

Submission  
No 128

## INQUIRY INTO THE BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION PROGRAM

**Organisation:** Cassilis Public School P&C  
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**Position:** Spokesperson  
**Date received:** 8/06/2010

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Partially Confidential

## GPSC2 GPSC2 - BER Inquiry Submission from Cassilis Public School

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**From:** "Phil & Wendy Morton" <  
**To:** <gpscno2@parliament.nsw.gov.au>  
**Date:** 6/8/2010 1:24 PM  
**Subject:** BER Inquiry Submission from Cassilis Public School

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BER Inquiry Submission from Cassilis Public School

**I would like to inform this Inquiry that the Cassilis School received an invitation to provide a submission to the Senate Inquiry, this invitation was received two days after the date of closure. Our school Secretary rang and advised the Inquiry of the lateness of the correspondence, they gave us a further two days. The Principal was absent for these two days so were unable to provide a submission. In light of this, we would seriously question the validity of this Inquiry (we are happy to provide postmarked documents to confirm this statement).**

In the first instance Cassilis Public School was notified that they would be getting a core seven toilet block budget \$110,000 and a COLA 8 metres by 7.2 metres, budget \$140,000. Bovis Lend Lease arrived on the scene unannounced, knocking down a well sheltered and shaded area that provided drinkers and wash facilities for students. This was done in 40 degree heat at the beginning of the school term with no provision being made for water or washing facilities other than some old sinks in the old toilet block that was to be demolished. When we complained, Bovis advised that they could provide 20 litre water bottles that we would have to pick up from Merriwa 30 minutes drive away at a cost of \$100 each, to come out of the project budget. Bovis did nothing about water replacement until May 6th, they provided one bubbler which stood over one metre tall meaning most of the primary children could not drink from it. The water provided to this drinker was via a hose exposed to the sun which meant it was too hot to drink. This was provided one day prior to an inter school event where we had over 300 people in the school grounds, this was the only drinking point that had been provided. A concrete slab was poured on this site with only four toilet outlets, it became apparent at that point in time that this would not be a core seven toilet. We wrote to Prime Minister Rudd, Deputy Prime Minister Gillard, Verity Firth, and Peter Groenewegen asking to halt the project for some community consultation, with no response. We then held a protest outside the school grounds and blockaded workmen to try and get some response from the above correspondence, none was forthcoming. However Joel Fitzgibbon, our local member, did get the workmen to stop work however no contact from project management. We did contact other media outlets, local radio, The Australian and Daily Telegraph newspapers, but still no comment from management or our political leaders. The men returned to work, project almost complete when we were able to get a meeting with John Zvolokin, Project Manager. The project was obviously too far developed to stop, however we were able to negotiate that they replace the original drinkers under a skillion on the side of the new toilet block. We also negotiated that the disabled shower / toilet are could be developed as a single toilet for visitors. Again this should have been unnecessary as we had advised them in the first instance that we already had a reasonably new disabled toilet / shower in a separate building. We have finally received some correspondence from Julia Gillards office when the building structure has almost been completed some four months from our original request for a meeting and community discussion about the multitude of problems with this project. Our school is all heritage protected, colour scheme of cream and soft green. In an extract from our Principal's letter "It is stated that the new building 'is to fit in with the current style and colours of the existing buildings'. We have a dark brick toilet (nothing else at our school is brick) with light grey colourbond roofing (school roofing in light green), and smoky blue colourbond fascia on the front and rear of the toilet block (our buildings are a cream with green trim)."

Heritage Impact Statement done on our school refers to the new project not being visible from the Wollombi Road, this is certainly true as the road is more than 100km away. It refers to a number of modern new constructions, this is not true. We believe this Impact Statement was done for a school somewhere else and has been used multiply across a number of school, creating a disastrous visual impact on the aesthetics of our school.

Our project has now blown out to \$271,997 which equates roughly to \$15,000 per square metre for our new core one toilet block. The \$140,000 budgeted for our new COLA has been absorbed by the toilet block plus an additional \$18,367 on top of the original budget and we still do not have a COLA.

At our meeting with John Zovolokin on 22 April, we questioned the \$140,000 for our 8 x 7.2 metre COLA. We presented to him a firm quote from a supplier who had supplied a number of these COLAs to the BER project, his contract to supply and erect these COLAs was \$15,320 creating a difference of \$124,680. John Zovolokin's only comment, when we asked how come the huge difference, was that on their buildings they would use galvanised down pipe as opposed to the fact that the quote we got may only have had PVC down pipe, so we were not comparing apples to apples. In correspondence since that meeting he has not been able to demonstrate to us in any way the difference of \$124,680 to produce this COLA that we never actually got.

