

**JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT NO 33 (2009-10)**

**Outcome:**

**DEEWR Question No. 1**

Ms Grierson (Chair) asked on 21 June 2010, DEWR Proof Hansard page 16

**Question**

Did you identify the risk that that rule would propose—that is, that principals would demand their entire allocation and therefore, having costed the program on a lesser amount being allocated, the program would require more funding? Had you advised your minister accordingly?

**Answer**

DEEWR was aware of the possibility that additional funds may be required. These matters are canvassed in chapter 5 of the ANAO report. As the commentary at paragraph 5.43 indicates, the department did advise the Minister of the issue.

# JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT

## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

### AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT NO 33 (2009-10)

#### Outcome:

#### DEEWR Question No. 2

Mr Neumann asked on 21 June 2010, EEWPR Proof Hansard page 22

#### Question

What are the department's observations, experiences and conclusions in relation to cases where school communities have wanted to change the project in some respect—the library or the multipurpose hall to be bigger, for instance?

Is the department monitoring those examples? There would be plenty of cases where a library would be being built, but what about examples of flexibility? For instance, for that hydrotherapy complex at the Ipswich Special School, Education Queensland allocated further funds to assist in that project to make sure the school community got what it wanted. Have you kept tabs on that, because that would be pretty good example of how the government is keeping the local school communities satisfied under this program?

#### Answer

The Department is monitoring the progress of BER projects on a monthly basis. Education Authorities are able to seek a variation to an approved project through the variations process. These project variations are considered on a case by case basis in line with the BER Guidelines and are included in the monthly reporting.

Variations have included increases in the scope of projects to ensure the new facilities meet the needs of schools and their communities. In some instances, these variations have included a contribution from unallocated BER funds from another school or a co-contribution by the school themselves. There are 1,101 P21 projects involving co-contributions.

Outlined below are some examples of these projects under the BER.

#### NT Government

**Elliott School** is receiving \$850,000 for the construction of a covered outdoor facility for learning and other school activity. The application identified that enrolments have steadily grown and there is a significant demand for a covered outdoor learning space. The project is strongly supported by the School Council and a co-contribution amount of \$300,000 was identified bringing the total funding to \$1.15m for the project.

#### Victorian Government

**Dingley Primary School** is receiving \$2.5m for construction of a multipurpose building including a combination of library, gymnasium, halls, classrooms or

administration offices. Co-funding with the State government of \$2.5m was identified bringing the total project funding to \$5m.

#### **NSW Government**

**Epping West Public School** is receiving \$3.02 million for the construction of a new library under the P21 element of the BER with a co-contribution amount of \$314,924. NSW DET advises the school wishes to add a classroom to the approved library project, to meet increased enrolments. The revised project amount is now \$3,334,924 and the additional funds are being provided by the school.

#### **ACT Government**

**Amaroo School** is receiving \$3 million for an extension to the library under the P21 element of the BER with a co-contribution amount of \$400,000 to improve project outcomes. The total value of the project at the school will be \$3.4 million. The multi purpose building includes six additional classrooms and a large central shared area.

**Harrison School** is receiving \$3 million for the construction of a new multi purpose building under the P21 element of the BER with a co-contribution amount of \$400,000 to improve project outcomes. The total value of the project at the school will be \$3.4 million. The multi purpose building will include six classrooms and an adjoining outdoor shade structure. Bifold doors will fold completely out of the way to give access from the Performing Arts Building to a paved area outside, allowing for a performance or presentation to use the doorway as a stage while the audience uses the paved area as outdoor seating.

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### AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT NO 33 (2009-10)

#### Outcome:

#### DEEWR Question No. 3

Senator Kroger asked on 21 June 2010, EEWR Proof Hansard page 30

#### Question

One of the things that has been consistent in a lot of these areas has been their criticism of the fact that the builder who is doing the job in the local school is not a local and has been brought in. So it is not actually injecting funds into the local community through the local builders; the education authority has been bringing in builders to do the job. Is that something you are aware of, and are you collecting information on it?

#### Answer

The education authorities provide jobs data to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations at an individual project level but this does not indicate whether or not the jobs were occupied by local people.

As part of its audit of P21, the ANAO undertook a survey of primary school principals to gauge their views on the administration of the program. In answer to the statement, 'My school's BER P21 project is supporting local employment', the majority responded that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

The *Building the Education Revolution Implementation Taskforce: Interim Report* (6 August 2010; page 39) gave an example of local job creation in Queensland, where a different procurement strategy for each Primary School for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (P21) funding round was implemented to engage a variety of construction industry participants and ensure stimulus and work was delivered broadly across differing parts of the industry. In addition, in the second round of funding for P21, construction managers were given specific directions to engage smaller builders to ensure that they did not miss out on the benefits of the BER program.

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### **AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT NO 33 (2009-10)**

#### **Outcome:**

#### **DEEWR Question No. 4**

Ms Grierson (Chair) asked on 21 June 2010, EEWR Proof Hansard page 32

#### **Question**

The Coordinator-General's progress report in February 2010 noted that completion rates were 'tracking slightly behind interim milestones' and were expected to catch up during 2010. So an update around completion rates and tracking against milestones would be appreciated.

#### **Answer**

As at 31 July 2010, 85 per cent of Primary School for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century projects have met or are expected to meet their target completion date or approved varied completion date.