

(10.00 a.m)

Tabled 19/5/10  
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# Building the Education Revolution Survey Report

## Executive Summary

The Australian Primary Principals Association surveyed its affiliates' members in March 2010 on issues relating to the two programs under the Australian Government's Building the Education Revolution (BER): the Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (P21) program and the National School Pride (NSP) program. Two thousand four hundred and thirty eight responses were received in five working days representing the largest response to an online survey for APPA in recent history. Eight survey items were posed, six closed questions (Question 1 to 6 below) and two open ended items (Questions 7 and 8 below).

### Question 1.

In which state or territory is your school located?

|              |             |             |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| ACT          | 56          | 2%          |
| NSW          | 801         | 33%         |
| NT           | 32          | 1%          |
| QLD          | 391         | 16%         |
| SA           | 244         | 10%         |
| TAS          | 101         | 4%          |
| VIC          | 419         | 17%         |
| WA           | 367         | 15%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>2411</b> | <b>100%</b> |

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**Question 2.****Which sector?**

|              |             |             |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Government   | 1897        | 78%         |
| Catholic     | 424         | 17%         |
| Independent  | 117         | 5%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>2438</b> | <b>100%</b> |

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**Question 3.****Are your students going to benefit from the BER Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (P21) project?**

Primary principals from all sectors and every state and territory agreed strongly (97%) that their students will benefit from the P21 project. Significant emphasis was placed on the fact that the program will provide funds to schools that would not have been able to access these funds in any other way. Consequently they were seen by school principals to be timely, significant and likely to contribute to enhance learning in their schools. Principals were not only aware of the educational implications of the scheme but were also cognisant of its potential stimulus to the national economy and to their local communities.

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**Question 4.****Are your students going to benefit from the BER National School Pride (NSP) program?**

The vast majority of school leaders (96%) agreed that the NSP program would benefit children in their schools. Whilst Catholic and Government responses were clearly and strongly positive about the program (97%) Independent school leaders were significantly less likely to agree (78%). This difference remains unexplained after an examination of the written responses.

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**Question 5.****Within the Commonwealth guidelines for the Building the Education Revolution program, is your school receiving projects that you and your school community want?**

Ninety percent of responses agreed that the projects undertaken matched community needs and priorities. By state breakdown, Government principals were less likely to agree, with NSW (86%), Victoria (88%) and Western Australia (88%) respondents agreeing with the question.

Respondents expressed a strong and consistent level of appreciation of individual projects, particularly in regards to much needed facilities, a good match to expressed need and satisfaction with the building outcome. Ten percent of responses were recorded as negative. Issues focused on 'descoping' of planned projects to accommodate cost over runs, poor communication and centralised decision making.

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**Question 6.****Have you been able to access the specific costings for your projects?**

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This question drew a broad range of responses with 93% of Independent principals and 87% of Catholic principals agreeing they have been provided with access to the costings for their projects. By contrast only 43% of Government school principals across Australia had access to costings. NSW (45%), Victoria (48%), and WA (48%) provided the least access of any state or territory. Victorian government principals responded significantly to this question, where only twelve percent reported having access to costings.

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**Question 7.****Based on the above responses, please briefly comment on your school's specific Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (P21) project.**

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Whilst school principals overwhelmingly remained positive about their P21 projects, the level of satisfaction from Government principals (57%) was quite significantly less than their Catholic and Independent principal colleagues. Major causes of dissatisfaction came predominantly from NSW and Victorian school principals. NSW state school principals were concerned about 'best fit' or funds being reduced by their maintenance objectives. The provision of school design 'templates' were regularly mentioned as being unsuitable, providing a cookie cutter approach to schools who were desiring site specific solutions. Other school principals complained of maintenance requirements consuming up to 50% of their funds, leaving them with significantly less value added outcomes than neighbouring schools.

Victorian school principals recorded their strongest dissatisfaction (11%) on issues of process. Issues included: insufficient time to consult, poor communication and a lack of best fit (5%). Western Australian school principals were equally concerned about 'best fit' and their processes at project level. In other states satisfaction levels were much higher and their written responses noted more flexibility and consultation in working with their State Education Departmental bureaucracy.

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**Question 8.****Based on the above responses, please briefly comment on your school's specific National School Pride (NSP) program.**

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Responses for NSP across sectors and states and territories were far more favourable than for P21. Reasons for this difference are outlined below. Average positive satisfaction was determined at 80%. This was an average of all responses. Broken down by sector, Government principals (76%) were generally less positive than their Catholic (95.8%) and Independent colleagues (97.5%).

Strong and consistent reference was made to the NSP program providing a greater degree of flexibility and local control than did the P21 projects. Principals in government schools sought more hands on management of the project. Reference was often made to their capacity to seek competitive quotes, to target specific local priorities flexibly and to avoid significant on costs. The projects identified within the responses also suggested that funds were drained away by the need to make good some essential work in the school.

Government principals saw contingency funds being spent on toilets, painting and repairs. Independent and Catholic principals on the other hand were almost universally content with the level of site based control and design they were provided with through the guidelines and jurisdictional processes.

## **Conclusion**

APPA's survey confirms the value that is being added to primary school infrastructure through the BER. Primary school principals across Australia in all sectors and jurisdictions agree strongly that the investment is providing benefit to students.

