

**Submission  
No 30**

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

**Name:** Ms Stephanie Ziolkowski

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**SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENT NSW LEGISLATIVE  
COUCIL GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No.2**

**Inquiry into the Building the Education Revolution Program**

The Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Fax: (02) 9230 3416

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This submission has been written by Stephanie Ziolkowski on behalf of Cardiff High School and  
Principal Suzanne Russell.

**Contact Information**

Name: Miss Stephanie Ziolkowski

Address:

Phone:

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Dear Sir/Madam,

1. Cardiff High School has been open and very pleased to be a part of the Building the Education Revolution – National School Pride Program. The maintenance on the school's main block and administration office has improved Cardiff High School's appearance significantly. The school received \$200,000 for maintenance on the school which was used to replace the ceiling of the top floor in the main block. Additionally, the external of the same block was painted. After the major maintenance work had been completed new blinds were installed at the front of the administration building with the remaining funds.

**2. In response to the terms of reference:**

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

The school as such did not have any say or knowledge of fees and charges. The management of Cardiff High School's BER project was conducted by the Department of Education and Training (DET) Assets Management Unit (AMU). The Department of Commerce then checked these fees and let the tender. A high value aspect of this hierarchy was quality assurance. The signing off on the quality of work by government agencies ensured projects were completed to a certain standard of excellence (This will be discussed further in reference 3).

It is interesting to note, some schools in the recent media were able to extract more value for money from the Rudd government's education stimulus spending because they were allowed to control their own tender process. This was the case for St Luke's Anglican School in Bundaberg's

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east where Principal Martin Oates, said he “just knew that we had to negotiate the best cost per dollar for the library”. However, in contrast, Mrs Suzanne Russell was thankful Cardiff High had been run the DET and AMU because building was clearly not her occupation. The BER project was not a forte she was familiar with and believed in leaving it to the professionals. Mrs Russell was satisfied with the work undertaken on her school.

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

Again, the Department of Education and Training (DET) Assets Management Unit (AMU) took care of construction costs. Cardiff High School did not have any input into the charged construction costs. The work that had to be undertaken on Cardiff High School was intricate due to the Caneite ceiling that needed to be replaced and the scaffolding required. So, it would seem that these charges do appear to be in line with industry standards.

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

The DET Assets Management Unit (AMU) was very effective in their oversight and review of contracts. Before any work went ahead at Cardiff High School an onsite meeting took place to cover the legalities of the job. Various contractors were used to fulfil the work such as occupation, health and safety inspectors, plasters and painters. The school believed that governmental oversight of contractors was very useful. As previously stated in reference 1 the quality assurance of all work was highly valuable to the school.

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Management by the DET and AMU ensured that all work undertaken on Cardiff High School was to an industry standard. No work was signed off until management were satisfied with the completed job. For example the contracted painters were asked to come back four times because the work done was not to a high enough standard. Managers, OH&S and tradesmen checked on the progress of the work continually to make sure everything was running smoothly. This dedication to the job was a guarantee to Cardiff High that contractors were doing their jobs properly. Additionally, the work that was carried out at Cardiff High will continue to be maintained by the DET and AMU. This quality assurance of work is a benefit that Cardiff High is glad to have.

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

Local contractors managed the site extremely well and were very particular as well as knowledgeable. These workers came to the school when they said they would and did what they had been asked to do. The internal ceiling in the main block at Cardiff High School needed maintenance badly and had to be repaired. Once the tradesman started to fix the ceiling under the BER program it was realised that the original plan provided was not going to work. If they went ahead with the plan the same problem of the paint lifting would happen again over time. The tradesmen realised that there had to be a better way to tackle the roofing problem. So, a local tradesman working at the site came up with an alternate plan.

All work ceased at the school until permission was granted from the DET and AMU. The plan was once again processed through the hierarchy and construction started again when it was approved. It was decided that the Caneite used in the existing ceiling would still stay there and

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would double as insulation. In addition, the roof had to be flattened and was positioned lower which also meant that all electrical wiring had to be relocated. The local tradesmen saved a lot of people time and money because of quick thinking and exceptional skills. However, it may be said that if there was more time for the BER projects the issues that arose during renovation could have been detected in the preliminary planning.

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

Cardiff High is very happy with the result of the BER. Maintenance on the main block of the school was needed badly. Thanks to the BER the school now has a new ceiling on the top floor and the outside of the main block looks more appealing with its fresh coat of paint. As does the administration building with its new blinds that are colour coded with the schools colour scheme. As stated previously Cardiff High were pleased that the work completed on the school had to be to a particular industry standard. This was a guarantee to the school that the job being done was getting done properly.

*2.6. Any other related matters.*

As stated earlier in the submission, there was only one small issue that the school identified and that was the speed of planning. Contractors and tradesmen did not understand the full extent of what was required in order to replace the ceiling in the main block until work was well under way. It would seem that the speed and lack of thorough planning caused a delay and replanning of the scope of works. Additionally, it could have been managed a little better and this could have been achieved if there had been more time. Furthermore, a recent article from Education

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Today stated that; “Among those who were dissatisfied with the BER in the APPA’s (Australian Primary Principals Association) survey, most cited issues associated with the deadlines as the cause. But many respondents who were satisfied with the program also lamented the speed with which they were required to organise a response”. This comment supports the minute issue of time management and the speed of planning. Even though many schools were happy with the outcomes for their school they still felt that things may have been a little rushed.

In addition, many other schools that proposed submissions for the Senate Committee Enquiry into the BER had positive results also with minimum problems. East Marden Primary School’s principal Maggie Kay said that unlike other principals who have raised concerns about the BER, she had little to complain about. Furthermore, Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) president Leonie Trimper said in a recent article 97 per cent of principals felt students would benefit from the BER scheme. “The findings clearly demonstrate its positive impact on primary schools across all sectors and states of Australia, “Ms Trimper said. Both of these findings present positive results about the controversial scheme. These results support how Cardiff High felt about the Building the Education Revolution Project.

**3.** Overall, Cardiff High School is pleased with the outcome for their school and students. The scheme has been a great idea that resourcefully used local trade’s people, created many jobs and helped schools address major maintenance issues. The \$200,000 issued to Cardiff High was used sufficiently to fix the ceiling of the top floor in the main block and to paint the external of the same building. Additionally, the administration block had new blinds installed. The Department of Education and Training Assets Management Unit took care of the construction costs and these



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figures appear to be in line with industry standards. The only setback was during the preliminary planning. It would seem that there was not enough time allocated to the planning process and therefore, a few problems were undetected. As whole Cardiff High School and Principal Suzanne Russell was happy with the end result of the National School Pride program.

Yours Sincerely,

Stephanie Ziolkowski

#### **4. References:**

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- Keller, C., May 1, 2010. Principals in dark over BER costings. Available from: ProQuest. <http://0-proquest.umi.com.library.newcastle.edu.au/pqdweb?index=77&did=2022107191&SrchMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1274609701&clientId=29744&cfc=1> [Accessed: 23 May, 2010].
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This submission has been prepared by myself (Stephanie Ziolkowski) on behalf of Cardiff High School. Each of the terms of reference have been assessed and have been answered appropriately. Cardiff High did not have control over the scope of works undertaken on the school. The Department of Education and Training (DET) Assets Management Unit (AMU) took care of all charged construction costs. There was only one main problem that arose during the first stages of construction, but was fixed fairly promptly. It appears that if there was more time during the preliminary stages of planning that this problem could have been detected. Overall, Cardiff High was pleased with the outcome of the BER for their school and students.