



Date: 22/10/09

By: Senator Mason

THE HON JULIA GILLARD MP
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Mr Jamie Briggs MP
Member for Mayo
PO Box 1601
MOUNT BARKER SA 5251

18 OCT 2009

Dear Mr Briggs

Thank you for your recent letter on behalf of your constituent, Mrs Kerry Forbes, Chairperson of the Governing Council of Eastern Fleurieu School concerning the schools eligibility for funding under the Building the Education Revolution (BER) program.

As part of the Australian Government's \$42 billion Nation Building — Economic Stimulus Plan, \$16.2 billion is being invested over 3 years for the BER program to fund infrastructure projects at primary and secondary schools.

This investment provides all eligible schools across Australia with world-class educational infrastructure that will meet the needs of our students to move into and compete in the 21st century.

The BER program is a Government initiative, underpinned by a strong partnership approach with state and territory governments and non-government education authorities. The education authorities are responsible for managing the implementation of projects, while the Commonwealth has oversight of projects through a reporting system ensuring projects are implemented in accordance with the BER Guidelines.

To date the BER program has funded over 24 000 infrastructure projects, benefitting over 9000 schools Australia wide.

Under the BER each state and territory education authority is responsible for dealing directly with their schools for BER funding purposes. They must ensure appropriate consultation processes are undertaken with schools applying for BER funding.

For the purposes of the BER program, schools with multiple campuses are treated as a single school. In the case of government schools, it is the relevant state or territory education department that provided advice to my Department as to which schools are separate school entities and which schools are multi-campus ones. This treatment is consistent with other federal government funding programs such as the National Secondary School Computer Fund, Investing in our Schools Program and the Local Schools Working Together program.

When the BER program was first announced in February 2009, my Department asked each state and territory education department and Block Grant Authority (for the non-government school sector) to provide a full list of their schools, including the full-time equivalent (FTE) data for each school. This data is referred to in the BER Guidelines as the census data and was used to calculate the notional funding allocations for each school under the BER program.

The South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services advised in its census data that Eastern Fleurieu School is to be considered as one school, and the BER applications for both *Primary Schools for the 21st Century* (P21) and *National School Pride* (NSP) were submitted accordingly. It should also be noted that the notional allocation of BER funding for Eastern Fleurieu School was based on the total of the FTE enrolments for all its campuses.

On 21 May 2009 I announced \$200 000 under NSP for school building refurbishment. Further, on 9 June 2009 I announced \$3 million for Eastern Fleurieu School to build new classrooms and new covered outdoor learning areas under the P21 element of the BER.

To receive funding under BER, there is a requirement to recognise and acknowledge the Commonwealth's contribution. As a minimum, schools must adhere to the procedures and requirements set out in these Guidelines.

Further information on the BER including recognition requirements can be accessed on the BER webpage at www.buildingtheeducationrevolution.gov.au.

I note however, your opposition to the BER and the views expressed by the Liberal Party that expenditure of this nature is poor quality expenditure. I trust you have advised the schools in your electorate of the fact you voted against and are opposed to the schools receiving this kind of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Julia Gillard
Minister for Education

The Hon Jane Lomax-Smith MP
Member for Adelaide



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Minister for Mental Health
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MEI 09/0320

Ms Kerry Forbes
Chairperson
Eastern Fleurieu School
11 Callington Road
STRATHALBYN SA 5255

Dear Ms Forbes

Thank you for your letter regarding facilities at the Strathalbyn 7-12 Campus.

Ensuring that our students have access to good school facilities is very important and I thank you for your feedback. When we came to office in 2002, the Rann Government inherited a large backlog of school maintenance. Since then, we have been working to address this with \$908 million being devoted to capital projects.

The Commonwealth's *Building the Education Revolution* (BER) Program is a welcome boost to improving school facilities and should allow the Rann Government to speed up its program to improve school facilities. The \$ 3.2 million allocated to the school will make a substantial difference to improving facilities.

Whilst the proposed capital works project for the Campus has been unsuccessful, it will be considered as part of next year's *Capital Works* program. I acknowledge your disappointment at not being included so far, but all applications are assessed against published selection criteria and then ordered in priority by staff from the department. I personally do not intervene in this process, as I believe it must be conducted in the most fair and transparent way possible.

The Commonwealth funds used for gyms were for primary schools not secondary however the school leadership team may also wish to consider making an application for *Capital Works Assistance Scheme* (CWAS) funding to build a new hall. If you would like further information on this, please contact Mr Trevor Roach, Acting Manager Site Asset Services, on 8226 8867.

Despite representation made by the department, the multi-campus Eastern Fleurieu School is classified by the Commonwealth as one school. It therefore only qualified for one set of grants under the Commonwealth's *Building the Education Revolution* Program. Kangaroo Island schools each qualified for separate Government funding due to a precedent established by the former Commonwealth Government. Whilst the "no worse off guarantee" is still given to the Eastern Fleurieu School by the Rann Government, this is not recognised by the Commonwealth.

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I would be delighted to visit the Strathalbyn 7-12 campus and will arrange a visit next time I am in the Strathalbyn area. Thank you for raising your concerns with me.

Yours sincerely



Jane Lomax-Smith

**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
MINISTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE
MINISTER FOR TOURISM
MINISTER FOR THE CITY OF ADELAIDE**

28 / 08 / 2009

Cc: Mr Trevor Roach, Acting Manager Site Asset Services
Ms Louise Mann, PA to Minister of Education