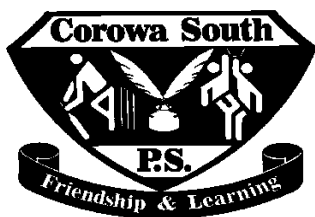


## **INQUIRY INTO THE BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION PROGRAM**

**Organisation:** Corowa South Public School P&C  
**Name:** Mr Oliver Raschke  
**Position:** Secretary  
**Date received:** 7/06/2010

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President: L. Delaney  
Vice: J. Wemyss  
Treasurer: S. Ballhause  
Secretary: O. Raschke/K. Larsen

### **Corowa South Public School Parents and Citizens Association** **Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the BER Program**

Most Honourable Members,

The Corowa South Public School Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) wishes to make its submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the BER Program.

Under the terms of reference for the Inquiry, the Corowa South Public School submits:

1. The levels and appropriateness of fees and charges imposed by various NSW government agencies

The consulting agency Laing O'Rourke levied substantial charges. The P&C is of the belief that these were excessive in light of the value added to the process by Laing O'Rourke.

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

The cost of the Corowa South Public School library is around \$850,000. By comparison, a local business is in the process of building a warehouse, which will have to meet strict government standards, with a capacity to store 500 pallets; the cost for this has been quoted at significantly less than the library. It would appear that the costs charged for this BER project are well in excess of industry standards.

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

The P&C holds that the oversight provided by the government in relation to contracts was lacking in rigour and diligence. The spirit of the BER Program was not followed in its execution and the application of "economic stimulus" appears to have been limited to a chosen few. The process lacked transparency and accountability to tax payers, principals, teachers, parents and students.

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

Corowa has local builders, electricians, plumbers, glaziers and a variety of other service providers. However, out of all those available, only one local plumber was used. All other trades and services were sourced from Albury/Wodonga. The amount of capital injected into the Corowa economy through this BER project was negligible. Once again, it would appear economic stimulus was only for the selected few.

5. Whether outcomes were of acceptable quality and suitable to the needs of each individual school

The P&C has grave concerns about the quality and suitability of the building provided by the individuals and corporate bodies involved in this BER program.

The library is fitted with unflued gas heaters. These types of heaters have been identified as being dangerous, since they release gases produced in the combustion process directly into the room in which they are installed. The gases which will be directly released into the library include carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide. There is no ventilation in these heaters, and the builders did not provide any in the area around them. These heaters are dangerous and completely unsuitable; these gases being released without adequate ventilation can cause carbon monoxide poisoning and trigger asthma attacks (NSW Department of Health Factsheet obtained at [http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/environmental/gas\\_heaters\\_fs.html](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/environmental/gas_heaters_fs.html)).

The library was equipped with two fire extinguishers. When the purpose of the building is to house large volumes of flammable items (such as paper books), the question presents why a fire sprinkler system was not fitted. Two fire extinguishers in a building which houses considerable potential solid fire fuels are inadequate and unsuitable.

Interactive White Boards (“Smart Boards”) for the library were promised as part of the BER project, but these have not been provided. The building has data points for the Smart Boards, but the items themselves were not provided. There are no whiteboards at all in the library.

The library building was deemed as completed by the builders when there was only shelving for books along one wall, and a handful of stand-alone shelves. This was completely inadequate and the builder seemed reluctant to agree that a library is built, in fact, to house books and other literature, for which an adequate amount of shelving must be provided.

The aesthetics of the building are of concern to the P&C. There was very limited opportunity for consultation regarding colour, size and materials. The other buildings at Corowa South Public School are heritage listed, the library constructed under the BER project is an eyesore. Notably, there is a large steel cage (known locally as “the shark cage”) on the side which faces the street. The character, construction and appearance of this building is not suitable for our school.

6. Any other related matters

The P&C welcomed the news of the Rudd government's BER Program when it was announced. The program promised work for local builders and tradespeople, and the opportunity for our school to obtain an updated building.

What ensued has enraged many people: our school now has an ugly, unsuitable and poorly fitted out building which cost tax payers around \$850,000 but brought a negligible benefit to the tradespeople of Corowa. The funds should have been sufficient to replace three demountables and what was delivered for \$850,000 was well below what could have been reasonably expected by building industry standards. The school is also expected to surrender the demountable classroom which was being used as the library, even though the demountable has become (among other things) the room for our arts program. A campaign is currently underway to retain this important building.

***The P&C of Corowa South Public School***