Principals across the three sectors agree that the facilities being planned match community priorities. In the responses, principals from NSW, Victoria and WA do however record concern over the limited flexibility and overly bureaucratic processes being applied to the use of these funds. This was particularly emphasised within the context of the P21 program. A number of responses from all parts of Australia expressed concerns about 'value for money'. Respondents noted that the NSP guidelines have allowed them to use local management to avoid much of this 'over pricing'. Views focused on the notion that NSP has provided good value for money and a more targeted use of funds on real priorities.

School principals have collectively responded strongly in support of the BER investment. The positive response of the non government sectors to local decision making and the negative responses by Government school principals to lack of transparency, template focussed solutions and centralised project management makes a strong case for the processes required to drive optimal benefit for students. The responses of school principals register strong support for enhanced autonomy in the design and management of capital works in schools. Their rejection of so-called 'cookie cutter' templates suggests that schools have very unique and defined needs that cannot be well met without a genuine embrace of local context. Principals are strongly asserting that they desire, and are capable of, local management of capital works projects. They suggest that what might be saved in economies of scale might be lost in function at the school level.

APPA looks forward to sharing these results with the Australian community in the interests of providing a voice for the experiences and advice of Australia's primary school leaders on issues related to the provision of future capital work projects in our nation's primary schools.



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# Building the Education Revolution Survey Report

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## 1. Context

The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) launched a survey of school leader opinion on the current state of implementation of the Australian Government's Building the Education Revolution (BER). Two thousand four hundred and thirty eight responses were received in a period of just five working days indicating the significance of this initiative and its impact on primary schools across all sectors and states of Australia.

APPA represents the national voice for 7,200 primary schools across Australia in all states and territories and across all three sectors of education. APPA is proud of its advocacy on behalf of primary schools, having had a significant influence upon the program's announcement, and now maintains an interest in providing a voice for primary principals on issues surrounding BER's progressive implementation. This report serves to identify the significant feedback from principals on the program in the interests of extending its effectiveness and its successful impact on the nation's primary schools.

APPA's governing National Executive Council moved to launch the survey in response to a wide range of media comment and continuing feedback from our affiliates' members on issues related to the implementation of the BER within their schools, sectors and state jurisdictions.

The survey opened on March 24 and closed on March 30, 2010.

Tables A and B show the responses by state/territory and sector.

(Differences in total response numbers reveal that not all respondents completed all items).

**TABLE A: Survey Item 1**

| 1. In which state or territory is your school located? |             |             |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| ACT                                                    | 56          | 2%          |
| NSW                                                    | 801         | 33%         |
| NT                                                     | 32          | 1%          |
| QLD                                                    | 391         | 16%         |
| SA                                                     | 244         | 10%         |
| TAS                                                    | 101         | 4%          |
| VIC                                                    | 419         | 17%         |
| WA                                                     | 367         | 15%         |
| <b>Total</b>                                           | <b>2411</b> | <b>100%</b> |

**TABLE B: Survey Item 2**

| 2. Which sector? |             |             |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Government       | 1897        | 78%         |
| Catholic         | 424         | 17%         |
| Independent      | 117         | 5%          |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>2438</b> | <b>100%</b> |

## 2. Survey And Report Methodology

The survey instrument was delivered through *Zoomerang*, an online survey instrument. Email advice was sent to all member affiliates of APPA encouraging their membership to participate. Eight questions were posed, six closed response items (Question 1 to Question 6) and two open ended response items (Questions 7 and 8):

1. *In which state or territory is your school located?*
2. *Which sector?*
3. *Are your students going to benefit from the BER Primary Schools for the 21st Century (P21) project?*
4. *Are your students going to benefit from the BER National School Pride (NSP) program?*
5. *Within the Commonwealth guidelines for the Building the Education Revolution program, is your school receiving projects that you and your school community want?*
6. *Have you been able to access the specific costings for your projects?*
7. *Based on the above responses, please briefly comment on your school's specific Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (P21) project.*
8. *Based on the above responses, please briefly comment on your school's specific National School Pride (NSP) program.*

The survey closed on March 30, 2010 upon which the results were collated and analysed independently by a professional research organisation. This report on the data analysis was completed by an educational consultancy contracted by APPA.

The closed response items were tabulated individually for analysis and also cross tabulated for patterns across sectors and states/territories. Where disparities between sectors within states were evident the data was analysed for such patterns. These supplementary tables are not included in this report. Where the patterns were significant special comment was made within the report text.

The open response items in Question 7 and Question 8 were coded to encompass the range of responses. The codings are noted in Tables C and D below.

**TABLE C: Coding Frame Survey Item 7 (Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century)**

|                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. School acquired needed/useful facility(ies)                           |
| 2. Facilities useful/needed but more needed                              |
| 3. Project not yet commenced                                             |
| 4. Project not optimal/not best fit with school needs                    |
| 5. Process inefficient/time consuming/poor communication or consultation |
| 6. Too costly for what achieved/not value for money                      |
| 7. Multiple                                                              |
| 8. Other                                                                 |

**TABLE D: Coding Frame: Question Eight (National Schools Pride)**

|                                      |
|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Satisfactory outcome              |
| 2. Project not commenced/completed   |
| 3. Not value for money               |
| 4. Did not get what needed/requested |
| 5. Negative comments                 |
| 6. Mixed responses                   |
| 7. Other                             |

Cross tabulations were generated linking written and closed response items. This revealed patterns to be revealed relevant to specific states/territories and schooling sectors. Written responses coded from the open ended Items 7 and 8 were analysed for comment relevant to the patterns evident in the Closed Response items. Indicative sample responses have been included in the discussion of the closed items below to highlight common relevant themes. Mixed responses were sufficiently frequent for the National School Pride (NSP) program and these were consequently recorded as a separate coding category.

