THE FORMER WHYALLA HIGH SCHOOL: REPORT ON POST-CLOSURE SITE STATUS

Prepared by Dr. Kari Dahlgren
Monash University
27 October 2026 (updated)

The former Whyalla High School, a State Heritage-listed building, was opened in 1943 and closed in December 2021. Despite assurances that the site would be put to productive use for the community and not be left derelict, there is still no current use. The site is set to be disposed of by the State, with disposal managed by Renewal SA "over the coming months," although the disposal strategy is yet to be developed or approved (Email Correspondence with Department for Education 13 October 2026 and 27 October 2026).

In order to support the Whyalla Collective's Groundswell Whyalla Project, and relevant interest in the site, I have compiled this timeline of relevant materials outlining the recent history of the site's status and plans, drawing from publicly available materials and email correspondence with relevant State agencies.

TIMELINE:

- **1943, the school opens. The site is of significant cultural and heritage value reflecting the critical time of its construction in South Australia's industrial history.** A Report to Flightpath Architects, authored by Peter Bell in July 2011, presents the important history of the high school (Document O). Including:
    - It represents a distinctive Inter-War Stripped Classical Style architecture (Bell 2011 pg. 3, Document O).
    - Initiative to construct the school came from BHP, who donated the land and agreed to pay half the construction costs (Bell pg. 2, Document O).
    - The school offered a range of education, including both technical and general courses for upper high school students as well as trade courses for mature age students, operating with the motto "One School for All" (Bell 2011, pg. 4, Document O).
    - The school was entered into the South Australian Heritage Register on 29 May 2003 (Bell 2011, pg. 6, Document O).

- **2017. Assurances were given the site would not be left empty post-closure.** When the closure of the Whyalla High School and the building of the new high school in Whyalla was proposed, concerns were raised about the future of the old school sites by Whyalla's Mayors, and assurances were given that the sites (including the Edward John Eyre High School) would not be left derelict. These include:
    - Whyalla's Mayor Breur raised concerns about the future of the sites:
        - "We do need to talk to the State Government about this and we want to be assured there will be a future for these properties and they won't be left derelict" Mayor Breuer (Document A, 28 Nov, 2017

- Whyalla's Mayor McLaughlin met with Premier Steven Marshall, and five senior ministers, including then Education Minister John Gardner, in order to receive assurances on the future uses of the sites. Education Minister John Gardner said:
  - "What we must ensure is that, as has happened in the past, we don't see school sites left vacant with no purpose for them attached for many, many years" Education Minister John Gardner (Document B, 10 October 2019)
- Hon. S.E. Close, the Minister for Education, said in 2017:
  - "what we need to do is work with the community and work with the local government so that we use that land and those buildings in the best way possible" (Document C, 16 Nov, 2017)
- In a News Release from 1 November 2017 from Hon Susan Close MP, Member for Giles Eddie Hughes has quotes attributable to him as "As part of the transition I have called for a clearly thought through strategy on the surplus sites." "We will protect the original Whyalla High School building and the area has real potential given the State's extensive land holding from Farrell St lookout to the coast" Eddie Hughes (Document D, 1 Nov 2017)

- **2020. A future use was proposed.** The Whyalla High School site, then appears in a number of Whyalla's plans, first as a part of a residential and/or tourism development included in broader plans for the foreshore development, but then as a proposed centre of excellence linked to hydrogen developments.
  - **16 November, 2020-** A proposal was approved by the Whyalla council for an engagement strategy with the State Government over the future use of the John Edward Eyre High School and Whyalla High School sites, in anticipation of the upcoming PC114 process for the disposal of state assets. This includes a briefing paper on council's vison for the sites, prepared by Planning Aspects Pty Ltd., titled *Briefing Paper on a Future Plan for Civic Park, Foreshore and Northern Coast Precincts.* (Annexure B of Document E)
    - Annexure B includes the Whyalla High School site within its vision for the Whyalla Foreshore, including:
      - "a mixed-use precinct with residential development, short term accommodation including a potential hotel, cafes, and restaurants, as well as options to consider if there is a market for a retirement village, aged care, as well as independent living in the state heritage listed Whyalla High School building, a short walking distance to the foreshore and historic main street" (pg. 8, Annexure B, Document E)
    - This proposal and the Briefing Paper were kept confidential by council, until they were released on 17 February 2025, "on the basis that strategic planning has been taken on by Government departments" (pg. 14, Document F)

