

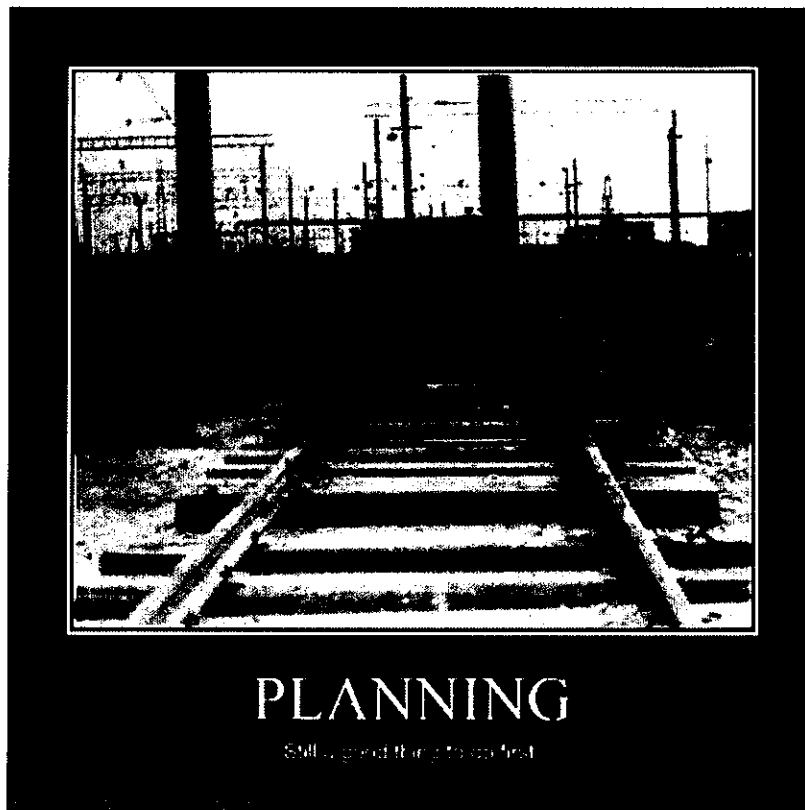
Submission  
No 119

## **INQUIRY INTO THE BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION PROGRAM**

**Organisation:** Tottenham Central School P&C  
**Name:** Mr Rick Bennett  
**Position:** President  
**Date received:** 9/06/2010

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# Submission to Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No 2 Inquiry into the Building the Education Revolution



## Tottenham Central School Parents and Citizens Association

Tottenham Central School is a K-12 school in the geographic centre of NSW (140km west of Dubbo).

Under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Project we have received a new canteen and refurbishment of four primary classrooms. The budgets for these projects total \$850,000 (\$600,000 for the canteen and \$250,000 for refurbishment of Primary rooms)

This canteen project has certainly not given the Tottenham school community or the taxpayer anything like value for money. It is a deplorable and inexcusable waste of money and cannot be utilized for its intended purpose.

## **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

### **GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 2**

#### **1. The levels and appropriateness of fees and charges imposed by various NSW Government agencies.**

We have not been privy to this information but would appreciate being able to view these figures.

#### **2. Whether costs charged for construction of BER projects are in line with industry standards.**

The costs charged for construction of our BER project are definitely not in line with industry standards.

Rawlinson's Construction Cost Guide considered an industry standard would indicate that the canteen built at Tottenham Central School under the BER is in no way even close to being in line with industry standards. As a guide Rawlinsons 2009 indicate square metre costs of buildings in schools (PRIMARY – single storey, standard finishes, buildings only, no air conditioning should be in the range of \$1260-\$1360 per square metre in Sydney). The canteen built at Tottenham Central School under the BER scheme, a building 3.130m x 7.925m (external dimensions) thus being 24.8 square metres and costing in total \$611 776. Therefore our canteen has cost \$24,668.38 per square metre.

How is it that Catholic and independent schools could manage to keep their costs in line with these standards delivering their projects on time, with acceptable pricing and consequently value for money but the NSW Government system failed this?

