

**Submission
No 5**

INQUIRY INTO THE BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION PROGRAM

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Position: Principal
Date received: 28/04/2010

To whom it may concern,

This submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the BER program is made by Noel Maddern, Principal of Urana Central School.

At Urana Central School I am very disillusioned about BER. We have less than 50 primary students, and so we were eligible for up to \$250 000 of funding under P21. I initially spoke to a company and received a verbal quote for a new library that would be bigger than our current demountable library, for approximately \$160 000.

I then discovered that we needn't manage things ourselves, the NSW DET would do it for us instead.

I then discovered that the DET were only going to provide a very small BDR library for the \$250 000. I enquired about self-management as I believed I could get much better value for money, and a bigger building. I was talked out of it every time I suggested it. I was told that the best option was to accept what I was being given, and then attempt to negotiate something bigger if there was money left over.

When the initial site inspection was done, I asked them to also do the specs for a building with one or two extra modules. They agreed to do so, and to pass the info onto the DET.

A few months later I was contacted by the DET to say that all schools with less than 50 primary students would be getting exactly the same BDR building, no matter what. All negotiations that I had tried throughout the year were a complete waste of time. Even the time we put into selecting colours was knocked on the head, and there were now only three colour schemes to choose from.

I was then given notice that all schools that were having demountables replaced by permanent buildings, would have their demountables removed. I have followed the suggested procedures to apply to have the demountable retained. I still have not received a decision on this. It should be noted that our library is required for use by ALL students in our school, from Kindergarten to Year 12, NOT JUST the primary students. Our library needs to have resources for the whole school. Despite my efforts in getting this point across last year, nobody took any notice of it, and I was not permitted to negotiate a larger building than the BDR.

I now have a partly finished BDR fenced off, awaiting power and cabling. It is smaller than our old library. The costing for it has come out at over \$310 000.

The cabling was going to be copper Cat 6 cabling, and not fibre optic. I had to push with a number of people to have this changed to fibre optic. The last I heard, from the contractor doing the building (NOT from any official DET source) was that we are going to receive fibre optic cabling.

This building is totally inappropriate as a Library for a K-12 school.

And the ultimate irony:

THE COMPANY I ORIGINALLY SOUGHT THE QUOTE FROM BACK IN FEB/MARCH 2009, ARE THE COMPANY THAT ARE SUBCONTRACTED TO BUILD THE BDR!!! They verbally quoted me \$160 000 for a building bigger than our demountable library. They are now building and installing the BDR which is smaller than our current library, for a grand total of over \$310 000. They have told me that it would cost them very very little to include an extra module in the BDR (giving 33% extra floor space) but they are not allowed to by the DET, even if I wanted to pay the extra out of school funds!

I cannot be more annoyed! The whole process has been completely bungled by the NSW DET!!! I wish I had self managed. I wish the BER program never existed, for if our demountable library is taken we will be worse off than when we started.

I also believe that the employment of Laing-O'Rourke by the NSW DET was contrary to the spirit of the BER program. This company is not a local company for us here in Urana. They are an international company. The BER program has put a lot of money into their non-local company. We would have got much much better value for money if we could have dealt directly with the sub-contractors that ended up doing the building.

In summary, the BER was a fantastic program, but the implementation through the NSW DET was very poor.

Noel Maddern
Principal
Urana Central School