

Design of the new Palmerston Secondary Special Education School

The Northern Territory (NT) Government is building a new secondary special education school in Palmerston to support students with additional needs in Years 7–12.

This initiative is part of broader reforms to secondary education in Palmerston, including the transition of Palmerston College's Driver and Rosebery campuses into two separate Year 7–12 comprehensive high schools from 2026.

This fact sheet provides key information ahead of the community Town Hall Consultation on 28 November 2025 at Forrest Parade School.

Overview

In September 2025, the NT Government announced that the new Palmerston secondary special education school will be located adjacent to the future Year 7–12 comprehensive high school in Rosebery (currently Palmerston College – Rosebery 7-9 campus).

The school will be designed to support up to 200 secondary-aged students with disabilities. It will offer tailored learning environments and inclusive opportunities through its co-location with the neighbouring comprehensive high school. Its central location ensures convenient access for families across Palmerston, including those in both established suburbs and newer areas such as Johnston and Zuccoli.

From 2029, families of students with additional needs will have three options for secondary education in Palmerston:

1. **New Palmerston Secondary Special Education School** - A purpose-built school co-located with a mainstream school.
2. **Special Education Centre at the new comprehensive high school in Driver** - An integrated experience with a mainstream school.
3. **Mainstream Education** - For students who thrive in inclusive mainstream settings.

The Department of Education and Training will deliver this project in collaboration with the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure.

Design Phase and Community Input

The school is currently in the **Design Phase**. Community feedback is essential to ensure the school meets the needs of students and families.

Design considerations

The design of the school will prioritise the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of every student.

Design will be informed by the successful Year 7–12 Henbury School in Darwin, best practice in special education, and lessons learnt from other special education schools across the NT and Australia.

Key design priorities include:

- **Understanding Our Students**
 - We're designing the school based on the needs of the students who will attend – including their age, mobility, communication styles, and support needs.
- **Supporting Learning and Life Skills**
 - The school will support a wide range of learning approaches, including flexible classrooms layouts, dedicated therapy and sensory spaces, life skills and vocational training areas, assistive technology to support learning, and inclusive outdoor areas.
- **Staffing that Supports Every Student**
 - The layout will reflect how staff work with students – including teacher-to-student ratios, and dedicated spaces for support staff and medical care when needed.
- **Smooth and Safe Daily Routines**
 - We're planning for the flow of the school day – from drop-off and pick-up to lunch breaks and transitions between classes, to make sure students feel calm and confident throughout the day.
- **Inclusion**
 - Co-location with the future Year 7–12 comprehensive high school in Rosebery provides opportunities for inclusion and sharing of facilities. We're looking at how students from both schools may come together to jointly engage in educational, cultural and sporting activities.
- **Safety and Wellbeing**
 - The safety and wellbeing of students is a top priority. The school will include secure entry and exit points, spaces designed to ensure clear sightlines and prevent wandering outside of school grounds, systems for managing emergencies, and calm areas for students who need a break.

Expert Design Advisory Group

The design is being guided by an Expert Design Advisory Group (EDAG), which brings together experienced educators and stakeholders, including:

- Carolyn Edwards (former Principal of Henbury School and current President of the NT Principals Association)
- Annie Keighran (Principal of Forrest Parade School)
- Sarah Corry (Principal of Henbury School)
- Maisie Floyd (current Principal of Palmerston College and future Principal of the new comprehensive high school in Driver)
- Kristi Beynon (current Head of Campus at Palmerston College's Rosebery site and future Principal of the new comprehensive high school in Rosebery)
- Representatives from:
 - NT Department of Education and Training's Inclusion and Engagement Services
 - Australian Education Union NT (Teacher representative)
 - Palmerston and Rural Specialist Education High School Group
 - a student and parent representative

Community feedback

As we progress the design the new school, we want to hear from you on various aspects of design including the feedback topics below, to ensure it reflects the needs and priorities of the Palmerston community.

Town Hall Consultation

Please join us on **Friday 28 November 2025** at **8:45 am** at **Forrest Parade School Hall** for a community consultation session. Representatives from the EDAG, along with the design consultant and architects, will present the draft design concept and listen to your feedback. This is a chance to ask questions, share ideas, and help define the vision for the new school.

Please register your interest in attending at strategicreform.doe@education.nt.gov.au

Online Feedback

If you are unable to attend in person, you can still contribute. Feedback can be submitted online via the QR code below.



What we want your feedback on

The school design will be informed by the successful Year 7–12 Henbury School in Darwin, best practices in special education, and lessons learnt from other special education schools across the NT and Australia.

Your feedback is welcome on any of the following areas and may reflect your own experiences or insights gained from other schools:

- Drop-off and pick-up areas
- Greeting and family spaces
- Administrative and staff areas
- General and specialist classrooms
- Therapy and sensory spaces
- Safety and accessibility features
- Wayfinding and signage
- Opportunities for sharing of facilities and inclusive activities with the Year 7–12 comprehensive high school
- Any other suggestions and advice you would like to share

Next steps

Once the design plans are finalised, a contractor will be appointed following a public tender to complete the design documentation and construct the school. The new school is expected to open from Term 1, 2029.