

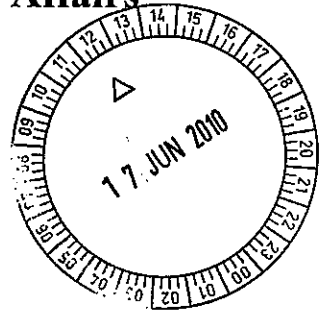
**Submission to the Legislative Council
Standing Committee on Environment & Public Affairs**

Petition No. 68 – Air Conditioning in State Schools

PUBLIC

Subject

No air conditioning in proposed building.



The National Building Economic Stimulus Plan (Building Education Revolution – BER) created the opportunity to construct a new building for education purposes at Edney Road Primary School in High Wycombe Perth WA. While the Parents & Citizens Committee (P&C) and community welcome the economic stimulus building the committee was surprised building plans did not include air conditioning.

Background

In 2000 the P&C commenced fundraising to air condition all building blocks across the school. While this placed a drain on funds for alternate opportunities to support the school and students, it was considered a successful tangible benefit to enhance student performance. In addition, the school has achieved good levels of student enrolment in the area.

The P&C were advised that the school was successful in the BER program in early 2010; however the State Government applied the Department of Education Policy on air-conditioning. Subsequently, because the school is located west of Roe Highway the building will not receive air conditioning.

Given the reason for economic stimulus and increased cost of air conditioning the potential for the P&C to raise funds from the community for the new buildings air conditioning is limited more than ever in the current economic climate and sufficient funds are unlikely to be raised in a reasonable timeframe.

This issue was escalated through the P&C to local Member of Parliament Andrew Waddell (MLA) to raise our concern. A partition was completed at this time.

At a separate meeting in which schools in the area were present, the Edney Primary School (PS) Principal and P&C President became aware High Wycombe Primary School (1km west of Edney PS) were getting air conditioning in their BER program building.

Communication ensued to confirm information was correct and the builder confirmed air conditioning units were drawn into the plans and costed for both High Wycombe and Edney Primary Schools. Shortly after, the Principal was advised the air conditioning was drawn into the plans in error however High Wycombe would still receive air conditioning as it was too late to alter their plans.

Analysis

Air cooling policy – it is understood that the closest temperature station to High Wycombe is based at Perth Airport. Recorded statistics appear to exceed the Education Departments air cooling policy benchmarks which would make the school eligible for air conditioning.

Government communication - On the 4 February 2009 the Hon Julia Gillard MP Media release - Building the Education Revolution - Primary Schools for the 21st Century (Joint media release with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd) stated:

“This historic national building investment by the Rudd Government will not only support jobs, it is also a down payment on the long term strength of the Australian economy.

Research shows that there is a positive and significant association between capital investment in schools and student performance, with the strongest evidence from a UK study *Building Performance* supporting investment in community primary schools.

By improving the quality of education received by every Australian child, this program will help deliver the stimulus of today and underwrite higher productivity tomorrow. The *Primary Schools for the 21st Century* program will be delivered through cooperation between Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the non-government school sector.”

In further information announced by Julia Gillard, it was clearly indicated air-conditioning could be part of the BER program.

Investment value and comparative buildings – dependant on situation, existing air conditioned buildings may be preferred to be used (if available) rather than the new building. Air conditioning would maximise value and recognition of the government’s commitment to education of primary school students. In comparison, other government buildings e.g. libraries, multipurpose halls, science buildings etc are air conditioned. The question is “Why is the proposed building any different?”

Summary

The purpose of this submission is to provide the committee with background and several key elements to support investigation of the above issue/subject.

Key points to support air conditioning to be included in Edney Primary Schools’ new building are:

- ▶ Air temperature statistics meet requirements detailed in air cooling policy
- ▶ Sea breeze in High Wycombe is non existent or arrives in the later afternoon, usually after school hours
- ▶ High Wycombe Primary School (approx 1km away) in same suburb is receiving air conditioning – equality and fairness does not appear to apply in this case
- ▶ A comfortable temperature environment is conducive to enhance concentration and student performance
- ▶ Comparative government buildings are built with air conditioning. Demountable and other buildings are also air conditioned.
- ▶ P&C funding has required dedicated commitment to support the school and students. Examples include subsidising class activities, equipment, stationery etc. Infrastructure costs are generally considered to be outside the scope of the P&C fund raising charter.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Glyn Cooper
President, P&C Edney Primary School

At present the complaint has not been taken to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman).