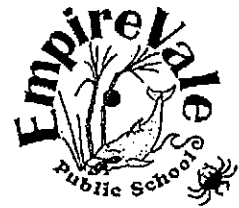


Submission
No 48

INQUIRY INTO THE BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION PROGRAM

Organisation: Empire Vale Public School P&C Association

Date received: 7/06/2010



Empire Vale Public School
P&C Association
Tōni Caesar President

To the NSW Parliament Legislative Council Inquiry into
the Building the Education Revolution program,

We are writing not so much out of a need to complain as we are extremely happy with some of the additions we've received under the BER. But more so to express our concern with promises made to our school and what was finally delivered.

Our school is located in a rural setting 6km from the town of Ballina. We currently have 68 students. We were advised our 2 air conditioned demountable classrooms were to be replaced by one permanent double classroom with air conditioning if it was currently in place, which it was, and an operable wall. As we have no current indoor area large enough to hold school dances or performances we were thrilled by this addition and looking forward to the benefits to the community as a whole.

We feel the school was very accommodating throughout the building period. With one demountable classroom removed we crammed that class of 27 students into our small library and made library unavailable for Term One. This has now extended to Term Two as the job is still not complete. No classroom relocation was required or any major excavation of the site.

We were surprised and not happy when the classroom arrived with a solid adjoining wall and was told the operable wall was now "out of budget". Next the covered walkway to the classroom, an area of approximately 20sqm was also "out of budget". That means 2/3rds of our students must come and go to class up and down a ramp in the rain. *We received 140mm of rain in a 24 hour period on June 3rd 2010. That is not unusual, mean rainfall for Ballina is recorded at 1735mm annually.*

Humidity is high in the Northern Rivers and that leads me to my final point. All our classrooms have been air-conditioned for many years. The original plans stated the new classrooms would be air-conditioned if currently in use except where DET policy states otherwise. We were not aware that we would be excluded from air conditioning till only a few weeks ago. Their reasoning that our January mean temperature doesn't reach 30°C. That excuse is pathetic as those children have experienced many days well into the high 30s. All teachers would testify that young children cannot concentrate in a hot sticky classroom. We are aware of other schools in our area receiving air conditioning in their new classrooms so why the discrimination? And the apparent deviation from DET policy.

The statement in the original document was misleading and sly. The parents of our students and the other tax payers in our community demand accountability of the funds initially allocated to our school. Of course costs of resources are rising but this would have been included in your original costings. It is an absolute scam that so much money has evaporated during the building period. Local contractors weren't used on our job. Funds were wasted needlessly on contractors travelling long distances.

The money allocated for our classroom is now lining the pockets of unknown parties and our students are expected to go without. We are a community demanding an answer.

Sincerely Yours,

Toni Caesar and Suzie Melchior
P&C President and Secretary of Empire Vale PS