#### **3. The effectiveness of government oversight and review of contracts signed between Head Contractors and the NSW Government**

The effectiveness of government oversight and review of contracts signed between Head Contractors and the NSW Government are totally ineffective in respect to achieving value for money for Government schools. One only needs to compare the projects that the non-government schools were able to complete to see that public schools were severely over charged and were not given the freedom to decide what structures would be best suited to their needs. The lack of transparency between the NSW Government and Head Contractors is a very worrying point.

#### **4. The use of local builders and tradespeople during the construction of BER projects**

We have local tradespeople (i.e. living in this community such as electricians, builders, plumbers and concrete suppliers) that were not even given a chance to quote on this job.

**5. The outcomes were not of acceptable quality and completely unsuitable to the needs of Tottenham Central School.**

Thanks to the gross mismanagement of this BER project Tottenham Central School currently has a completely inadequate building unsuitable for its intended purpose at an exceedingly unreasonable cost to the taxpayers of our nation.

This building does not meet our requirements as it is undoubtedly too small. It does not provide sufficient space to house our refrigeration needs. It does not provide enough space for cooking and food warming equipment. There is completely inadequate room for food preparation. It does not provide toilet facilities for our canteen staff. All of these features were provided in our existing canteen building (4.9m x 7.6m) which also housed a large permanent shelter area (10.5m x 19.6m) where children can eat, play, rest and learn, out of the elements of our harsh environmental conditions and lastly a valuable secure storage area (2.4m x 7.6m). The total dimensions of our existing canteen being 26.9m x 10.5m.

**6. Any other related matters.**

- Lack of consultation and flexibility in this whole process. Tottenham Central School would have benefited from other options. We already had a completely acceptable canteen with a bonus shelter area. There are so many other options that we would have preferred, i.e. enclosing our COLA and converting it into a Multi Function building that operated as a hall, music and drama centre and sporting facility. Or upgrading our science lab (which was promised at the time!). Or building a music and art room (we currently have to store our music equipment in the science lab and art equipment in another classroom) both of which are not acceptable situations.
- At the "Senate inquiry into Primary Schools for the 21st Century" a letter was discussed by the NSW Teachers Federation representative disclosing how principals in the public school system were encouraged (almost to the point of being threatened) to not self manage their school's project.
- The Tottenham Central School P & C trusted this program. It would have been inconceivable to think that a shoebox would be built. Surely when the original plans were drawn (we assume by architects) they would have had to consider that large fridges need to go into these buildings, that their needs to be sufficient areas for food preparation, sufficient bench space to place toasters, pie warmers, urns etc. Also, surely some thought would have gone into the towns that these canteens were being built in. Tottenham, being in the centre of NSW, experiences very hot summers and needs to have air conditioning in buildings, especially one where food is being prepared. This was never factored in and we have since had to fight to have it installed. Originally we were told that the P & C would have to fund raise to buy an air conditioning unit! The finished building is not vermin and dust proof – there was a gap between the shutter

doors and serving areas. Once again, it was assumed that where food was being prepared and stored, it would have been completely sealed.

We feel that there is no other description for this programme than a complete roort. Our community is up in arms at the small size of this canteen – it is just inconceivable that such a small building (storage shed!) could have cost between \$550,000 - \$600,000.

- To constantly hear Julia Gillard, Verity Firth, Michael Coutts-Trotter, Angus Dawson etc insisting “value for money” has been achieved in this BER program is insulting. It is about time that the government admits that there have been serious flaws with the roll out of this program in public schools.

We are not just up in arms over Tottenham as we are aware that there are numerous problems in other schools – the whole process of the BER in public schools seems to be such an incredible rip off. There seems to be no accountability.

- We have had extensive problems with getting real figures for our canteen.

We have just recently received a letter from Angus Dawson, BER Program Director, re: draft audit report for Canteen (see attached) which suddenly puts the BMV of the canteen at \$275,656. Angus has deducted \$272,191 from the “Estimated construction sum posted on the BER website”. He has said that the following “Items of Non-Typical Scope” “are not directly associate with the canteen”.

