

**Submission
No 93**

INQUIRY INTO THE BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION PROGRAM

Organisation: Blaxland East Public School
Name: Mr Howard Leader
Position: Principal
Date received: 7/06/2010

7th June, 2010

NSW Parliamentary Enquiry into the Building the Education Revolution (BER) program.

BER works costing \$2.5 million

Consisting of:

Construction of COLA

Refurbishment of classrooms

OUR PREFERENCES

Meetings were held between staff and the school P&C. Both decided that the school would benefit most from a gymnasium or large hall that was suitable for indoor sports.. We were told that there was no code available for a Primary school gymnasium. We replied that a High School plan would be fine. We were told that we could not have a High School gymnasium as we were not a High School. The age of the students has no effect on the type of gymnasium we could have used or its usefulness to the community which would also have been able to use it. Other school facilities have been accessed by the local community for decades.

REFURBISHMENT OF CLASSROOMS

There have been no meetings with the school staff or the P&C to discuss the plans for the work at the school. Neither group has had direct access to the builders to discuss their concerns. All communication has been verbally, with the Principal. This has been a severe intrusion on his time to perform his already lengthy list of school duties. It is also highly inefficient and inconsiderate.

Each classroom is costed at \$65,000. For that the builders provide painting, carpet, lights, whiteboard, fans, cabling, vinyl and furniture. But they are not providing interactive whiteboards or replacing the windows which at present cannot be used due to safety concerns. There will be no provision of hot water to the classrooms.

We do not feel this is value for money.

There are site works costed at \$124,000 for the refurbishment of the classroom but, as they are working on established classrooms, no ground preparation etc. has been necessary.

Site services for the refurbishment were costed at \$167,000 yet these buildings already have services connected. Does this mean data cabling (which was already available to the classrooms) is costed at \$167,000? This seems excessive.

Preliminaries for the refurbishment were costed at \$182,840 and for the COLA at \$ 60,947. Only 1 compound was constructed, it seems to have been budgeted twice. This seems an excessive amount for a temporary fence and a site office.

Two classrooms have been 'finished' but within a week paint is peeling off and there are paint splatters on brickwork.

5 classrooms were required to move on the same day, at the builder's request.

- no site supervisor was present
- no boxes were supplied to pack supplies etc
no trolleys were provided
- no removalist firm was employed
- 2 workmen from Multiplex were in attendance but were about to leave the school at 8:30am until action by our Principal
- neither workman was present at the school between 11am and 1:45pm

This resulted in:

- 1 classroom not being moved at all
 - no assistance or equipment were supplied to move 2 storerooms
 - 1 classroom's removal having to be completed in 75 minutes (the time remaining until the students left the school – without them helping, far less would have been moved).
- Had the workmen been present from 11am to 1:45 they would have had unimpeded access to classrooms as the students were not in the room during that time
- The workers only moved 4 units of furniture from my classroom, leaving everything else for staff, students and parents to move.
 - Students, parents and staff having to move furniture and equipment due to the time constraints which resulted from the lack of adequate planning and personnel.
 - The workmen left at 4:30 with the moving incomplete.
 - They did not return to complete the tasks.
 - Parents, students and school staff were forced to move the equipment and furniture for 1 classroom and 2 storerooms.
 - The teacher who suffered the incomplete move was unable to organise her classroom as many large pieces of furniture had still not been moved to the temporary accommodation room. All that staff, students and parents had been able to achieve the day before was to dump all the desks and resources into that classroom.
 - No workmen were present at the school for a further 3 days so why was it necessary to move so many classrooms and storerooms at the same time?
 - Some classroom furniture is still on the open veranda and exposed to the current rain as the workmen have not moved them to the shipping container as they said they would.
 - 2 staff members have been injured in the moving process and are claiming Worker's Compensation. School funds are used to pay for these claims and are reimbursed by the insurance company, even if the claims are deemed to substantiated.
 - The school Principal and the General Assistant had to move the rest of the furniture before classroom organisation could begin. Until that was achieved NO lessons could occur.

- The state of the classrooms was witnessed by the Principal, other staff members and the President of the school P&C. A photographic record was also kept.

- Yves Goarin, the Project Manager, attended the school on the 19th May (the day after the moving day) to meet with the school P&C on a playground matter.

When challenged about the state of the classrooms and the other concerns over the moving of the classroom he stated that other schools had been supplied with the services of a removalist firm, trolleys and boxes. He stated that "All we had to do was tell him". Why would we need to tell the Project Manager that these things would be needed to move 5 classrooms and 2 storerooms in 1 day? Surely it was obvious that supplying 2 workmen and no boxes or trolleys would be insufficient? We are not a project manager but it occurred to us immediately.

Many teacher meetings had been held to discuss our concerns over the proposed BER works. A long list of concerns was presented to Multiplex. The lack of personnel, boxes, trolleys etc were most definitely on this list.

- The offer of removalists etc was for future moves. The Site Supervisor was informed by the Principal, on the afternoon of the move, that the planned moves were incomplete. No offer was made to rectify the immediate problems of 2 classrooms where no teaching could take place. No workmen were sent to complete the tasks. It was left to parents, school staff and students to move all that furniture and equipment. None of these people are employed to undertake these activities. None of these people should have been placed in danger of physical injury.

- As no site supervisor was present during the move so it was left to school staff to solve all the problems that had arisen by this grossly inadequate planning.

STUDENT SAFETY

- On the 11th May a van was driven (with the Multiplex security guard walking in front of it) through the school playground while student were playing there.
- No warning was given to the teacher on playground duty. She was unable to stop this incident occurring as she was in an area of the playground away from the carpark. It was witnessed by another teacher. Students playing in that area were aged between 5 and 12. They were also given no warning. Thankfully no students were injured or killed. If they had waited 5 minutes lunchtime would have been over and the students would not have been present.
- This incident was reported to the Principal who reported it to the Multiplex site manager when he next visited.
- The staff wrote a letter to the Project Manager, Yves Goarin, informing him of this incident and requiring his assurance that no further incidents would occur.
- In his reply Mr Goarin stated that he had not been informed of the incident and requiring the school staff to report any future incidents to a Multiplex staffer. It was reported to a Multiplex staffer. If the school staff had not directly contacted the Project Manager would our students been again endangered as a result of Multiplex's inability to communicate with each other?

COMPLETION BONUS

-as the school staff, parents and students have been required to undertake duties which were necessary for the refurbishment to be completed (and for which they have not been paid and for which Multiplex, no doubt, has included in their costs). I am of the opinion that Multiplex does not qualify for a completion bonus. It did not complete all activities, many were performed by others. Therefore I request that the \$15,595 be directed to the school's funds to be used to the school's benefit, as decided by the people who performed the tasks that Multiplex had been paid to perform.

CONCLUSION

In 35 years of teaching service for the NSW DET this is the first opportunity the undersigned have had to participate in the creation of very expensive improvements to the facilities of a school for the benefit of students.

It is indefensible that so little was provided to Blaxland East P.S. for \$2.5 million.

It is indefensible that the little that is being achieved, is being done in such a way that it is creating an unnecessarily huge negative impact. The staff and students at the school are suffering as a result of incompetence, avarice or a combination of both.

Our frustration at what has been improved at our school versus what could have been achieved with \$2.5 million is overwhelming.

Many of our concerns are based on a lack of knowledge of the process and provision of the project brought about by hast and lack of effective consultation from the outset.

Yours faithfully

Guy Power

Rosalind Brown

Howard Leader