent with 3 children in the zone we will not be sending our children to Springbank because of the limited opportunities. This is why we are having to review our other options but would support a shared zone or resining to Unley as believe in supporting our community (just not at the detriment of my childrens future which I think Springbank currently is).”

“We have students at Westbourne Park primary and very few families we know would consider Springbank unfortunately.”

“Springbank has approximately 149 students, which is extremely small already. Additionally, of the 149 I understand that the breakdown is about 70% boys and 30% girls, which is not a good gender balance. The school also performs poorly academically with NAPLAN results well below the national average. Due to the small number of students and staff, children are very limited in the subjects they can study. Specifically, my children could not continue with the languages they have been learning in their primary education. The school itself is dated and tired and the location is not great. I do not want my children to go to Springbank.”

“This school needs to be zoned with Unley High school as at the moment it is the worse school in the state. If not zoned with Unley then should be shut down.”

“Wasn't intending on sending my kids to Springbank based on existing feedback/reputation within the community but would reconsider public school if Unley High was an option.”

“I will not send my children to Springbank Secondary. We would rather move than have them miss out on attending a high school such as Unley, Brighton or Glenunga.”

“Currently being zoned for Springbank Secondary College does not instil confidence in the opportunities that my daughter will have for secondary education. We love living in this area but have always felt disappointed with the calibre of secondary education available. We have seriously been considering private secondary education. However, this rezoning would present us with a public option that we would be happy to consider.”

“The reputation of the school is very poor driving low enrolment which is in itself compounding the issue. My wife and I are looking for housing in other school zones for this reason. We have young children and rezoning would be a real game changer for us, enabling our family to stay in our current home and send the kids to a quality public school.”

“The low numbers also concern me in terms of possible friendship groups and having the opportunity to mature find your place in high school setting. Larger numbers of students offer a more diverse community and more opportunities for different types of young adults to come together. We will not be sending out children to Sprinkbank Secondary if they were to remain open. I am a strong advocate for public education, however if we dont have the option to attend Unley then we will choose to go Private.”

## The need for students to be exposed to a broad range of subjects

“My husband and I live in St Marys and have 4 children. We both work full time so we can send them to a Catholic school because we know that we are zoned to Springbank college when they are in high school and we have no intention of sending them there. We believe it is too small to offer a varied and satisfactory education. We would strongly consider Unley high school, if it was where they were zoned, when looking at high schools as we do believe strongly in state school education. I believe that the continued existence of Springbank college is a waste of tax payer funding as it is so small and inefficient.”

“We will not send our children to Springbank Secondary College. We want a school that has more resources and is able to provide better opportunities.”

“The school is too small (student numbers) and therefore the students are disadvantaged with subject selection.”

“Springbank with its small population cannot offer the breadth of opportunity of subject choice and friendship groups as a larger school such as Unley.”

“Having a limited subject offering and capacity to expand it (without considerable investment in staff and facilities) does not make it an attractive option for most parents within the community. No doubt the small class numbers are advantageous to local students that may not wish to pursue higher education options that require specialist subject choices and year specific focused delivery. Nevertheless, Unley High School has the capacity to cater for these students, so it does not seem cost effective to sustain both school options.”

“I don't feel Springbank College offers adequate subject choice or sporting activities compared to other local public schools. I have twin daughters and feel Springbank College will not provide an environment for them to develop independently. I find it stressful knowing this is the only local school my children are guaranteed admission and should they not be accepted to Unley High when the time comes I will be looking outside the public school system.”

## Support for the disability unit and inclusive education model at Springbank Secondary College

“My grandson has had an amazing benefit from going to Springbank SC. Having had difficulties at previous schools, he has really enjoyed this school and done very well.”

“I think this school is great for kids with special needs who require smaller classes. If included in Unley which already has huge numbers these kids will get lost and not get the specialized teaching they need. Not fair on the students and families or teaching staff to close after there is evidence enrollments have improved.”

“My grandson now goes to the school (Spring Bank Secondary). He has some learning challenges and placing him, and others like him in a large school environment will make learning a greater challenge. Spring Bank, unlike other schools, is small enough to provide easy access to teacher assistance.”

