

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012**

Outcome 2 - Schools and Youth

DEEWR Question No. EW0833_12

Senator Mason asked on 20 October 2011 , Hansard page 69

Question

Victorian schools have lost playgrounds and basketball courts as a result of the BER.

Senator MASON: Can I ask a question that relates to an article in the Sunday Age—and I rarely read the Sunday Age, Ms Paul. I tend to read the Weekend Australian, although I occasionally read the Age when it attracts me. There was an article on 18 September which reported that dozens of Victorian schools have lost playgrounds and basketball courts as a result of the BER. It is alleged that these schools allowed their playground and basketball courts to be used to construct the new buildings under the BER with an understanding that the old buildings that were being replaced would be torn down, and playgrounds and basketball courts built in their place. These schools have been told that there is no money left in the BER program for demolition. Senator Chris Evans: This is a good reason for not reading the Age, Senator. We need an explanation. Senator MASON: I usually do not. Much as I know it is a very sophisticated paper, it is far too sophisticated for us Queenslanders. Are you aware of that issue, gentlemen? Mr Kovacic: Yes, we are aware of the issue. Senator MASON: Have you received any direct representations regarding the problems? Mr Kovacic: We are not aware of any representations having been received. Senator MASON: Do you have any idea how many schools are affected? Mr Kovacic: No, we will have to take that on notice. Senator MASON: Could you take that on notice? Mr Kovacic: Yes.

Answer

The BER has funded the demolition of buildings where demolition was necessary to build the BER facility. The BER guidelines clearly state that “any costs associated with the demolition of existing buildings may be included as part of the project costs.”

The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (the Victorian Department) has advised that it has elected not to unnecessarily demolish buildings on the basis that it maximizes the BER funding available for projects.

The Victorian Government has a multi-year program for funding the demolition of buildings which are old and surplus to requirements and the Victorian Department has advised that school building demolitions will be undertaken as part of this program.

The Victoria Department has advised the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations that as at 28 October 2011, 198 Victorian Government schools had received funding from the \$5 million State Government fund announced in March 2011 to assist with the reinstatement of playgrounds and sports courts impacted as part of a school's BER project.