



## Media Release

15 December 2010

### **Building the Education Revolution Implementation Taskforce first report released**

The Australian Government released the Taskforce's first full report into the Building the Education Revolution (BER) program today.

The BER program was conceived amidst the global financial crisis. The major component of the BER Program was the \$14 billion Primary Schools for 21<sup>st</sup> Century element to build and upgrade infrastructure in all primary schools. There are over 10,500 projects in P21 in nearly 8,000 schools across the country. Ninety nine per cent of P21 projects have commenced, 50 per cent are under construction and 43 per cent of projects nationally are completed.

Following the release of its Interim Report on 6 August this year, the Taskforce has continued to receive, investigate and respond to complaints about the administration of the BER Program as well as ascertaining whether schools and education authorities are achieving value for money from their BER projects. Forty complaints have been received since the interim Report. The Taskforce has now received complaints in respect of 294 schools to date; approximately 3 per cent of all schools involved in the BER program. Of the 136 open complaints, 107 are categorised as value for money and are being investigated.

The Taskforce has conducted more than 320 visits to schools, increased the data in its cost analysis database (BER-CAM) to over 3,150 school projects and undertaken 57 detailed value for money reviews of BER projects.

BER-CAM provides statistically valid, comparative data on the detailed costs of P21 projects from all over the country. It now contains project data for all 22 education authorities across all project types and for more than 30 per cent of the projects implemented under P21.

The NSW Government has the highest cost per square meter of all 22 education authorities and on average builds the smallest facilities. In three of the six states (NSW, Victoria and Queensland), Catholic systems have materially lower costs than government schools. In the other three states, however, the reverse is true.

The Taskforce has now assessed the implementation and delivery models used by all 22 education authorities. In recent months the Taskforce has investigated and evaluated outcomes in WA, SA and Tasmania and has witnessed innovative and flexible approaches to pursuing value for money. The Taskforce has found that where school communities have been involved in decision-making and where education authorities have taken advantage of flexibility in the BER Guidelines, higher quality education infrastructure outcomes and better value for money has been achieved.

The Taskforce has also observed the Queensland Government's strategic engagement of the construction industry as a whole and has a high level of confidence that value for money is being achieved by the Catholic and independent schools.

Chairman of the Taskforce, Brad Orgill, concludes that 'the vast majority of BER projects across the country in the government and non-government systems are being appropriately and successfully delivered. This has resulted in quality and, from our observations, generally much-needed new school infrastructure, while achieving the primary goal of stimulating economic activity.'

Of the 57 detailed value for money reviews outlined in this report, 17 schools failed the value for money assessment. Of these, 13 are NSW Government schools. These schools are exclusively the subject of value for money complaints or have been registered with the Taskforce through investigative reporting by the media.

The Taskforce calls for those education authorities where value for money issues have been identified to work with their school communities to ensure remaining problems are addressed. The Taskforce will continue to work with education authorities across the country to ensure that these schools do receive value for money.

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