“We have a child who has ASD and we feel that SSC as a smaller state high school in our zone would be beneficial for him to have the support during his school years there. His Independent Learning One Plan and the funding will go further for him there than at Unley High. We also feel for some students and especially for our son, Unley High is too big and he will definitely get lost in the system.”

“I fully acknowledge that a low percentage of students in the Springbank Zone go to SSC which isn't really surprising given its uncertain future these past years. What I suspect you'll find is that a fair percentage of the children who do go there (from other zones) are like my son. They are looking for a smaller educational environment. We're not necessarily interested in how broad the range of subjects are. For me, all I want for my son is to at least make it through his compulsory education years.”

“My Grandson [name] has been a student there for a couple of years & as he has an intellectual disability, this school supports his needs extremely well. The emotional support of Springbank with its smaller classes & personal knowledge of the students is very important for students such as [name] who benefits from smaller class sizes as well as teachers who are trained to offer schooling of special needs.”

## Support for the closure of Springbank Secondary College

“For a long time Springbank College has been unable to provide the wide ranging curriculum, facilities or school environment that I hope my son will experience when he reaches high-school age. At this point I would not consider the school for his education, and would need to look at either private options, or find a way to be accepted into Unley from outside the zone. I believe the school should have been closed earlier, now is definitely the time to do so.”

“Under no circumstances would we consider sending our children to Springbank Secondary College. This decision is largely due to the limited curriculum and associated extra-curricular offerings. In part, we have also considered the schools' poor reputation and dilapidated facilities.”

“Closure of Pasadena High makes sense as enrollment numbers have been dwindling for years. Students need to be exposed to a vibrant learning environment for their education, sports and social needs. Unley High certainly provides this.”

“Why are you waiting so long to close a school that was dead 20 years ago.”

“With a history of a poor reputation for being able to provide education to students due to significantly low student numbers, I do not think it is a worthwhile allocation of resources in difficult times to justify keeping it open. Resources would be better allocated elsewhere with students being zoned to Unley High.”

“My thinking is that students deserve the opportunity to experience a learning environment that meets their current and future learning needs. It is also important for teachers professional learning to be surrounded by others so that rich and challenging conversations about education can occur. Having a broader range of teachers can only enrich professional discussion and diversity of thinking. This development can only act to benefit all in the learning environment.”

## Support for Springbank Secondary College in its current form

“Closing the school would disadvantage local families, add to traffic congestion elsewhere and compromised future needs as the demographics change.”

“This area is extremely poorly served for government secondary schools. With strong feeder schools - CLG primary, Westbourne Park primary and Edwardstown primary, and zoning at Unley High, it is essential the Springbank with all its facilities not only stay open but be given plenty of help to rebuild it and parents encouraged to support it - easier said than done I know but with so little choice of secondary schools in the area, parents are not only forced into paying fees for private schools but don't have any real choice between public and private.”

“We have a friend whose son would not fit in well at a large school like Unley but is thriving at Springbank S C. Student numbers are small enough for teachers to stamp out bullying and provide help for students with special needs.”

“The school needs time to rebrand. As a parent, I am extremely happy with the school and can only voice to the great community that a Springbank College is such a inclusive school, offering a great education.”

“I support a shared zone to enable students in the area to attend either school.”

“Diversity in schooling is important and Springbank offers some of that diversity that is critical for the success of students that choose to go there. For some, small class sizes, greater levels of support from teachers, and more hands on subject offerings will help them achieve that success.”

## The benefits of a small school

“Don't close Springbank Secondary College my 2 boys attend, we wanted a smaller school for them. Big schools aren't for all kids they don't fit in and get lost in the system!! It's our local Public High School that's why we moved into the area 15 years ago.”

“Our son [name] has been doing exceptionally well since going to Springbank, and we are concerned if he goes to a school as big as Unley he will get lost in the system.”

“As a parent of a child that attends S.S.C. My daughter chose the school as it was a small school, having joined from Bellevue Heights Primary School, the thought of going to a big High School made her anxious. Being zoned in to Unley High would mean her joining an even bigger High School and be transitioning into year 11 which will be a massive upheaval for her when she should be concentrating on school work.”

