

Tottenham Central School- NSW

Thursday 22nd April 2010

Tottenham Central School is a K-12 school in the geographic centre of NSW (150km west of Dubbo).

Under the 21st Century Project we have received a new canteen and refurbishment of four primary classrooms. The budgets for these projects total \$850,000 (\$600,000 for the canteen and \$250,000 for refurbishment of Primary rooms)

On 09 September 2009 the Senate referred the following matters to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee for inquiry and report.

(a) Consideration of the Federal Government's Primary Schools for the 21st Century program, with particular reference to:

(i) The conditions and criteria for project funding,

- Apparently no criteria for Central Schools (in NSW)
- Minimal consultation
- No detailed plans/specifications provided
- Rushed decision
- Led to believe we were getting Science Lab at the same time as our P21 project, this then changed to refurbishment of existing Science Lab, this then changed again to no refurbishment of existing Science Lab. The school nominated a canteen under the P21 program which has turned out to be grossly inadequate. We now have a new canteen which is not as functional as our old one and a Science Lab that is forty six years old and has not had any substantial upgrades or renovations in that time, apart from minor maintenance such as painting and new vinyl flooring. We would have much preferred to have had the Science Lab refurbished and foregone the new canteen.

(ii) The use of local and non-local contractors,

- No local contractors used
- Main subcontractor was a builder from Dubbo (150km away) who "sub-let" work to other contractors in Dubbo (eg electricians, plumbers etc)

(iii) The role of state governments,

- No involvement

(iv) Timing and budget issues, including duplication,

Budget Issues

- Minimal time and detail given to planning and consultation. This led to rushed decisions and poor decisions resulting in an undersized and inadequate canteen. This building doesn't approach what the school community expectations when they were told they were receiving a \$600,000 canteen.

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Timing

- A lot of work was done over Christmas vacation which was on one hand good because classes were not interrupted, but on the other hand school staff were not present to “oversee” work.

(v) Requirements for school signs and plaques,

This project has not been finalised and plaques have not been received

(vi) The management of the program

- We feel the management of the project was extremely poor especially in the initial stages where there was minimal consultation regarding specifications, size, design and cost of proposed building

- The school community was not presented with other options which would have been more educationally beneficial to the students of Tottenham Central School

(b) Other related matters

The BER has provided an insubstantial and completely inadequate building (8.47m x 3.1m), in which the canteen (3.1m x 5.4m) plus an office (3.1m x 3.07m) that has cost \$600,000 of taxpayers’ money.

The building was not vermin or dust proof and had no air conditioning system. However, these matters are supposedly in the process of being addressed.

This building does not meet our requirements as it is undoubtedly too small. It does not provide sufficient space to house our refrigeration needs. It does not provide enough space for cooking and food warming equipment. There is completely inadequate room for food preparation. It does not provide toilet facilities for our canteen staff. All of these features were provided in our existing canteen building (4.9m x 7.6m) which also housed a large permanent shelter area (10.5m x 19.6m) where children can eat, play, rest and learn, out of the elements of our harsh environmental conditions and lastly a valuable secure storage area (2.4m x 7.6m). The total dimensions of our existing canteen being 26.9m x 10.5m.

We consider our school is now at great risk of losing its large demountable canteen which incorporates our existing canteen, a large sheltered area and a secure storage area.

This canteen project has certainly not given the Tottenham school community or the taxpayer anything like value for money. It is a deplorable and inexcusable waste of money and cannot be utilized for its intended purpose.

Richard Bennett (Rick)

P & C President

Tottenham Central School

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