### 3. Analysis of Data

#### 3.1 CLOSED RESPONSE ITEMS:

##### 3.1.1 Closed Response Item 3:

***Are your students going to benefit from the BER Primary Schools for the 21st Century (P21) project?***

##### **By Sector**

The large majority of schools in all sectors reported that their students would benefit from P21 project. Principals from Government schools (96.5%) were slightly less likely than those from Catholic (99.3%) and Independent (97.1%) schools to agree that their students would benefit. See Table F for a detailed breakdown of response by sector.

Typical quotes relating to the perceived benefits are:

*'We have been able to construct a new school and community hall which will be of great benefit as we were sadly lacking this type of facility.'* (Catholic sector)

*'We will be receiving high quality classrooms specifically for our primary classes. The project has been an excellent opportunity for us to build our primary resources.'* (Independent sector)

*'These funds are being used to build a new library - something sorely needed and something our school community could only dream about. For the first time our school will have flexible learning spaces and a facility the equal of any.'* (Government sector)



**TABLE F:****Are your students going to benefit from the BER Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (P21) project?**

| Are your students going to benefit from the BER Primary Schools for the 21st Century (P21) project? |             | Yes           | No         | Total          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|----------------|
| School sector                                                                                       | Government  | 1818<br>96.5% | 65<br>3.5% | 1883<br>100.0% |
|                                                                                                     | Catholic    | 413<br>99.3%  | 3<br>.7%   | 416<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                                     | Independent | 115<br>98.3%  | 2<br>1.7%  | 117<br>100.0%  |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                        |             | 2346<br>97.1% | 70<br>2.9% | 2416<br>100.0% |

**By State and Territory**

The large majority of schools in all states and territories reported that their students would benefit from the P21 Project. Schools in Tasmania (93.6%) and the Northern Territory (90.6%) were less likely than those in other locations to agree with this statement.

See Table G for a detailed breakdown of response by state/territory.

**TABLE G:**

**Are your students going to benefit from the BER Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (P21) project?**

| Are your students going to benefit from the BER Primary Schools for the 21st Century (P21) project? |     | Yes           | No         | Total          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------------|------------|----------------|
| In which state or territory is your school located?                                                 | ACT | 55<br>100.0%  | 0<br>.0%   | 55<br>100.0%   |
|                                                                                                     | NSW | 774<br>97.4%  | 21<br>2.6% | 795<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                                     | NT  | 29<br>90.6%   | 3<br>9.4%  | 32<br>100.0%   |
|                                                                                                     | Qld | 379<br>97.7%  | 9<br>2.3%  | 388<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                                     | SA  | 235<br>97.9%  | 5<br>2.1%  | 240<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                                     | Tas | 94<br>93.1%   | 7<br>6.9%  | 101<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                                     | Vic | 398<br>96.1%  | 16<br>3.9% | 414<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                                     | WA  | 355<br>97.5%  | 9<br>2.5%  | 364<br>100.0%  |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                        |     | 2319<br>97.1% | 70<br>2.9% | 2389<br>100.0% |

A typical quote from around the nation for this item was:

*'Eight rooms being refurbished, COLA for basketball court. three new permanent classrooms. Work is slow but much needed' (Government sector)*

It is clear that a high level of support (97%) exists for the P21 program in terms of its potential and existing benefits for students. This support is consistently high, across sectors and across states and territories.

**3.1.2** Closed Response Item 4:

***Are your students going to benefit from the BER National School Pride (NSP) program?***

**By Sector**

Government (96%) and Catholic (99.5%) school principals were significantly more likely to agree that work conducted under NSP was going to benefit students than were Independent school principals (78.3%). See Table H for a detailed breakdown of response by sector.

**TABLE H:**

**Are your students going to benefit from the BER National School Pride (NSP) program?**

| Are your students going to benefit from the BER National School Pride (NSP) program? |             | Yes           | No          | Total          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| School sector                                                                        | Government  | 1817<br>96.0% | 75<br>4.0%  | 1892<br>100.0% |
|                                                                                      | Catholic    | 418<br>99.5%  | 2<br>.5%    | 420<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                      | Independent | 90<br>78.3%   | 25<br>21.7% | 115<br>100.0%  |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                         |             | 2325<br>95.8% | 102<br>4.2% | 2427<br>100.0% |

**By State and Territory**

Again, in all states more than 90% of principals agreed that their students would benefit from NSP, with those in Western Australia reporting the lowest level of agreement (91.8%). See Table I for a detailed breakdown of response by state/territory.