- **2021 Whyalla Beach and Foreshore Master Plan**, prepared by Jensen Plus for the City of Whyalla, included as its first listed objective: "Unlock the potential of the foreshore, beach, Whyalla High School site, Main Street precinct, and the surrounding neighborhoods" (pg. 7, Document G). The Masterplan mentions several potential uses for the site:
  - A Boutique Hotel (pg. 26, Document G)
  - Beachside Residential Village, Residential land with sea views, and retirement or aged care on lower flatter land area (pg. 35, Document G).
  - Office accommodation, or tertiary education and student accommodation (pg. 36, Document G).
  - "A centre of excellence for hydrogen" (pg. 34, Document G). Related to this, the Masterplan mentions that after consultation and engagement some strategies and concepts designs were adjusted, including "Inclusion of Council's proposed "hydrogen hub" within part of the former Whyalla High School land and buildings. (pg. 13 Document G).
  - The Masterplan also includes a larger plan including the high school site ovals, as part of a large destination holiday park (pg. 58), or a beachside residential village (pg. 62, Document G).

- **2022-2030 Economic Development Strategy** includes the Whyalla High school site within its plans for industrial decarbonisation and hydrogen, stating that: "Council will advocate for the adaptive reuse of the Whyalla High School site to become a centre of excellence for heavy industry, including a focus on education, research, technology; an

interpretive centre for resources and renewables industries; and home of the regional HILT CRC Hub in the Upper Spencer Gulf" (pg.14 Document H)

- Related to the plans above, the strategy also mentions, "it is proposed to convert the 'old' Whyalla High school into a university campus that is home to a new school of green hydrogen manufacture, mining, and engineering" (pg. 20, Document H).

- **2022 South Australian Election Priorities,** repeated this vision for the high school along with support for a government entity Hydrogen Power SA to develop a government hydrogen power enterprise. The document included the Action, "Hydrogen Power SA to be based in Whyalla at the former Whyalla High School, along with HILT CRC, and the Hydrogen Technical Advisory Group" (pg. 17, Document I).

- **April 2023, PC114 Process** is initiated and Whyalla council registers its interest in the site.
  - PC114 Process, is the first step for the disposal of surplus land by the state government. Details are available in Document J, Annexure B. This process describes how sites are determined to be strategically significant or not, and allows councils to register their interest in a site, as well as purchase at market rates (Flow chart on pg. 28 of the Premier and Cabinet circular 114, is helpful explanation of the process Annexure B, Document J)
  - In special council meeting of **4 April 2023,** Council approved a report and recommendation to register an interest in the Whyalla High School Site (Document J). This was kept confidential until 17 February 2025, when it was released because "strategic planning has been taken on by Government departments" (pg. 25 Document F).
  - **4 April, 2023** Register of Interest is emailed by Mayor Phil Stone, which references the sites importance to the Whyalla Beach and Foreshore Masterplan, and which references the multiple potential uses for the site, outlined in that plan. It also states: "The State Heritage listed main building has significant social and cultural value to our local community, having originally been built by BHP as a Tech School to train/educate the workers needed in the shipyards and steelworks. Having this building repurposed to support the training and development of the future workforce required for our burgeoning green hydrogen/renewable energy and green ore/steel future is considered very fitting adaptive reuse for this iconic and much loved building". Signed by Mayor Phil Stone (Annexure C, Document J),
  - This Council document also includes **The Department for Infrastructure and Transport's Strategic Land Use Assessment** for the sites (Annexure A, Document J). This references various important details regarding the site, including the site identification numbers, Crown conditions on the land, Site and Capital Values of allotments composing the site, Planning and design code (SN- Suburban Neighbourhood), presence on the Asbestos register, and site overlays including heritage assessment. (Annexure A, Document J). *This is a key document recording significant details about the site, including its assessed value.*

- **Feb 2024. City of Whyalla Potential Development Sites** includes The Whyalla High School Site. It is listed with development opportunities including the centre of excellence for hydrogen, as well as "Executive residential developments" "Destination Tourist Park/Resort" and "Retail development providing services to residences" with a link to the Whyalla Foreshore Masterplan (pg. 6 Document K)

- **17 Feb 2025.** Previously confidential documents are made public: the 16 Nov 2020 council the future use State-owned High School sites (Document E) and the 4 April 2023 Special Council Meeting regarding the PC114 process (Document J). The confidentiality was revoked for the same reason for both "on the basis that strategic planning has been taken on by Government departments" (pg. 14, and pg. 25, Document F).

- **18 December 2025**, Whyalla CEO Justin Commons "met with Renewal SA, re Whyalla High School and Grounds Business Case" as reported in the 27 January 2026, Ordinary Council Meeting (pg. 32, Annexure C, Document L)

- **23 July 2026,** Whyalla CEO Justin Commons and the Manager City Development, met "with Renewal SA, re Whyalla High School: Strategic Development and Potential Uses" reported in the 17 August 2026 Council Meeting (pg. 38, Attachment 3, Document M).

