

30<sup>th</sup> April 2010

### **Inquiry into the Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century program**

Whilst I applaud the concept of the Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century program, regrettably, the outcome for Cassilis Public School and the wider community will be very poor.

#### **Timing and budget issues**

- Insufficient time for proper consultation with the school community led to confusion, uninformed and inappropriate decisions being made within the school.
  
- The school was allocated \$250,000 and was led to believe it was getting a COLA and toilet/wash shed amenities upgrade. Due to the cost of a new toilet block, the school will not be getting a COLA. The new amenities block, consisting of one male toilet, one urinal, one boys hand basin, two girls toilets, one girls hand basin and one accessible toilet and shower, has a cost estimation by Bovis of \$279,000. Based on quotes received for similar projects within the community, I believe that the toilet block would cost below \$100,000 under normal conditions.

#### **The Management of the Program**

- From the onset, documentation presented for discussion and planning to Cassilis Public School by Bovis Lend Lease was scant and inaccurate in many instances.
  
- Plans of the proposed works and supporting documentation were not provided to the school community until well after the works had started. This meant that such issues as there being no provision for drinking water

or washing facilities for the children in the new plans were not noticed until construction was well under way, leading to an ad hoc and expensive approach to provide much needed facilities that had been removed. If the school community realised that it was losing a female block consisting of four girls toilets and one segregated female adult toilet; a boys toilet block consisting of three toilets and a long urinal and one segregated male adult toilet; and its bubbler/wash shed consisting of eight bubblers and two wash troughs to be replaced by two girls toilets, one male toilet, one urinal and an accessible toilet / shower with no provision for bubblers, wash facilities or adult toilets for \$250,000 they would not have agreed to the project.

### **The use of local and non-local contractors**

- Cassilis Public School is located in Zone No 2(v) – Heritage Conservation Area, under the Merriwa LEP 1992, and also included in the State Heritage Inventory (Database Number 10535). The Heritage Impact Statement for the Building The Education Revolution Projects at the Cassilis Public School Prepared for Bovis Lend Lease on behalf of NSW DET by Tanner Architects acknowledges these facts, however the new BER building that has been erected is brick with blue colourbond trim on the outside walls and a grey roof. Nowhere else in the Cassilis Heritage Conservation Area is there a brick building, and the schools existing buildings are painted cream with green trim and green rooves. This new building has seriously compromised the integrity of the school and village aesthetics and I believe that it is possible that the new building does not comply with the local environmental plans. Tanner Architects documentation for Cassilis Public School in places makes reference to quite a different school (Wollombi Public School) and a different building project (refurbishment of the Administration building). I feel that if the Upper Hunter Shire Council Heritage Consultant (Ms Lillian Cullen) was consulted about this project, a much better outcome would have been reached for the school and village.

I hope the abovementioned information is of some help to your inquiry.

Yours sincerely  
Linda Gant