**TABLE 1:**

**Are your students going to benefit from the BER National School Pride (NSP) program?**

| Are your students going to benefit from the BER National School Pride (NSP) program? |     | Yes           | No          | Total          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| In which state or territory is your school located?                                  | ACT | 54<br>96.4%   | 2<br>3.6%   | 56<br>100.0%   |
|                                                                                      | NSW | 751<br>94.2%  | 46<br>5.8%  | 797<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                      | NT  | 31<br>96.9%   | 1<br>3.1%   | 32<br>100.0%   |
|                                                                                      | Qld | 380<br>97.4%  | 10<br>2.6%  | 390<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                      | SA  | 241<br>98.8%  | 3<br>1.2%   | 244<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                      | Tas | 100<br>99.0%  | 1<br>1.0%   | 101<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                      | Vic | 407<br>97.8%  | 9<br>2.2%   | 416<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                      | WA  | 334<br>91.8%  | 30<br>8.2%  | 364<br>100.0%  |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                         |     | 2298<br>95.8% | 102<br>4.3% | 2400<br>100.0% |

Indicative of the positive responses to the National School Pride program are the quotes below drawn from the open ended responses in Item 8.

*'NSP funding has enabled a low SES school community to install electronic interactive whiteboards in every classroom.'* (Government sector)

*'Able to liaise with school community to determine school needs, all decisions at local level. School chose projects and installers. Project a wonderful asset to our school community.'* (Catholic sector)

*'We were able to rebuild our school oval which has had a dramatic effect on both recess and lunch time play opportunities as well as being supportive of our PE program.'* (Independent sector)

Similar to the P21 BER program, high levels of support (95.8%) exist for the National School Pride initiative. This strong support is consistent across states and territories. Catholic and Government principals were extremely positive about this program often referring in the written responses to the increased flexibility and control they enjoyed over its application. Independent schools were the least likely to agree at (78%) for reasons that were not clearly detailed in the analysis of their open ended responses.

**3.1.3 Closed Response Item 5:**

**Within the Commonwealth guidelines for the Building the Education Revolution program, is your school receiving projects that you and your school community want?**

**By Sector**

Principals from government schools (87.6%) were significantly less likely than those from Catholic (98.3%) and Independent (97.4%) to agree that their school communities received projects that they wanted. See Table J for a detailed breakdown of response by sector.

**TABLE J:**

**Within the Commonwealth guidelines for the Building the Education Revolution program, is your school receiving projects that you and your school community want?**

| Within the Commonwealth guidelines for the Building the Education Revolution program, is your school receiving projects that you and your school community want? |             | Yes           | No           | Total          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| <b>School sector</b>                                                                                                                                             | Government  | 1644<br>87.6% | 233<br>12.4% | 1877<br>100.0% |
|                                                                                                                                                                  | Catholic    | 415<br>98.3%  | 7<br>1.7%    | 422<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                                                                                                  | Independent | 114<br>97.4%  | 3<br>2.6%    | 117<br>100.0%  |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                                                                                     |             | 2173<br>89.9% | 243<br>10.1% | 2416<br>100.0% |

**By State and Territory**

More than 90% of principals agreed that their schools were receiving projects the community wanted, with the exception of the two largest states: NSW (86.9%) and Victoria (88.2%), and Western Australia (88.1%).

See Table K for a detailed breakdown of response by state/territory.

**TABLE K:**

**Within the Commonwealth guidelines for the Building the Education Revolution program, is your school receiving projects that you and your school community want?**

| Within the Commonwealth guidelines for the Building the Education Revolution program, is your school receiving projects that you and your school community want? |     | Yes           | No           | Total          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| In which state or territory is your school located?                                                                                                              | ACT | 54<br>96.4%   | 2<br>3.6%    | 56<br>100.0%   |
|                                                                                                                                                                  | NSW | 692<br>86.9%  | 104<br>13.1% | 796<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                                                                                                  | NT  | 31<br>96.9%   | 1<br>3.1%    | 32<br>100.0%   |
|                                                                                                                                                                  | Qld | 358<br>92.7%  | 28<br>7.3%   | 386<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                                                                                                  | SA  | 232<br>95.9%  | 10<br>4.1%   | 242<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                                                                                                  | Tas | 99<br>98.0%   | 2<br>2.0%    | 101<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                                                                                                  | Vic | 366<br>88.2%  | 49<br>11.8%  | 415<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                                                                                                                  | WA  | 318<br>88.1%  | 43<br>11.9%  | 361<br>100.0%  |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                                                                                     |     | 2150<br>90.0% | 239<br>10.0% | 2389<br>100.0% |

Indicative of the range of predominantly positive comments extracted from the open ended items relevant to this question are:

*'Multipurpose venue to use for our Sport and Performing Arts program - a fantastic asset for our school community.'* (Catholic sector)

*'In conjunction with school funding we have been able to build ten new classrooms, two outdoor learning spaces, infants reception and work rooms and toilet facilities.'* (Independent sector)

*'Our school will be having a new resource centre built. This will be a child friendly and ICT capable building. Our school community is very excited about having this new space. It will allow our library and computers to be housed in one place.'* (Government sector)

Representative of the issues giving dissatisfaction is this response from a government school principal:

*'We are receiving a BER multipurpose and art room facility. We already have a multipurpose room and art room. This template was the only one which would fit our difficult site so that's what we got. We accepted it because something was better than nothing.'* (Government sector)

In summary it would appear that Government schools particularly in NSW, Victoria and Western Australia were less happy than their counterparts in other states and certainly less satisfied than Catholic and Independent schools with the match of their project with community priorities. However, overall satisfaction remains high at 90%.

### 3.1.4 Closed Response Item 6:

***Have you been able to access the specific costings for your projects?***

#### **By Sector**

Principals from government schools (42.9%) were significantly less likely than those from Catholic (86.6%) and Independent (93.0%) schools to report that they were able to access costings for their projects. See Table L for a detailed breakdown of response by sector.

