

LOCAL PROJECTS, LOCAL JOBS — DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1170. Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN to the Minister for Education and Training:

I refer to the Western Australian Auditor General’s “Audit Results Report—Annual 2017–18 Financial Audits of State Government Entities: Report 7”, of November 2018, and in particular the section titled “Local Projects, Local Jobs program—accountability and acquittal of projects”.

- (1) Which projects funded by the Department of Education were considered by the Auditor General and what were the sums of money involved?
- (2) Which were the three instances cited on page 26 of the report in which schools used the funds for a purpose that differed from the grant agreement, and which was the one for which there was no documented approval of the change?
- (3) For each of those cases, who were the local members of Parliament for the area in which the schools were located and who approved the change of scope?
- (4) Which was the project for which there was no documented approval of the change by the “relevant minister or authorised delegate within the entity”?
- (5) In each of these three cases, what were the original purposes specified in the grant agreement, and the sum of money involved, and what were the purposes for which the funds were actually used?
- (6) How did these irregularities come about; when did the minister first become aware of them and how; and what steps has she taken, and when, to audit remaining projects and to ensure that this does not happen again?
- (7) Is the minister aware of any other instances of such changes of purpose or irregularities; and, if so, for which projects and what sums of money are concerned?

The PRESIDENT: I must say that that question probably does not fit within the definition of “concise”, member.

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for the question. It was a long question and, therefore, there is a long answer.

- (1) The Office of the Auditor General sampled 22 projects funded through the Local Projects, Local Jobs program. As the information is provided in tabular form, I seek leave to have the information incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The following material was incorporated —

Project Number	School Name and Project Description	Committed Funds (excluding GST)
MET078	Beechboro Primary School - play equipment.	\$30 000
MET080	Belmay Primary School new hard cover area.	\$50 000
MET087	Belmont Primary School - netball upgrade courts.	\$50 000
MET170	Eden Hill - new shade cover for two play areas.	\$40 000
MET173	Ellen Stirling Primary School - new shade structures.	\$25 000
MET175	Ellenbrook Primary School - new shade structures.	\$20 000
MET423	Salvado Catholic College nature play area and shade sails.	\$10 000
MET214	Glendale Primary School - playground upgrade	\$25 000
MET215	Good Shepherd Catholic College - new nature playground.	\$10 000
MET230	Gwynne Park Primary School - nature playground.	\$11 000
MET290	Kinross College - new bus.	\$70 000
MET549	Woodvale Primary School - nature play music wall.	\$3 500
MET365	Noranda Primary School - new shade sails.	\$20 000
MET396	Embleton Primary School - new playground equipment.	\$30 000
MET137	Connolly Primary School - smart boards, 3D printers nature play.	\$40 000
MET185	East Victoria Park Primary School - new early childhood playground.	\$20 000
MET450	St Helena’s Catholic School - shade sail.	\$20 000

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MET451	St Kieran's Primary School playground upgrade.	\$25 000
MET453	St Michael's School - new nature playground.	\$10 000
MET486	Tranby College - nature play area.	\$50 000
MET519	West Balcatta Primary School - playground upgrade.	\$25 000
MET029	Armadale Senior High School - new virtual reality equipment.	\$26 000

(2) They were Belmay Primary School, Connolly Primary School and St Michael's School. The project for which there was no documented approval of the change of scope was Connolly Primary School.

(3) The local members of Parliament are: Belmay Primary School, member for Belmont, Ms Cassie Rowe, MLA; Connolly Primary School, member for Joondalup, Ms Emily Hamilton, MLA; St Michael's School, member for Bassendean, Hon Dave Kelly, MLA.

Approval for the change of scope was as follows: for Belmay Primary School, a request was sought by the school principal and supported by the Department of Education and the member for Belmont, Ms Cassie Rowe, MLA. Approval was provided by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, Mr John Carey, MLA. The Department of Education was then provided with written advice from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Connolly Primary School consulted with the Connolly Primary School Parents and Citizens Association and the school principal endorsed the change in scope. No written documentation is available.

For St Michael's School—Catholic Education Western Australia—a request was sought by the school principal and approval was provided to the school by the office of Hon Dave Kelly, MLA. The email noted there was support from me.

(4) It was Connolly Primary School.

(5) For Belmay Primary School, the original project and funding of \$50 000 was allocated for a hard cover for the junior play areas to provide protection from all weather conditions. The school spent \$26 548 on a hard cover for the junior play areas, and sought approval to utilise the remaining funds of \$23 452 to establish a nature playground.

For Connolly Primary School, the original project and funding of \$40 000 was allocated for smart boards, a 3D printer and two nature play areas. The school purchased smart boards totalling \$29 140. The balance of \$10 860 was spent on digital technology kits and classroom furniture.

For St Michael's School, the original project and funding of \$10 000 was for a nature playground. However, the school instead sought approval to utilise the \$10 000 to establish a robotics program through the purchase of robotics equipment.

(6) The Department of Education acknowledges that there may have been some confusion in the early transition of the program, and support from the local member had potentially been interpreted as approval. In all instances, the schools, through their principals, had determined that the change in scope was in the best interests of the students and sought the support of the local member. The decision to change the scope by the principal is considered consistent with the department's financial policies and delegations, resulting in minimal risk to the program.

The department provided Local Projects, Local Jobs progress reports to me, including updates on any change of scope requests that had been submitted to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Formal notification of the Office of the Auditor General's finding was advised to the Minister for Education and Training in October 2018. I note that in late 2017, prior to the April 2018 Office of the Auditor General audit, further guidance regarding the process was provided by the department to schools to remove any confusion and to clarify that an approval change requires both the local member's support and the approval of the minister's office and the Premier's office.

(7) No.