The Cassilis School P&C has a history of self management of projects coming in within time and budget, we would like to know why the smaller schools were discriminated against and not allowed to manage their own projects as the private schools were, we feel this alone is a matter for the Minister for Discrimination to take action on. We know there was pressure put on the headmasters not to self manage, and in fact they were threatened with the possibility of having to face costs of shortfalls and other costs personally if they managed these projects. We would like to know who is responsible for this directive and that they should be dealt with for their discriminatory behaviour. The downgrading of our core seven toilet to a core one toilet was described by John Zovolokin as simply when all the contracts were let and schools advised of what improvements they were getting, that they actually had no designs or plans or in fact any costs for any of these buildings, and they simply sent us a footprint of the core seven toilet which we were never to get. He further advised that under instruction from Prime Minister Rudd and Education Minister Gillard to roll this program out, get contracts in place, which they did. However when contracts had been signed to do all these building improvements, funds and costs made available they in fact did not have any plans and their quantity surveyors had actually done no costings.

Also at our meeting with John Zovolokin, he laughingly commented that he had seen our protest on TV and wondered what we would have to complain about but had not had the courtesy to contact our school or P&C. The whole point of the protest was to try and get some dialogue with project management so we could point out the many problems that were already emerging with this project before they went further with them at great cost to our community and in fact we would end up with something that was not what we wanted. He also commented that this type of project was never going to happen again, suggesting that basically we should be grateful for whatever we got. We pointed out to him in the strongest of terms that there is no such thing as a free lunch, that this project is being funded by taxpayer dollars and borrowed dollars at that, and as taxpayers, parents and citizens, we were not happy with the costs of this project. We were able to go through the costs provided by Bovis Lend Lease Project 1527 Cassilis Public School, showing a total cost to date of \$271,997. We were able to demonstrate to John that it showed in excess of \$100,000 in costs that were not actually part of this building project, his response was that any surplus funds from this project would come back directly to the Cassilis School to fund whatever projects we felt would be beneficial to the school. We have since advised him, having got costings on the new core one toilet block, that we believe there should be at least \$150,000 surplus to this project. We would then spend this surplus fund on upgrading our existing toilets to a modern standard, by redoing slab, replacing all the old timber and asbestos sheeting with a design that would be

aesthetically pleasing and functional to our requirements. We would also extend our existing shaded outdoor area to be utilised in inclement weather for school assemblies and other functions, as we do not have a school hall. Had we had community consultation in the first instance, this would have been the project we would have undertaken and we believe at less than half the cost that this project has now cost the taxpayers. We would be happy to supply to you all our documentation, we would be happy to attend your inquiry where we could give you a much greater understanding of this grossly mismanaged project.

Attached to this email are the following:

- a timeline with dates of all our correspondence with BER project management, Prime Minister Rudds office, Education Minister Julia Gillard and NSW Education Minister Verity Firth. All this correspondence can be provided if requested for further investigation.
- There is also one scanned page from our principal Ross Craven that he presented to the teachers inquiry.
- Also attached is a scanned copy of the costing sheet (in two parts) provided by Bovis, and note that it states "ECS Approved".
- Another attachment is a quote from Statewide Sheds for a COLA.

With regards to the costing sheets, in view of the size of this project the first \$45,000 of these costs would have to seriously be questioned as to their value, the concrete costs of \$9,443 based on our local suppliers cost, this is grossly overquoted. Combination of roof structure and roofing totalling \$23,008 for a construction of this size again would be grossly overquoted. Toilet partitions at \$13,972 again grossly overquoted for a toilet of this size, miscellaneous fixtures and furniture \$8,222 grossly overquoted, hydraulic services at \$13,334 should be zero as new system is going into the existing system, no upgrading is required nor any testing required to be done. Demolition at \$15,312 grossly overquoted for the demolition of our shelter area; site preparation and bulk earth works \$7,955 grossly overquoted as this was a level area with little earthworks to be done. Site electrical work of \$36,394 should be zero as power was provided to site and the actual electrical fitout was quoted elsewhere in this quote. These are to name just the very obvious cost blowouts and might I remind you that they have claimed that these costs are to date, and the building is not yet completed. As I have already pointed out to you of the original core seven toilet design and construct cost of \$110,000 they are claiming a blowout of costs of \$171,997 on the original budget.

Kind regards  
Phillip Morton  
Spokesperson for Cassilis P&C