**TABLE L:**  
**Have you been able to access the specific costings for your projects?**

| Have you been able to access the specific costings for your projects? |             | Yes           | No            | Total          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| School sector                                                         | Government  | 803<br>42.9%  | 1070<br>57.1% | 1873<br>100.0% |
|                                                                       | Catholic    | 363<br>86.6%  | 56<br>13.4%   | 419<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                       | Independent | 106<br>93.0%  | 8<br>7.0%     | 114<br>100.0%  |
| <b>Total</b>                                                          |             | 1272<br>52.9% | 1134<br>47.1% | 2406<br>100.0% |

### By State and Territory

Principals reported being able to access costings at rates that varied between highs of 81.8% (Tasmania) and 65% (Queensland) to a low of 45% (NSW). Other states where fewer than 50% of principals reported accessing costings were Victoria (48.6%) and Western Australia (47.9%).

Principals' responses to 'Have you been able to access the specific costings for your projects?' showed the influence of sector and state. Independent (>92%) and Catholic school principals (>88%) were much more likely to report being able to access costings than were Government school principals. The exceptions were NSW Catholic principals, only 61.4% of whom responded 'yes' and Tasmanian Catholic principals (78.6%). However, among Government school principals, percentages of who reported having access to costings varied from a low of 12% (Victoria), though mid range figures of 36.4% (ACT), 39.5% (NSW) and 45.2% (SA) to highs of 63.4% (Qld) and 82.4% (Tasmania).

See Table M for a detailed breakdown of response by state/territory.

**TABLE M:**

**Have you been able to access the specific costings for your projects?**

| Have you been able to access the specific costings for your projects? |     | Yes           | No            | Total          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| In which state or territory is your school located?                   | ACT | 34<br>60.7%   | 22<br>39.3%   | 56<br>100.0%   |
|                                                                       | NSW | 359<br>45.3%  | 434<br>54.7%  | 793<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                       | NT  | 17<br>53.1%   | 15<br>46.9%   | 32<br>100.0%   |
|                                                                       | Qld | 250<br>65.1%  | 134<br>34.9%  | 384<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                       | SA  | 141<br>58.8%  | 99<br>41.3%   | 240<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                       | Tas | 81<br>81.8%   | 18<br>18.2%   | 99<br>100.0%   |
|                                                                       | Vic | 201<br>48.6%  | 213<br>51.4%  | 414<br>100.0%  |
|                                                                       | WA  | 173<br>47.9%  | 188<br>52.1%  | 361<br>100.0%  |
| <b>Total</b>                                                          |     | 1256<br>52.8% | 1123<br>47.2% | 2379<br>100.0% |



Comments drawn from the open ended items illustrate the typical experiences of school leaders in relation to access to costings:

*'I do not believe that I am getting enough information to know if value is being delivered. I have asked for the costings but not received them.'* (Government sector)

*'Our school is getting a template building proposed by the Department and as such we have not had access to the specific costings of this project. Our builder has 22 similar projects running concurrently.'* (Government sector)

*'Much easier for those of us in the independent sector. Our projects seem to be progressing nicely and at reasonable costs and on time.'* (Independent sector)

The responses reveal a vast disparity between the states and sectors with regard to access to costings for their projects. Whilst around 90% of Catholic and Independent school leaders reported having access to costings less than half that number of Government leaders nationally had such access. The states were reported as having provided the least access were the larger states of Victoria, NSW and WA. Considerable frustration was expressed by leaders in these states with regard to centralised decision making and variations to projects without consultation and access to costings. It was reported that the NSP program generally provided greater access than the administration of the P21 projects and this greater transparency and control was highly and consistently valued throughout the written responses as delivering better value for money and a better fit to need.

### 3.2 OPEN WRITTEN RESPONSE ITEMS:

#### 3.2.1 Open Written Response Item 7:

***Based on the above responses, please briefly comment on your school's specific Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (P21) project.***

### **Analysis of Open Ended Written Responses P21**

#### **By State and Territory**

Examination of the results for the analysis of the open written responses on P21 by state reveals considerable variation. Whereas 90.7% of ACT principals made positive comments about the project, only 53.9% of NSW and 61.6% of Victorian principals reported only positive experiences/outcomes. 85.5% of Northern Territory principals also made only positive comments about the program. For NSW principals, the main concern was that the project was not the best fit with the schools' needs (13%) or was too costly for what was achieved (10.2%). Victorian principals reported that the process was the 'problem', with lack of consultation, poor communication and other issues the main difficulties (11.3%). In addition 5.5% reported that the project was not the optimum one for their school.

A trend was noted in the comments for principals from rural and remote areas to be particularly appreciative of project outcomes for their school. See Table N for the full breakdown of coded responses by state and territory.