“We would like our children to go to Unley but a big school does not suit all children (especially those with additional needs). It's good to have options for individual families and individual children.”

“We need more schools with less students as opposed to less schools with more students.”

“Smaller schools have value”

## Conclusion

There are a number of matters that the Review Panel will need to take into account when assessing the relative merits of the two primary options that have been presented in this review - that of the status quo, or that of a new zoned school (in Unley High) for high school aged students living in this area. Both propositions have arguments for and against that have been presented by members of my community.

In relation to the status quo, it is clear that there are many people - indeed an overwhelming majority - who are not currently choosing Springbank Secondary College for their child's education despite it being their local zoned public school. The feedback from many families suggests that whatever confidence the government may express in the high quality of teaching and learning at the school, there have been long term concerns in the community about the school, and in particular whether the school can offer the specialist subject options and the broad range of social interactions that they expect to be available for their children. This sort of feedback is perhaps most pronounced from families whose children are currently in primary school, and who are currently contemplating their choices for high school in the near future.

The review committee may like to consider whether it is possible to undertake further analysis of the intentions of local primary school parents from feeder schools on the basis of what their plans might be if Unley High School were not an available option. It would be valuable to know whether they might intend to send their children to Springbank Secondary College as their local zoned school in those circumstances. Some survey respondents suggested that the impact of COVID-19 on people's school choices may well see an increase in the number of public school enrolments. If there were a strong indication that many more parents were planning to enrol their children in Springbank Secondary College then this might alleviate concerns about subject choices.

Feedback from respondents who were most eager to show their support for Springbank Secondary College in its existing form focused heavily on several themes. It is important to understand the value placed on the inclusive education approach taken to support students with a disability at the school. More broadly there was strong feedback from families whose children had thrived emotionally and had demonstrated improved general wellbeing since attending Springbank Secondary College.

For these children, the environment and community fostered by Springbank Secondary College is clearly a desirable one from their and their parents' point of view. While acknowledging that it has an impact on subject choice and availability, a number of these parents identified their preference for a small school. In the event that the review committee were to make a recommendation for change, then an exploration of how the needs of these children within other high schools might be met would be critical.

While the relevant legislation ultimately suggests that the review committee needs to make a formal recommendation about either the proposition at hand, or alternatively the status quo, I would submit that there is also a third option that would be worth the time of the review committee to consider, and potentially offering as a secondary recommendation.

The themes that have emerged through the feedback I have received raise questions around whether there could be a place in the public education system for Springbank Secondary College to continue in a modified form, as an unzoned school, potentially with high quality specialisations in areas not currently serviced within the inner south and west. A range of VET qualifications now seen as high-demand, leading to apprenticeship and traineeship pathways, alongside SACE completion, could well be a desirable focus area if a suitable mix that were not offered at nearby schools could be identified. This could be complementary to the inclusive education model for students with a disability that currently is supported by those in the existing school community.

Consideration would need to be given as to whether the removal of a school zone would diminish enrolments further, to the point where the school became residualised with even lower numbers. However, if the school were to become unzoned, it would be in a position to pitch itself as a truly specialist school of choice that might appeal to certain cohorts of students more broadly, whose families are not currently giving consideration to coming to Springbank Secondary College.

In presenting this submission for the consideration of the review panel, I acknowledge that proponents on both sides of this question have very strong feelings about the matter. This is natural, as people's first concern will always be for the wellbeing of their children. I trust that the arguments I have put forth will help distil the views of many in my community while offering some useful suggestions for consideration.

# Appendix 1: Community survey

## Example of hard copy community survey

### Have your say

**The review will consider closing Springbank Secondary College and zoning this local area to Unley High School**

Ways to complete this survey:

  
**Online at:**  
[carolynpower.com.au/get\\_involved](http://carolynpower.com.au/get_involved)

  
**By hand and either pop in a post box or snap a photo and email to:**  
[elder@parliament.sa.gov.au](mailto:elder@parliament.sa.gov.au)

Do you support the rezoning of this area so that students will be zoned for Unley High School?

