



Australian Institute of Architects

22 April 2010

Ms Shona Batge
Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and
Workplace Relations Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Batge

Primary Schools for the Twenty First Century Inquiry

The Institute of Architects (the Institute) is an independent, national, member organisation with almost 10,000 members across Australia and overseas. The Institute exists to; advance the interests of its members, their professional standards and contemporary practice, and expand and advocate the value of architects and architecture to the sustainable growth of our community, economy and culture. The Institute actively works to maintain and improve the quality of our built environment by promoting better, responsible and environmental design.

The Institute welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee's inquiry into Primary Schools for the Twenty First Century. The Institute wishes to raise issues under (b) of the terms of reference 'other related matters'. These issues relate to the sustainability and energy efficiency of the projects funded under the Building the Education Revolution (BER).

In February 2009 the Institute voiced its support for the Federal Government's \$42 Billion Nation Building and Jobs Plan (the Plan), which allocated funding for the Building the Education Revolution, as we believed the Plan's initiatives served a dual purpose of addressing community infrastructure needs as well as providing a stimulus for the building sector.

At the same time, the Institute emphasised the importance of good design and the need for any school buildings and social and defence housing built as a result of the package, to meet leading practice standards in sustainability and energy efficiency, in order to align with the Government's objectives to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

The Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council's report, *The Second Plank – Building a Low Carbon Economy through Energy Efficient Buildings* shows the significant potential the building sector can make to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency measures, complementary to the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

With this in mind, we urged the government to couple the investment in school, social and defence buildings, with a green approach and we recommended that the Green Building Council's Green Star Tool for Education should be considered as a requirement for access to funding under the Plan for all new school buildings.

We are aware that the Federal Government in seeking the Australian Greens Party's support for the National Building and Jobs Plan legislation in the Senate, undertook a number of commitments, including to maximise the energy efficiency of any new building under the second and third stages of the schools infrastructure component of the Plan.

The Institute supports this undertaking and is extremely interested to learn how this has been implemented and whether it has been achieved.

We note that under the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations *Guidelines for the BER Element 1 –Primary Schools for the Twenty First Century*, the 'Conditions for Funding' state that 'wherever possible all new buildings and refurbishments should incorporate sustainable building principles to help reduce any impact of building on the natural environment' etc.

The Institute is concerned that the inclusion of the words 'wherever possible' doesn't entirely reflect the intention of the Australian Government in their agreement with the Australian Greens Party.

The Institute seeks assurances that the new buildings under the stimulus package have been designed to maximise energy efficiency to leave a positive legacy for the community and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions arising from the operation of the new facilities when compared to business as usual.

The Institute respectfully suggests the Committee consider this issue in its deliberations and report to Parliament.

The Institute actively worked to support the Government's roll out of the BER projects, particularly to assist its endeavour for sustainable buildings. To this extent the Institute developed a sustainability fact sheet providing an overview of practical ways to improve the energy efficiency and sustainability of BER projects. This was promoted through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' website.

Over the last thirteen years the Institute has developed industry's leading Environment Design Guide (EDG) – an online resource which includes 250 refereed papers on topics such as materials selection, case studies and strategies for designing and delivering sustainable projects. Although this is provided as a subscription service, the Institute made 30 selected Environment Design Guide papers and case studies relevant to BER projects, available electronically and free of charge, for use by all consultants, designers, contractors etc engaged on BER projects. This offer was communicated to the Federal and State and Territory Coordinator Generals for the Nation Building and Jobs Plan.

The Institute also promoted the skills and expertise that the profession could contribute to help each government achieve their objectives. The State and Territory Coordinator Generals were each supplied with a list of architectural practices in their jurisdiction, who had indicated to us that they had both experience working on education projects and were able to work on BER projects within the tight timeframes set. Anecdotal evidence suggests that only a small proportion of Institute members received work under the BER.

I look forward to the Committee's report as the Institute is interested in drawing lessons, for the profession, from the BER, about the effectiveness of the program both in relation to the stimulus effect it is having and in achieving sustainability objectives.

I would be happy to discuss any of the points raised in this submission should the Committee require more information or seek clarification.

Yours sincerely,

David Parken, LFRAIA
Chief Executive Officer