- **27 August 2026,** The Governing Council of the Whyalla High School is dissolved as noted in the South Australian Government Gazette. (No. 48, p. 2872, Document N).

From here, there is no more recent documentation I have been able to find publicly available.

EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE:

- **Renewal SA:** As of 8 Oct. 2026, Renewal SA had not received instructions form the Department for Education to dispose of the site. (8 October 2026, email correspondence).

- **Department for Education**. In two emails, 13 October 2026, and 27 October 2026, stated:
    - There are no planned uses for the site. That it is non-compliant with current legislation and standards to be occupied or operational in any capacity. (13 October, 2026 email correspondence).
    - That after the site was found to be of strategic significance and council registered their interest in 2023, The Office for Regional Housing (ORH) led the development of a business case for the site, but that by July 2026, all agencies that had originally expressed interest were no longer interested.
    - In August 2026, the PC114 process began again, and in October 2026, site was confirmed to not be of strategic significance, and the disposal of the site could proceed
    - Renewal SA will manage the disposal of the site, once they've been issued with instructions to do so (27 October, 2026 Email correspondence).
    - Disposal under the PC114 process will proceed "over the coming months" (13 October, 2026 email correspondence)
    - As part of PC114 disposal process, Renewal SA will notify State and local governments, and allow them to register interest in acquiring the site. Timing is not yet determined. (27 October, 2026 Email correspondence).
    - The disposal strategy is yet to be developed or approved. (27 October, 2026 Email correspondence).

AI Acknowledgement:

Claude (Anthropic) was used to compile the table of documents and to format this report into the Monash template.

MONASH University

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

The Former Whyalla High School: Report on Post-Closure Site Status

Document	Date	Title and link
A	28 November 2017	City of Whyalla states support for new school (Whyalla City Council news item) https://www.whyalla.sa.gov.au/our-city/news-and-events/latest-news/2017/city-of-whyalla-states-support-for-new-school
B	10 October 2019	Mayor's message gets through: State Government pledge on school sites (Whyalla City Council news item) https://www.whyalla.sa.gov.au/our-city/news-and-events/latest-news/2019/mayors-message-gets-through
C	16 November 2017	Hansard, House of Assembly: Whyalla High Schools Amalgamation https://hansardsearch.parliament.sa.gov.au/daily/lh/2017-11-16/36
D	1 November 2017	New school for Whyalla community (news release, Hon Susan Close MP, Minister for Education)
E	16 November 2020	Future Use of State-Owned High School Sites – Confidential (Council report, item 19.1.1) https://www.whyalla.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0041/1936994/19.1.1-ceo-CONF-report-future-use-of-state-owned-high-school-sites-16-november-2020.pdf
F	17 February 2025	Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the City of Whyalla https://www.whyalla.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0036/1766538/council-minutes-COMPLETE-17-february-2025.pdf
G	December 2021	Whyalla Beach + Foreshore Master Plan: Active, Accessible, Fun https://www.whyalla.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/1081320/211210-P1421-Whyalla-Foreshore-Revitalisation-MP-Report-FINAL.pdf
H	2022	Economic Development Strategy 2022–2030: Investing in Whyalla is investing in South Australia's future https://www.whyalla.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0035/1251989/EconomicStrategicPlan_CURRENT-VERSION_01072022.pdf
I	2022	2022 South Australian State Election priorities (City of Whyalla) https://www.whyalla.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/1068119/Whyalla_SA_Election_Priorities_V8_Labour Version_PrintReadyNoMarks.pdf
J	4 April 2023	Commercial Considerations (Special Council Meeting report, item 5.1.1, re former Whyalla High School) https://www.whyalla.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0023/1937003/5.1.1-ceo-report-commercial-considerations-4-April-2023.pdf
K	February 2024	Whyalla Potential Development Sites https://www.whyalla.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0027/1550592/Whyalla_Potential_Development_Site_Prospectus_Feb-2024_QR_2.pdf
L	27 January 2026	Ordinary Council Meeting Agenda, City of Whyalla https://www.whyalla.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0037/1928368/council-agenda-PUBLIC-27-january-2026.pdf
M	17 August 2026	Ordinary Council Meeting Agenda, City of Whyalla https://www.whyalla.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0028/2029069/council-agenda-PUBLIC-17-august-2026.pdf
N	27 August 2026	The South Australian Government Gazette, No. 48 https://www.governmentgazette.sa.gov.au/2026/August/2026_048.pdf
O	July 2011	History of Whyalla Technical High School: Report to Flightpath Architects (Peter Bell) https://www.academia.edu/35699546/History_of_Whyalla_Technical_High_School