Demolition (\$23,364) which never occurred as the canteen was erected on an adjacent vacant site. We are concerned that this figure keeps popping up in revised figures – surely this amount was not paid to the contractors?

Awning (\$18,290) - this small awning is adjacent to the canteen and has no other purpose than to provide shelter to the children at the canteen.

Upgrade electrical and data supply (\$85,538). From our knowledge there was no upgrade of power to the school. There were no major obstacles to cross when power was routed to the canteen (apart from a couple of paths). How could the cost have been so high. Existing data cable in our library was extended to the new canteen.

Make good concrete pavement (\$15,576). This is re-cementing the paths that the power cut through.

Builders Preliminaries which should be allocated to Classroom Refurbishment (\$47,077) which was the other project undertaken at the school. The classroom refurbishment already had a figure of \$18,000 allocated to preliminaries (see attached spreadsheet from Stuart McCreery) which seemed to suffice as no scaffolding or site establishment or dis-establishment took place for the classroom refurbishment. We have asked for site diaries and invoices in order to check this correction. We have not yet received this information.

Extra over cost for deep raft foundations (\$7,080) – this is related to the slab of the canteen.

Builders Preliminaries for the Non-Typical scope of work (\$40,559).

We believe all of the above items are directly related to the new canteen.

Basically, politicians and BER representatives can juggle their figures as much as possible however the bare facts are that the “canteen project” in its entirety cost in excess of \$556,419.

This is a different figure again to the spreadsheet figures (attached) given to us by Stuart McCreery at our school on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2010 which cost the canteen out as \$611,776.

- Verity Firth’s claim on ABC’s 7.30 Report Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2010 that our canteen “is costing less than, less than half of the quoted \$600,000, easily less than half of the quoted \$600,000. The costs that are included in that \$600,000 included power upgrade for the school, data supply upgrades for the school, including fibre optic cabling, play ground drainage, the demolition costs on the site so that we can build the tuck shop” seems to be incorrect. As mentioned above, there was no demolition required, no power upgrade and the school already had fibre optic cabling.
- We feel there should be an inquiry into the pricing of these projects and possibly legal action considered.

**One has to ask after having nearly a million dollars spent on our school, is our school better off and have the educational outcomes of our students been improved. Tottenham School Community think not.**

Rick Bennett  
P & C President  
Ph:  
Email:



Mr Stephen Garriock  
Principal  
Tottenham Public School

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Dear Stephen,

Further to our recent conversations I have received the draft audit report for your canteen project. This report is subject to formal comments being received from the managing contractor and submission to our Audit Sub Committee.

In the meantime I note the following:

Grant awarded to Tottenham Public School from the Commonwealth for the canteen. (excl GST)	\$600,000
Estimated construction sum posted on our website 19/10/2009 (excl GST)	\$556,419

We have now determined the benchmark value (BMV) for your canteen project which is \$547,847 (excl GST). The ECS and BMV include items which are not directly associated with the canteen. These are, in BMV values:

Items of Non-Typical scope	Excl GST
Demolition	\$23,364
Awning	\$18,290
Playground drainage	\$34,707
Upgrade electrical and data supply	\$85,538
Make good concrete pavement	\$15,576
Builders Preliminaries which should be allocated to Classroom Refurbishment	\$47,077
Extra over cost for deep raft foundations	\$7,080
Builder's Preliminaries for the Non-Typical scope of work	\$40,559
	<b>\$272,191</b>

This means the BMV for the canteen alone is \$275,656.



I understand you have been provided this information in a different format on an earlier occasion (27<sup>th</sup> April 2010).

I also confirm that following the review undertaken since I spoke with you and Mr Rick Bennett, President of the Tottenham Central School P & C 31 March, the following action has been taken;

1. The managing contractor has been instructed to rectify the building defects, including dust penetration through the shutters and drainage outside the canteen (different from the drainage mentioned above).
2. Air conditioning has been provided to the canteen.
3. Equipment will be provided including a vertical freezer and vertical refrigerator.
4. The existing demountable and shade structure will be retained.

I will be in contact in the near future once the audit report is finalised.

Yours sincerely

Angus Dawson  
BER Program Director

/ June 2010



