

Submission from the
National Out of School Hours Services
Association for
Primary Schools for the Twenty First Century.

Information About the Submission

This submission is provided by the National Out of School Hours Services
Association

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Our Interest.

The National Out of School Hours Services Association (NOSHSA) represents the combined Australian voice of the peaks Out of School Hours Care services (OSHC) in each State and Territory.

There are over 3100 Out of School Hours Care services in Australia providing care for by over one quarter million children and their families, 98% of whom are in the Australian workforce.

The diversity of service delivery and differences in service provision across OSHC services is challenging for the National Association and this response represents the views and feedback on the impact of the Federal Government's Building Education Revolution initiative. Each state and territory association will provide its own response where needed, addressing specific issues for their membership.

Schools in the 21st century
Australian Government's Building Education Revolution Initiative (BER)

NOSHSa welcomes the investment by the Australian Government into the development of improved facilities for primary schools across Australia.

In this submission NOSHSa intends to comment on;

- **The conditions and criteria for project funding**
- **The role of State Governments**
- **Timing and budget issues**
- **The management of the initiative**

The vision of developing facilities and increasing the provision of multi functional community spaces was enlightened and visionary.

In bringing this vision to life early reflection was needed to determine what a school in the 21st century should look like.

- What are the needs of children, families and educators today and into the future?
- How will other societal factors impact on schools in the future?
- How can our school sites become more effective "community hubs"?

It is concerning that this economic stimulus initiative has not made provision for guaranteeing the continuing care and education needs of all families.

The conditions and criteria for funding

The conditions and criteria for funding omitted to embrace a complete vision of how all Australian schools will look in the 21st century with the increase in the number of working families using OSHC services.

The funding conditions should have outlined an inclusive requirement to consult with existing OSHC services and their families regarding the impact of the building works.

The role of State Governments

The role of State Governments has been highlighted as the determining factor in the success or challenges faced by OSHC services in the implementation of the BER initiative.

In NSW, WA and SA a number of OSHC services have been impacted upon with the following issues:

- permanent loss of venues or;
- reduction in venue sizes

- relocation costs
- disruption to the provision of quality care
- staff morale

The facilitation of the process at a local level has ranged from exemplary to alarming. There are reported cases across NSW and WA where services have been effectively eliminated from any consultation or discussion regarding the housing of the OSHC service. In WA, one parent managed service providing care to 25% of the school population has been given a notice of eviction from the service.

Timing and budget issues

There was no published criteria specified in Government funding for OSHC services forced to relocate temporarily or permanently. Relocation costs for OSHC services should have been included in the BER initiative. Relocation costs will in some instances be unaffordable and force these services to pass costs onto families through increased fees.

OSHC services are traditionally housed in school buildings and are a major user of school facilities. There are instances where OSHC services use parent contributions or absorb costs to upgrade facilities. Where buildings are removed or demolished, these assets are written off resulting as a loss and reported in financial statements.

The management of the initiative

The management of the initiative requires a coordinated approach across Australian Government departments to ensure that the states and territories implement BER without impacting on other Australian Government policies and programs such as the National Quality Accreditation system.

Conclusion

The provision of venues for the use of OSHC is a major challenge, extensively documented, and one that has now been further impacted upon through an Australian Government initiative.

NOSHSA recommends the Australian Government make provision for the following;

- One off funding to cover costs of OSHC service relocation due to the current initiative.
- The development of a long term Australian Government education and care strategy that embraces families and communities. The OSHC sector would be an integral part of this strategy. Ensuring OSHC services have access to appropriate facilities with security of tenure is critical.