



Sutton Public School - Striving for Excellence

SUTTON PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENTS & CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

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SUBJECT: SUBMISSION TO SENATE INQUIRY INTO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY PROGRAM - SUTTON PUBLIC SCHOOL, NSW

Sutton Public School is a school of about 140 students that is located in southern NSW about 20km NE of Canberra. Sutton School was successful in receiving funding in the Primary Schools for the 21st Century Round One. Funding of \$850,000 was provided by the Federal Government for construction of a new library.

Our concern with this program is with the continuing reduction of our new library's scope and capacity through the initial stages of the project, lack of consultation and cost visibility from the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and the distinct possibility that a much-needed facility may be taken away from the school in exchange for the new library.

Continued reduction in new library scope and capacity

As a result of the P21 round 1 funding announcement and contact with the NSW DET, the Sutton School Principal accepted on behalf of our school community the funding to build a size 14 library. This library was to be twice the size of our current library and equipped with the latest technology. The school staff and parent community were advised and were excited about this prospect.

The school was advised that the \$850,000 would cover the cost of a 14 Core MDR (Modular Design Range) library including fit out using the Department's contractor. At this time the school were considering managing the project themselves so obtained quotes from a Canberra building project manager indicating that a brick 14 Core equivalent building and fit out could be provided within the \$850,000 budget. The school decided however to continue with the Department project managing a 14 Core MDR since we felt our principal, staff, P&C and school were not in a position to take on the additional responsibility and risk. We accepted the NSW Department of Education and Training proposal on that basis.

In June the school was advised by DET that the budget could now not build a 14 Core MDR library but instead we would get a brick 7 Core library equivalent, we assumed that this would include an excellent fit out to utilise the budget since the building was now reduced by half the size. The school reluctantly agreed to this but only on the proviso that the school could retain the current demountable library so we had the additional space required. This unfortunately could not be guaranteed since we need to

go through another committee for consideration. Letters were written by the P & C and principal to DET in support of this.

On 13 August the school was advised that an error had been made and that the original plan had only scoped a 7 core MDR library (15 sq metres larger than our current library). Notably a Department Officer took responsibility for the error and provided a written apology to the Sutton School community. We therefore learnt that the \$850k could now only pay for a 7 Core MDR library although apparently this had always been the case it was just that we hadn't been told that information. We were not provided at this time with any breakdown of costs and indeed received very little information in writing from DET.

Lack of consultation and cost visibility from the NSW DET

After receiving advice on Thursday 13 August that the school was now getting a new 7 core MDR library our principal was called at home on the weekend by two demountable companies, wanting to make an appointment to visit the school and cost putting the demountable library at school. We therefore deduced from this that a costing had not been done to that point and that was why we could get no information on our project except to say we were using up our money. The school was accused of stalling the project and advised that they ran the risk of not getting a new library at all unless we agreed to commence the project straight away. We were concerned knowing that the cost to another local school for a 7 core size MDR fitted out in recent years was less than \$300k.

The principal continued to wait for costings which were received on 02 October 2009. We were surprised to see all the extra fees and noticed that the demountable building did not even come equipped with air-conditioning. The day after receiving the costing the construction team arrived to start the work and the principal finally got to view the plans for the building on-site. When the principal noted that the building had a westerly orientation and would be quite warm and suggested it should be orientated to face a different direction she was told that the school had already used all their funds and a change in the plans could not be considered. Sutton School has felt that they had been bullied by the DET to accept the smaller demountable and had no input into its siting at the school. The lack of consultation by DET in the process has caused our teaching principal a lot of stress and has required her to brief staff and the school community on setbacks that have been encountered.

Potential loss of a valuable school facility

Although this is not yet finalised, we have been advised by the DET that our current demountable library may be removed. The school has identified for a number of years that extra space and capacity was needed in the form of another classroom to facilitate special school programs in a learning environment. These include school band and music practise, school counsellor, pastoral and value education, Maths Olympiad, intensive and special learning programs to mention just a few.

The current demountable library is provided with extensive disability access and landscaping that has taken a lot of time, effort and funds by many in its provision. Removable of the demountable from that location would mean removal of these works and re-establishment of a suitable alternative to cater for our disabled students and visitors. The Sutton parent community have requested that the School retains the current

library demountable. This would result in what we consider is a win-win situation where the school's capacity and facilities are improved and no relocation works (and costs) would need to be carried out. We feel that if the demountable is removed then the school community will have to burden avoidable costs.

The provision of a new library at Sutton Public School under the Building Education Revolution funding scheme is greatly appreciated by the Sutton school parent community. We are also aware that time is of the essence in stimulating the economy by quickly spending these funds. We feel however that we were not consulted in the planning stages and costing was not made available by the NSW DET. In addition to that we may ultimately be in a more difficult situation both practically and financially should our current demountable library (fitted with air conditioning provided by P & C funds) be taken from us.

Yours sincerely

Duncan Bosworth
2009 President
On behalf of Sutton Public School - Parents & Citizens Association

Attachments: P21 Round 1 funding allocation Page 11
Sutton Public school library costing dated 02 October 2009