

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates

21 – 22 October 2009

Question: sbt 1

Topic: Infrastructure Funding for Schools

Hansard Page: Written

Senator XENOPHON asked:

1. As part of the government's economic stimulus package, schools have been given funds to build infrastructure such as halls.
 - a) What requirements are in place for a tender process to get competitive quotes from a variety of contractors?
 - b) What opportunity is there for schools to choose how they wish to spend these funds – ie. if they don't need a new hall, are they able to build new classrooms or books and other resources?

Answer:

- 1 a) Under the Building the Education Revolution (BER) Guidelines, states, territories and Block Grant Authorities (BGAs) must ensure that tendering and procurement arrangements for BER funded projects require the projects to demonstrate:
 - value for money;
 - compliance with any relevant planning requirements; and
 - the project is able to be delivered within the required timeframes
- 1 b) Under the *Primary Schools for the 21st Century* (P21) element of the BER, the Australian Government is investing \$14.1 billion for all Australian primary schools, K-12 schools (primary school component) and special schools to build new iconic facilities such as libraries, multipurpose halls or classrooms, or to upgrade existing facilities.

According to the BER Guidelines, P21 funding can be used for capital expenditure on the following items (in order of priority):

1. construction of new libraries;
2. construction of new multipurpose halls (e.g. gymnasium, indoor sporting centre, assembly area or performing arts centre) or, in the case of smaller schools, covered outdoor learning areas;
3. construction of classrooms, replacement of demountables or other building to be approved by the Commonwealth; or
4. refurbishment of existing facilities.

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Where a school and its community determined that a school had no need for construction of any of the projects listed above, and had identified a need for an early learning centre, it may have applied for funding of such a centre.

Funding may be used for the fit-out of new buildings or refurbishments to the extent that it is necessary to make them operational for the purpose for which they are designed.