YES     NO     UNSURE

Do you think Springbank Secondary College should close or stay open?

CLOSE     STAY OPEN     UNSURE

Why/Other Feedback:

Your details:

FULL NAME:

EMAIL:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

MOBILE:

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## Springbank Secondary College

### *Have your say*

A review has been announced by the Education Minister to advise if this area should continue to be zoned to Springbank Secondary College (formerly Pasadena High School) or if it should become part of an expanded Unley High School zone.

The review provides an opportunity for you to have your say.

**Why a review?**  
The schools ongoing low enrolments are impacting its ability to offer students a broad and varied curriculum and specialist subjects. I stand with our community and what's best for parents and students, so please let me know your views.

**CarolynPower MP** MEMBER FOR ELDER

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## Appendix 2: Parliamentary speech

Speech delivered on 20 March 2019 in the South Australian Parliament, House of Assembly, by Carolyn Power MP:

### **SPRINGBANK SECONDARY COLLEGE**

**Mrs POWER (Elder) (15:36):** I rise today to talk about an important school in my electorate, Springbank Secondary College, and its recent transformation. Opened in 1965 as Daws Road High School, the school underwent a name change in 2002 to what many may know the campus by: Pasadena High School. As Pasadena High School, the school was best known in the community for its great basketball program and its superb support for students with a disability through the Pasadena Disability Unit.

On Friday 8 February, I was delighted to attend the official launch of the new identity of the school as Springbank Secondary College alongside the Minister for Education; the federal member for Boothby; Uncle Tamaru, Aboriginal elder; Mitcham council members; and other key community members. Driven by principal Wendy House, partnerships have been forged between Springbank Secondary College, Flinders University and the Australian Science and Mathematics School with a shared vision to re-create the school as a science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) school.

These partnerships present a great opportunity to demonstrate the value of collaboration with leading-edge, research-informed teaching practice for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is an exciting move for our local community. Principal Wendy House, and the governing council, currently chaired by Mrs Jody Moate, are to be commended for their efforts to reimagine what education can mean for their students at Springbank Secondary College. I would also like to pay special tribute to the previous governing council chair, Helen Shepherdson, whose leadership and hard work were also instrumental in the school's transformation.

When speaking with principal Wendy House, she has been very clear in highlighting that this is not just a new name and a new logo for the school; rather, it reflects a complete overhaul of the school's culture and pedagogy. Springbank Secondary College's new motto, 'Igniting inquisitive imagination', is a strong reference to the new teaching practice and approach to learning now being offered, with themes of creativity, research and forming new ideas and a strong knowledge base.

The redesigned school will look to emphasise learning approaches with a special STEAM focus embedded into the curriculum. Specifically, the school will integrate interdisciplinary curriculum design, inquiry and collaboration, along with research-informed teaching pedagogies, driving innovation, applied knowledge and entrepreneurship to achieve the best possible outcomes for students and to provide opportunities for growth. Plans to establish a new senior school will enable curriculum choices to be expanded to include arts, design, support, recreation, food and hospitality.

In the future, it is envisaged there will be an opportunity for students to prepare for careers and life after school by embedding local industry internships, VET and school-based apprenticeships as a core component of the new senior school curriculum. Learning spaces are also set to receive an upgrade to equip the school to support its STEAM curriculum. This will require integrating appropriate digital resources and facilities, colourful, flexible and appealing spaces and flexible furniture that can easily be adapted to meet the learner's needs.

In addition to its academic focus, Springbank Secondary College will also seek to grow its existing sports academy, in particular its special interest basketball program. The new sports academy will be supported through partnerships with Flinders University Sport, Health and Physical Education; the education department; and local sporting bodies, such as Basketball SA and the Sturt Basketball Club. These partnerships will provide a high-quality program, including sports sciences, strength, conditioning and player management.

The principal, governing council, school staff, students, community members and local residents have all been instrumental in driving this change and new direction for Springbank Secondary College. As technologies evolve and people assume multiple careers in the future and new careers emerge, the school is really equipping its students for careers of the future.

Well done and congratulations to all involved. I look forward to continuing to support this important and valued school community in my electorate as this new school steams ahead.