

## Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Supplementary Budget Estimates 2013-2014

#### Outcome 2 - Schools and Youth

Department of Education Question No. ED0204\_14

Senator McKenzie asked on 20 November 2013, Hansard page 84

#### Question

#### **Building the Education Revolution (BER) funding spent on the demolition or removal of existing buildings**

CHAIR: My question follows up on a letter from the former member for Wannon the Hon. David Hawker. The example was that the local cricket club approached the Dunkeld Consolidated School council offering to remove an old building with the intention of using it as their cricket club rooms. The school council corresponded with the state's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and were informed that the building 'had to be demolished'. They had to demolish existing school buildings in order to be eligible for the BER funding, even when the building was still functional and it was feasible for other community groups to use it or tow it away free of charge. I am just wondering if the department is aware of cases like this occurring under the BER program? Mr Hehir: I have not been made aware of that sort of example before but I can certainly take that on notice. CHAIR: In order to be eligible they were taking away community buildings which, in small rural and regional areas, can often be used by other community groups. That was a bit of a pain. There are other examples you might like to take on notice: the Abbotsford Public School in New South Wales, Baulkham Hills North Public School also New South Wales and Amphitheatre Primary School in Victoria. Ms Paul: Are these similar instances? CHAIR: They are cases of buildings having to be demolished in order to be eligible for BER programming and where local community groups wanted to salvage those buildings but were unable to do so. Mr T Cook: I think I recall some of the reviews and evaluations, particularly in those two states. One of the concerns that was raised was the strong central control that those two states had in relation to BER, which did not give schools flexibility. This might reflect some of the comments that you have just made. We will certainly look into it. CHAIR: I would appreciate that. Could you also provide how much of that BER money was spent on the demolition or removal of existing buildings. Have you collected that sort of data? Ms Paul: We might have. The program is closed now but we have held historical data on a project-by-project basis, so we may well have it. We will have a look.

#### Answer

Under the Building the Education Revolution (BER) Guidelines, the demolition of existing buildings was not one of the eligibility criteria to receive BER funding. The BER Guidelines did allow for the demolition or removal of existing buildings to be included as part of the project if the owner of the facilities wished to do this. Demolition was not a requirement of the Commonwealth. Education authorities were not required to report this information to the Commonwealth. The department does not hold information on the demolition or removal of existing buildings.