

23rd April, 2010

Re: Inquiry into the Primary Schools for the 21st Century program

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our opinion as to the success and/or shortcomings of the P21 Stimulus Package.

I write on behalf of the School Council and School Community of Mt Martha Primary School (MMPS). Unfortunately, due to procedural inefficiencies and inconsistencies we have experienced in the manner MMPS was treated, our school community has developed a very unfavourable opinion of the handling of this stimulus package. As a result, our community's belief in the Government's (both State and Federal) commitment, loyalty and honesty to our school community has been shattered. We have been left feeling bewildered and gutted at the outcome of our "share" of the P21 Stimulus Package.

It cannot be denied that the school community consensus is now frustration and anger at the manner in which our current and future children of MMPS have been disadvantaged.

This has been "achieved" via a system that obviously was not meticulously structured; processes not clearly laid out to be followed (actually changed mid-stream and even further down stream); lacked transparency and was inconsistent in its application. One only has to look at the manner in which all involved at the top end are now trying to avoid the ultimate reality - that this "planned" stimulus package has proved to be a flawed

and mismanaged one from its outset. Sadly, in many, many instances, it has had the adverse effect in many communities. Ours is a prime example.

Our school community is not one for seeking to "stir the pot", so we attempted to tackle fact finding the reason as to why we had been disadvantaged in as reasonable and amiable a manner as possible. This search began in August 2009, and, sadly, to date we still have no clear picture of the reasons behind MMPS being not provided its full entitlement under the stimulus package. I have attached some copies (we now have two binder folders of correspondence - mainly ours!) so you may see the plight our school community has been placed in.

I am sure that there would be a trail of internal correspondence that would enlighten you without my having to go into pages and pages of details. However, below is a quick sketch of where we are coming from:

- Submission made in Round One for the "Multi-purpose" modular package, which we were not successful in obtaining (please note, our confirmed numbers at this stage were 609 students).
- We were not successful in Round Two.
- As Round Three was drawing to a close, a Contractor on behalf of the Department visited MMPS and offered a portable classroom package (\$850K) advising us that this was the most MMPS could obtain under P21.
- MMPS Principal received an email late one afternoon, which had to be signed off and returned the very next day - not giving a great deal of time to research implications in signing off on such a document.
- In August 2009, we began a fact finding mission - beginning following false media coverage in our local paper (information given to them in a Federal Government press release) announcing that MMPS had been given \$3mil in this P21 stimulus package. This

misreporting of our true position is still dogging our school to this very day.

- Present day - we are still awaiting the installation of the \$850K portable package [therefore are unable to comment on sections (a) (ii) - (vi)].

As a school community we are now - for the very first time in our school's history - standing as a divided community. Due to the inaccurate reporting of our school's handout in P21, and consequent lack of support in attempting to clarify and explain why we were disadvantaged, we are now faced with a great percentage of our community having lost faith in the schools management and administration. This has ultimately resulted in members of our school community second guessing and misinterpreting the manner in which the funds of the school are managed.

For the first time ever, this year our budget had to be amended after the first quarter of the school year. Usually, our school council can budget to expect to receive in excess of 85% of essential item parent payments, and up to 75% of voluntary contributions. Devastatingly, in light of adverse media coverage (unfortunately stemming from a group of mistrusting parents) this year we now can only hope to recover 65% of essential item parent payments, and below 50% of voluntary contributions.

The distressing reality is, our school community has not just disadvantaged of its entitlement under P21, but been left divided and financially disadvantaged because of the "fallout" this stimulus package has created. We are worse off than we ever were before - the only "stimulating" within our school community is division, negativity and lack of trust and confidence.

I am more than willing to attend and speak at a public hearing.

Yours sincerely,

Iona Eichstadt
School Council President,
On behalf of the Mt Martha Primary School Community.