

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

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

Outcome 2 - Schools

DEEWR Question No.EW0169_12

Senator Mason provided in writing.

Question

Howard State Schools - BER

In respect of the Building the Education Revolution program, and the project located at the Howard State School (in Queensland), can the Department please advise whether it is aware of the following, and any relevant details relating thereto: (a) reports that the two buildings which were originally contracted approximately 15 months ago under this program, still can't be used for their intended purpose due to fundamental design faults which have not been fixed? (b) reports that the drainage for the new building is totally inadequate and that the surrounding grounds have become a swamp, which is not only unsightly but a potential health and safety risk to students, teachers and the school community? (c) reports that the lights in the Library have never worked properly and as a result are permanently switched off? (d) reports that the cabling in the Library have been installed incorrectly, resulting in no computers or telephone access in the building being possible for over 12 months (meaning for example that in order for staff members to check books in or out of the Library they must physically remove them to another separate school building)? (e) Reports that the new Hall floor is easily damaged, even by light activity, despite this being against the design guarantee? (f) reports of lack of any action to remedy these defects or any satisfactory response to the School Principal and/or the Howard State School P&C Association by the two companies responsible for the contract to construct these two buildings (namely Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) and The Reed Group)?

Answer

The Queensland Department of Education and Training (QLD DET) has advised the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations that:

- a) The library and multi-purpose hall constructed under the Primary Schools for the 21st Century element of the Building the Education Revolution (BER) at HowardStateSchoolwere completed on 19 January 2010 and the school has been occupying both buildings since.

All Queenslandstate school BER projects which have reached practical completion are deemed technically compliant and certified for occupancy by a Building Certifier.The building certifier signed the certificate of compliance for the buildings on 21 December 2009 and the projects reached practical completion on 18 January 2010.

- b) Re-excavation and reinstallation of the drains and pits was carried out at the end of April 2011. The work complies with approved designed stormwater and drainage plans, despite this however, existing poor soil conditions may cause potential ground flooding with concentrated rainfall.

QLD DET has visited the school, reviewed the drainage area and received a briefing by the School Principal. The contractor (through the project manager) has provided QLD DET with options to rectify the potential flooding issue. These options are to be considered in consultation with the school. QLD DET have provided a commitment to the school the drainage issue will be rectified at no cost to the school's overall BER project budget.

- c) The initial lighting defects were rectified on 15 May 2011 and the lights were in full working order. A further defect with the lighting was identified by the school on 28 June 2011. The contractor has subsequently agreed to replace the light fittings. Supply and installation of the light fittings is expected to occur by the end of August 2011. The school has been advised of this development. The Library is currently being used and the repair work to be completed is not considered major.
- d) The rectification works for the cabling in the library is completed. Certified installers completed the installation of new fibre-optic cabling to the school's new BER facilities in accordance with QLD DET's standards. Connection to the network occurred on 6 May 2011.

The installation of ICT was delayed due to a shortfall in accredited installers and materials to meet the demand. The delay was also exacerbated by extreme weather.

- e) The Project Manager has confirmed with QLD DET that the flooring in the multi-purpose hall was rectified on 28 May 2011.
- f) The school has been provided with updates and a program for the rectification of defects by the Project Manager.