

**Submission
No 99**

INQUIRY INTO THE BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION PROGRAM

Organisation: Mt Pleasant Public School P & C Association
Name: Mrs Sue Sylvester
Date received: 7/06/2010

30 May 2010

Mt PLEASANT PUBLIC SCHOOL

SUBMISSION – BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION

I would like to make a submission on behalf of the Mt Pleasant P & C association in regard to the classroom/library building we received as part of the Federal governments Buildings the Education Revolution (BER).

“Building the Education Revolution (BER) is a \$16.2 billion investment that provides world-class educational facilities, through new infrastructure and refurbishments, to all eligible Australian schools” this quote is directly from the government website. Unfortunately as I have detailed below there is nothing world-class about a \$850,000 classroom building without air-conditioning or smart boards.

In summary the following items are of great concern to our school and community.

1. The original and detailed plans sent to the school are not that of the building that arrived.
2. The footings had to be dug in three different locations.
3. The peers had to be erected twice.
4. No consultation at all in regard to the internal layout.
5. A pile of school pavers stored for later use were broken by contractors.
6. Gas heating infrastructure was installed in the building and the school has no access to gas facilities.
7. There is no air-conditioning to be installed after we were advised there would be.
8. The demountable building that was removed had air-conditioning.
9. There is no smart-board to be installed after we were advised there would be.
10. The exorbitant cost of the building \$850,000, being \$9,444 per square meter.

In September 2009 our school principal advised the P & C that our school had been allocated \$850,000 for a library as part of the Government’s BER . The School then requested that we actually combine this building to become a library/classroom to replace the current demountable classroom, thus providing a much need teachers interview and resource room by utilizing the existing library.

At no point did anyone seek the consultation of our principal in regard to the internal layout of the building. The principal felt that the layout of the original building we had been “issued” would be satisfactory to service a classroom and library.

In early 2010 the footings were dug to prepare for the piers, however after 4 weeks it was discovered the footings installed, differed from the floor plans of the new building to be erected, as a result the footings had to be re-dug. The newly adjusted footings were again discovered to be incorrect and were re-dug and poured a third time and in addition it appears the floor plans for which all footings were dug are different from the original plans sent to the school.

All of the above was done without consultation with the school. Once it was decided the footings were finally correct, the piers were constructed. The problems continued due to the poor and unsafe construction of the piers. An inspection of the piers resulted in the piers being demolished and reconstructed. So now the footings have been dug and poured three times and piers erected twice, and still the principal has not sighted the actual plans for the new building that will be erected. It is hard to believe that all the plans can be finalised for a building approved by all departments and discover only after the foundations are put in place the actual building is not even the same size or layout as the specified plans.

No updated detailed plans were sent to the school and it was only when the building was finally erected on the piers that the Principal realised that the layout inside was completely different from that of the original building the school was to receive. This was very disturbing as the new layout is not suitable for teaching and the original plans sent would have been a much better structure for the students and staff.

As no consultation was sought another "error" occurred the infrastructure for gas heating was preinstalled in the building. Mt Pleasant Public School does not have any gas facilities and has no way of accessing gas heating. Another ridiculous cost that could have been saved and put into the air-conditioning had the consultation been sought.

Another item which is of great disappointment to our school is the disregard the contractors had for the school property and surroundings. Our school takes great pride in its pristine surroundings and the neat and tidy manner the gardens and buildings are kept. One point in particular was paving bricks which we had specifically kept in a neat and tidy pile was used by the contractors to install the ramp. Permission had not been sought by the contractors to use the pavers which the balance were left broken and unusable scattered all over the ground. This then becomes another cost which the P & C will have to raise to replace such pavers. Unfortunately the P & C does not have a spare \$850,000 to cover such costs.

The final and MOST DISAPPOINTING item of the project is the building would not be air-conditioned or have a smart board fitted. The P & C association were informed that for the \$850,000 this building would be air-conditioned and have a smart board installed, it was not until April 2010 that our school principal advised otherwise. This would result in additional expensive costs for a small rural school to raise sufficient funds necessary to install essential air conditioning and a smart board for our students. The air-conditioning alone has been quoted at over \$8,000.

How is it possible that a building 90 square meters can cost \$850,000 and not include air-conditioning and the "run of the mill" technology, that equates to \$9,444 per square meter. One dictionary meaning for revolution is "a complete change" often associated with advancement. Why call something an education revolution when it is providing less than that which was already available. We had a demountable building with air-conditioning you the government replaced it with

a “permanent building” without air-conditioning and without the electronic technology of a smart board. Our air-conditioned portable classroom was replaced by a non-air-conditioned building which was built by a portable building company, being APB Australian Portable Buildings. Which part of this BER is a revolution?

WE want the best for our school and we want the best for our dollar unfortunately in this case we did not receive that. There should have been more consultation and flexibility. We had an opportunity to bring our school into the 21st century and all we have been provided is a building that cannot be heated or cooled is not up to date with the electronic world, and cost a ridiculous \$9,444 per square meter to build. So much for the revolution!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

**Building the Education Revolution
Implementation Taskforce**

The Building the Education Revolution (BER) Implementation Taskforce has been established to examine the operation of the BER. It will receive, investigate and respond to complaints, ensure value for money, and recommend changes to policy, contracts or projects to ensure the objectives of the BER are realised.

As detailed in the government’s Building the Education Revolution website, I look forward to knowing that the taskforce will investigate and respond to our complaint and it is pleasing to see that they are now going to “ensure value for money”, particularly if the objective of this project was to provide “world class educational facilities”.

Yours sincerely

Sue Sylvester

President P & C Mt Pleasant Public School