**TABLE N:**

**Based on the above responses, please briefly comment on your school's specific Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (P21) project.**

| Based on the above responses, please briefly comment on your school's specific Primary Schools for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century (P21) project. |                                    |                                   |                                |                                                                       |                                                                       |                                                      |                       |                    |                                     |                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                | Positive, useful/needed facilities | Facilities useful but more needed | Project not commenced/finished | Project not optimal/best fit for school's needs/not what was promised | Process inefficient/time consuming/poor communication or consultation | Too costly for what was achieved/not value for money | Multiple difficulties | Other              | Project delayed for various reasons | Total                  |
| ACT                                                                                                                                            | 49<br>90.7%                        | 0<br>.0%                          | 2<br>3.7%                      | 1<br>1.9%                                                             | 1<br>1.9%                                                             | 0<br>.0%                                             | 1<br>1.9%             | 0<br>.0%           | 0<br>.0%                            | 54<br>100.0%           |
| NSW                                                                                                                                            | 398<br>53.9%                       | 21<br>2.8%                        | 33<br>4.5%                     | 96<br>13.0%                                                           | 52<br>7.0%                                                            | 75<br>10.2%                                          | 17<br>2.3%            | 16<br>2.2%         | 30<br>4.1%                          | 738<br>100.0%          |
| NT                                                                                                                                             | 23<br>85.2%                        | 1<br>3.7%                         | 0<br>.0%                       | 0<br>.0%                                                              | 1<br>3.7%                                                             | 0<br>.0%                                             | 1<br>3.7%             | 0<br>.0%           | 1<br>3.7%                           | 27<br>100.0%           |
| Qld                                                                                                                                            | 252<br>70.2%                       | 10<br>2.8%                        | 19<br>5.3%                     | 16<br>4.5%                                                            | 18<br>5.0%                                                            | 21<br>5.8%                                           | 2<br>.6%              | 8<br>2.2%          | 13<br>3.6%                          | 359<br>100.0%          |
| SA                                                                                                                                             | 175<br>75.1%                       | 5<br>2.1%                         | 5<br>2.1%                      | 10<br>4.3%                                                            | 10<br>4.3%                                                            | 9<br>3.9%                                            | 3<br>1.3%             | 6<br>2.6%          | 10<br>4.3%                          | 233<br>100.0%          |
| Tas                                                                                                                                            | 82<br>93.2%                        | 0<br>.0%                          | 0<br>.0%                       | 0<br>.0%                                                              | 2<br>2.3%                                                             | 2<br>2.3%                                            | 0<br>.0%              | 1<br>1.1%          | 1<br>1.1%                           | 88<br>100.0%           |
| Vic                                                                                                                                            | 234<br>61.6%                       | 10<br>2.6%                        | 20<br>5.3%                     | 21<br>5.5%                                                            | 43<br>11.3%                                                           | 11<br>2.9%                                           | 13<br>3.4%            | 9<br>2.4%          | 19<br>5.0%                          | 380<br>100.0%          |
| WA                                                                                                                                             | 212<br>66.0%                       | 19<br>5.9%                        | 9<br>2.8%                      | 29<br>9.0%                                                            | 27<br>8.4%                                                            | 7<br>2.2%                                            | 1<br>.3%              | 7<br>2.2%          | 10<br>3.1%                          | 321<br>100.0%          |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                                                                   | <b>1425<br/>64.8%</b>              | <b>66<br/>3.0%</b>                | <b>88<br/>4.0%</b>             | <b>173<br/>7.9%</b>                                                   | <b>154<br/>7.0%</b>                                                   | <b>125<br/>5.7%</b>                                  | <b>38<br/>1.7%</b>    | <b>47<br/>2.1%</b> | <b>84<br/>3.8%</b>                  | <b>2200<br/>100.0%</b> |

**By Sector**

Examination of the results for the analysis of the open-ended responses on P21 by sector also reveals considerable variation. Government school principals (57.4%) were much less likely to report entirely positive outcomes, compared to principals from Catholic schools (89.9%) and Independent schools (93%).

Government school principals reported that the project was not optimal (9.5%) or that the process was difficult or unsatisfactory (8.4%) or did not represent value for money (7.2%) at considerably higher rates than did Catholic or Independent school principals.

See Table O for the full breakdown of response by sector.

**TABLE O:**

**Based on the above responses, please briefly comment on your school's specific Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (P21) project.**

| School sector | Based on the above responses, please briefly comment on your school's specific Primary Schools for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century (P21) project. |                                   |                                 |                                                                       |                                                                       |                                                       |                       |            |                                     |                |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
|               | Positive, useful/needed facilities                                                                                                             | Facilities useful but more needed | Project not commenced/ finished | Project not optimal/best fit for school's needs/not what was promised | Process inefficient/time consuming/poor communication or consultation | Too costly for what was achieved/ not value for money | Multiple difficulties | Other      | Project delayed for various reasons | Total          |
| Government    | 987<br>57.4%                                                                                                                                   | 62<br>3.6%                        | 84<br>4.9%                      | 164<br>9.5%                                                           | 144<br>8.4%                                                           | 124<br>7.2%                                           | 35<br>2.0%            | 42<br>2.4% | 77<br>4.5%                          | 1719<br>100.0% |
| Catholic      | 366<br>89.9%                                                                                                                                   | 3<br>.7%                          | 5<br>1.2%                       | 9<br>2.2%                                                             | 12<br>2.9%                                                            | 2<br>.5%                                              | 3<br>.7%              | 1<br>.2%   | 6<br>1.5%                           | 407<br>100.0%  |
| Independent   | 93<br>93.0%                                                                                                                                    | 1<br>1.0%                         | 0<br>.0%                        | 0<br>.0%                                                              | 1<br>1.0%                                                             | 0<br>.0%                                              | 0<br>.0%              | 4<br>4.0%  | 1<br>1.0%                           | 100<br>100.0%  |
| <b>Total</b>  | 1446<br>65.0%                                                                                                                                  | 66<br>3.0%                        | 89<br>4.0%                      | 173<br>7.8%                                                           | 157<br>7.1%                                                           | 126<br>5.7%                                           | 38<br>1.7%            | 47<br>2.1% | 84<br>3.8%                          | 2226<br>100.0% |

