Department of Education and Early Childhood Development – Victoria

For all school principals, assistant principals, regional directors, assistant regional directors, business managers, infrastructure division, and Deputy Secretaries

S313-2009 Economic Stimulus Plan – Building the Education Revolution

- Given the size and significance of the Building Education Revolution (BER) program there is naturally a high level of interest from the general community. I am distributing this circular to keep you all informed of BER progress so that you can in turn inform your staff, parents and other stakeholders.

- Combined with the Victorian Schools Plan, the BER program will deliver an unprecedented funding boost to Victorian school infrastructure, while delivering on the Commonwealth Government’s commitment to boost jobs and stimulate the economy.

- I know that principals and school communities have been excited by this opportunity and have made tremendous efforts over the past few months in preparation for the rollout of the program.

- I thank everyone for their efforts and congratulate you on the achievements so far.

- I know work is happening already in every school through the National School Pride program and am hearing great reports from school communities about their activities.

- In relation to the Primary Schools for the 21st Century program, the tender process for Round 1 contractors is nearing completion. Activity will begin on school sites next week and we’re all looking forward to seeing the results of our co-operative efforts to prepare for this.

- In order to ensure the building program will have the maximum economic impact the Commonwealth has imposed strict timelines. This has placed significant pressure on the time available for consultation, and has required us to streamline our traditional design and procurement processes.

- There is no doubt the timelines have created challenges and I want to acknowledge the positive attitude and responsiveness of the overwhelming majority of our schools and principals.

- I am aware that a few schools have raised concerns about the BER process. The Department and projects managers are working closely with those schools concerned to resolve any outstanding issues.
I want to assure you that, despite some media reports, all funding allocated by the Commonwealth for delivery of Primary Schools for the 21st Century projects will be used for this purpose.

The costs incurred by the Department in administering the BER program are separately funded by the Commonwealth Government. Expenditure on the Building Education Revolution is subject to a rigorous and accountable process and will be subject to standard auditing requirements.

The cost of template designs for each enrolment band matches the indicative caps schools can expect to receive from the Commonwealth according to their enrolments.

The cost of each template includes project-related costs that can be reasonably anticipated during the delivery of the BER program over the next two years. This includes design and construction costs as well as other costs such as project management fees, builders’ fencing and amenities, temporary access roads, security and signage, connections to water, gas, electricity and sewerage, and landscaping. Consistent with standard practice, the template costings include a small contingency amount to cover unforeseen costs.

This approach recognises that costs will vary across individual schools. For example, a school may encounter rock or soil issues, or need to extend its water, gas or electricity services. It would not be fair for this individual school to have to forego part of their facility in order to meet this extra cost, so it has been allocated across all projects.

The approach to apportioning costs across all schools will also ensure that our rural and remote schools are not disadvantaged by the higher construction costs in these areas.

I am forwarding this communication to the media to help correct some misunderstandings that have been incorporated into newspaper reports in recent weeks.

**Actions Required**

- Note the information provided in this circular.

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Prof. Peter Dawkins  
Secretary