Responses from the majority of government school leaders who were positive about the program in their schools centred on the value they placed on projects that were, without BER, beyond their community's reach:

*'Money for infrastructure we would not have had access to otherwise - major refurbishment and reconfiguring of school's teaching / learning spaces.'* (Catholic sector)

Typical of the responses among dissatisfied government school leaders is this quote:

*'Allocation \$850,000 for new canteen and special programs room (SPR). Our current canteen is in a shipping container! Canteen part of BER was descoped, leaving only the SPR (half sized classroom) and small covered area. Our canteen is still in the shipping container.'*  
(Government sector)

By contrast this is a typical quote from the vast majority of positive responses from Independent and Catholic schools:

*'In conjunction with school funding we have been able to build ten new classrooms, two outdoor learning spaces, infants reception and work rooms and toilet facilities.'* (Independent sector)

The expression of dissatisfaction in Government schools reached 34.1% nationally with P21 projects. Victoria (61%) and NSW (54%) recorded the lowest levels of satisfaction. Victoria's school leaders in the Government sector were concerned with poor communication and delivery by their system and their centrally appointed contractors. NSW leaders identified the 'descoping' of projects and the lack of optimum fit with their needs as the most significant issues.

### 3.2.2 Open Written Response Item 8:

***Based on the above responses, please briefly comment on your school's specific National School Pride (NSP) program.***

## **Analysis of Open Ended Written Responses on the National Schools Pride Program**

### **By State and Territory**

School leaders' comments about the experiences and outcomes from NSP were generally more positive. Those from the Northern Territory (93.1%), the ACT (90.2%) and Tasmania (92.4%) were the most satisfied (or more likely to report only positive experiences or outcomes). Least satisfied were principals from Western Australia (73.3%) and NSW (77.6%). However, 8.6% of Western Australian principals and 7.7% of those from NSW gave a mixed response, that is, the project had good outcomes at their school but there were some aspects that had caused concerns or difficulties. Five percent of NSW principals and 7.6% of WA principals made comments that were entirely negative (although that does not imply no positive outcomes from the project). Value for money was a concern for 4.9% of NSW and 5% of WA principals.

See Table P for the full breakdown of responses by State and Territory.

**TABLE P:**

**Please briefly comment on your school's specific National School Pride (NSP) program.**

| In which state or territory is your school located? | Based on the above responses, please briefly comment on your school's specific National School Pride (NSP) program. |                                 |                     |                                       |                |                   |            |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|------------|----------------|
|                                                     | Satisfactory/positive                                                                                               | Project not commenced /finished | Not value for money | Did not get what was needed/requested | Mixed response | Negative comments | Other      | Total          |
| ACT                                                 | 46<br>90.2%                                                                                                         | 1<br>2.0%                       | 0<br>.0%            | 0<br>.0%                              | 2<br>3.9%      | 1<br>2.0%         | 1<br>2.0%  | 51<br>100.0%   |
| NSW                                                 | 557<br>77.6%                                                                                                        | 18<br>2.5%                      | 35<br>4.9%          | 10<br>1.4%                            | 55<br>7.7%     | 36<br>5.0%        | 7<br>1.0%  | 718<br>100.0%  |
| NT                                                  | 27<br>93.1%                                                                                                         | 0<br>.0%                        | 0<br>.0%            | 0<br>.0%                              | 0<br>.0%       | 1<br>3.4%         | 1<br>3.4%  | 29<br>100.0%   |
| Qld                                                 | 260<br>73.9%                                                                                                        | 13<br>3.7%                      | 12<br>3.4%          | 4<br>1.1%                             | 40<br>11.4%    | 21<br>6.0%        | 2<br>.6%   | 352<br>100.0%  |
| SA                                                  | 196<br>86.3%                                                                                                        | 1<br>.4%                        | 2<br>.9%            | 1<br>.4%                              | 18<br>7.9%     | 7<br>3.1%         | 2<br>.9%   | 227<br>100.0%  |
| Tas                                                 | 85<br>92.4%                                                                                                         | 1<br>1.1%                       | 0<br>.0%            | 1<br>1.1%                             | 3<br>3.3%      | 0<br>.0%          | 2<br>2.2%  | 92<br>100.0%   |
| Vic                                                 | 325<br>87.1%                                                                                                        | 9<br>2.4%                       | 1<br>.3%            | 4<br>1.1%                             | 19<br>5.1%     | 13<br>3.5%        | 2<br>.5%   | 373<br>100.0%  |
| WA                                                  | 222<br>73.3%                                                                                                        | 1<br>.3%                        | 15<br>5.0%          | 9<br>3.0%                             | 26<br>8.6%     | 23<br>7.6%        | 7<br>2.3%  | 303<br>100.0%  |
| <b>Total</b>                                        | 1718<br>80.1%                                                                                                       | 44<br>2.1%                      | 65<br>3.0%          | 29<br>1.4%                            | 163<br>7.6%    | 102<br>4.8%       | 24<br>1.1% | 2145<br>100.0% |

### By Sector

Analysis by school sector revealed that Catholic (95.8%) and Independent (97.5%) school principals were more likely to report only positive outcomes than their Government schools counterparts (75.7%). However, 9.4% of Government school principals gave a mixed response compared to 1.3% of both Catholic and Independent school principals.

Government school principals reported that value for money (3.8%) was a concern or made only negative remarks about the project (5.6%).

See Table Q for the full breakdown of responses by sector.

**TABLE Q:**

**Based on the above responses, please briefly comment on your school's specific National School Pride (NSP) program**

| School Sector | Based on the above responses, please briefly comment on your school's specific National School Pride (NSP) program. |                                |                     |                                       |                |                  |            | Total          |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|------------|----------------|
|               | Satisfactory/positive                                                                                               | Project not commenced/finished | Not value for money | Did not get what was needed/requested | Mixed response | Negative comment | Other      |                |
| Government    | 1280<br>75.7%                                                                                                       | 43<br>2.5%                     | 65<br>3.8%          | 26<br>1.5%                            | 159<br>9.4%    | 95<br>5.6%       | 22<br>1.3% | 1690<br>100.0% |
| Catholic      | 383<br>95.8%                                                                                                        | 1<br>.3%                       | 0<br>.0%            | 3<br>.8%                              | 5<br>1.3%      | 7<br>1.8%        | 1<br>.3%   | 400<br>100.0%  |
| Independent   | 77<br>97.5%                                                                                                         | 0<br>.0%                       | 0<br>.0%            | 0<br>.0%                              | 1<br>1.3%      | 0<br>.0%         | 1<br>1.3%  | 79<br>100.0%   |
| <b>Total</b>  | 1740<br>80.2%                                                                                                       | 44<br>2.0%                     | 65<br>3.0%          | 29<br>1.3%                            | 165<br>7.6%    | 102<br>4.7%      | 24<br>1.1% | 2169<br>100.0% |

Once again a range of satisfaction was recorded for NSP with the lowest satisfaction recorded in WA (73.3%) and the highest in the NT (93.1%). Lower levels of satisfaction were significant for the government sector. These lower levels of complaint about 'not getting what was wanted' are notable here compared with the P21 responses. NSP was most often acknowledged for its flexibility and less centralised processes providing leaders with choice and opportunity to drive value for money. It was within the mixed responses that most leaders expressed their dissatisfaction. Issues such as 'control over the funds', 'clearing of maintenance backlogs' and 'flexibility' were consistent themes throughout the open ended responses to NSP.

The following comments from the main source of complainants (i.e. in the government sector) are indicative:

*'Half of the money went on painting which should have been done by the department. We were ripped off for at least 50% of the funding.'* (Government sector)

*'As I was able to "manage" this component ALL priorities were achieved. We were very happy with this component of the project.'* (Government sector)

*'Very limited flexibility initially, then the range of "maintenance items" increased to be very useful.'* (Government sector)

#### **4. Conclusion**

The survey confirms the value that primary school leaders place on the BER program in contributing to the capacity of their schools. Both programs were acknowledged for their outcomes in delivering long awaited enhancements to primary school infrastructure. The responses confirm that many primary schools have not to this point been able to raise sufficient capital from community or governmental sources to substantially extend their facilities for learning. Rural and small schools report significant approval of the funding stream enabling projects formerly beyond their reach.

Both the NSP and P21 programs are providing facilities that are needed in communities. A consistent benchmark of successful implementation recorded across all sectors and states related to the capacity for schools to design and have continuing control over their projects. However it appears that in NSW the perception of 'best fit' is not as high as in other states. It is significant to note the higher levels of satisfaction with completed or nearly completed projects by Catholic and Independent schools who enjoyed this greater level of access to costings, design choices and ongoing local control over the project generally.

Considerable levels of frustration was also evident in the Government sector more so than in the other sectors with respect to project management. Communication, costings, lack of consultation represented the most significant source of frustration especially in the Victorian government sector. Whilst the speed with which this program was required to stimulate the economy was a national imperative, Independent and Catholic leaders appear to have managed to have their projects satisfactorily delivered within timeframes without the need for templates or central project management.

An observation for the description of projects is the extent of the funding that went to catch up maintenance. Refurbishing toilet blocks, general maintenance and replacing old demountables featured regularly in the projects which while welcomed by some communities as clear urgent priorities angered others who saw that the poor state of their building stock deprived them of the value added facilities other schools were able to achieve.

The survey endorses the BER program in both its forms. It is clear that school leaders across the country see the benefits in terms of learning for students. A strong match with community need is also clear. Evident within its differential implementation processes across sector, states and territories are some significant messages. It registers a protest from the Government sector on excessively centralised and opaque processes and an accolade from the Independent sector and Catholic sectors for programs that invest control and decision making with local communities. It highlights the backlog of facility maintenance that exists in Australia's primary schools as significant allocations of funds were required to 'make right' before value adding could occur. It highlights the fact that primary schools generally regardless of sector, size, or geography have unique needs and priorities and their leaders and communities now expect a strong voice in both the design and delivery of capital investment projects.

The final word goes to a principal who sums up the positive responses received from Australia's primary schools:

*'Our project is resource centre and multi-purpose hall. The funding is an enormous asset as we have outgrown our space. The additional time and impost this has caused will eventually be forgotten when the buildings open.'*