



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Building the Education Revolution Program**

**QUESTION**

**Monday, 15 June 2009**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## QUESTION

**Date** Monday, 15 June 2009  
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**Questioner** Bird, Sharon, MP  
**Speaker**

**Source** House  
**Proof** Yes  
**Responder** Gillard, Julia, MP  
**Question No.**

### Building the Education Revolution Program

**Ms BIRD** (Cunningham) (2.36 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion. Will the Deputy Prime Minister update the House on recent media reports about the Building the Education Revolution program?

**Ms GILLARD** (Lalor—Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion)—I thank the member for Cunningham for her question. I know that she would be very delighted that jobs in her local economy are being supported through the economic stimulus plan. There are over 1,133 projects in her electorate, and 87 of these projects are at 61 of her local schools under the Building the Education Revolution program. This contribution in Cunningham is part of the biggest school modernisation program the nation has ever seen. Over the next 12 months there will be 23,000 projects in about 9,500 schools around the country—a huge national effort to support jobs today whilst we build the infrastructure we need for tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, you and others in the House may have seen some recent publicity about the guidelines for the Building the Education Revolution and some claims relating to expenditure in particular schools. Can I make this position very clear for the House: the guidelines for the Building the Education Revolution are clear; they are available publicly on the website; and they have certainly been absorbed by school communities who want to benefit their schools under this program. In particular, the Building the Education Revolution guidelines have required that, wherever it is possible, local tradespeople are engaged for the work. Preference must also be given to businesses that have demonstrated a commitment to adding or retaining trainees and apprentices. The guidelines also state that, wherever possible, new buildings and refurbishments should incorporate sustainable building principles and be designed to maximise energy efficiency. The guidelines are also clear that, for planned amalgamations, the indicative funding allocation for the school to be merged can be combined and used for capital or refurbishments in the new school. We are working cooperatively with state

and territory authorities and with the independent and Catholic school systems to deliver this huge modernisation program.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Ms GILLARD**—The opposition are catcalling about this because they do not support and have never supported this investment in schools. Mr Speaker, you may have seen, as other members of the parliament may have seen, some very specific claims made in the *Australian* on 12 June, where it was alleged that funding was being handed to schools slated for closure or amalgamation.

*Mr Pyne interjecting—*

**Ms GILLARD**—I hear the shadow minister yell out ‘Gepps Cross’. I am coming to that in just a moment, and he will be very interested in the facts. Firstly, the guidelines in relation to schools that are due to be closed or amalgamated are clear—

*Mr Pyne interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER**—The member for Sturt!

**Ms GILLARD**—The member for Sturt will be very interested in the answer, given his interjections. He should just wait one little minute and some things will become clear to him. The guidelines are clear in relation to schools that are due to be closed or amalgamated.

*Mr Pyne interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER**—The member for Sturt should wait quietly.

**Ms GILLARD**—No funding is going to schools that are in the process of, or were planned for, closure. The guidelines in this respect are exactly the same as those of the Investing in Our Schools guidelines—exactly the same. Of course, states and territories and block grant authorities were asked to advise the Commonwealth of any schools earmarked for closure when they provided their enrolment data to the Commonwealth in February 2009. In some cases when we published the names of successful schools under the Building the Education Revolution, the state, in their application, named the

school that was amalgamating. Let me just make the facts very, very clear—so clear that the opposition—

*Mr Pyne interjecting—*

**Ms GILLARD**—The member for Sturt will now be very interested in this fact, and he will come to the dispatch box and no doubt apologise for that interjection. Let me make the facts very clear. The *Australian* reported on 12 June that Inala West State School, which is amalgamating with Inala State School, would be receiving \$125,000 for classroom upgrades. The fact is that, as Inala West State School is to be closed and amalgamated with Inala State School, 100 per cent of the funding will go to Inala State School for classroom upgrades—the continuing school. The *Australian* reported on 12 June that Richlands State School, which is amalgamating with Richlands East State School, would be receiving \$75,000 for classroom upgrades. The fact is that 100 per cent of this funding will go to Richlands East State School—the school that is continuing. The *Australian* reported on 12 June that Dinmore State School, which is amalgamating with Riverview State School, would be receiving \$75,000 for classroom upgrades. The fact is that 100 per cent of this funding will go to Riverview State School—the school that is continuing. The *Australian* reported on 12 June that Bremer State High School, which is moving to a new site, would be receiving \$200,000 for revegetation and a fitness track. The fact is that these facilities are for the new site. The *Australian* reported on 12 June—

*Mr Pyne interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER**—The member for Sturt!

**Ms GILLARD**—and I am sure the shadow minister will be interested in this—that Gepps Cross Primary School, before it merges into a new super school in 18 months time, will be receiving \$125,000 to be spent on fixing a toilet block. The fact is that the Building the Education Revolution funds for Gepps Cross Primary School were approved for information and communication technology at the amalgamated site and the funds will be used for this purpose. The South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services has advised my department that the school will not be using any Building the Education Revolution funds to fix toilets and drainage and that any maintenance for toilets and drainage would be funded by the state government. The fact here—

*Mr Pyne interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER**—The member for Sturt is warned!

**Ms GILLARD**—Obviously the shadow minister for education, caring nothing about education, does not

want to listen to the answer—and the facts are perfectly clear. These vital resources are being delivered to schools which are continuing and which will educate students. The members of the opposition might think that is something to be laughed about; they might think that building 21st century infrastructure for Australian schools is all a bit of joke; they might think it is appropriate to come into this House and vote against it; they might think it is appropriate to go on the media and describe it as a low-quality spend; and then they might have the hypocrisy to try and get themselves in the photo when these funds are announced at local schools. But the Australian community know that this program is benefiting local schools, building the infrastructure they need for the 21st century and supporting local jobs.

This is a huge national mobilisation effort—\$14.7 billion is unashamedly being delivered quickly to support jobs today during the global recession. People of goodwill around the country are turning their hands to make sure that this money is delivered in the form of construction sites and that it supports jobs right around the country. We will continue to work with those people of goodwill. We understand that from time to time in a program of this size there will be complaints and concerns. We have responded to a number of those. All we ask in the course of this process is that people of goodwill continue to work together to get the program delivered, and obviously we would prefer if, when reporting on these matters, there was some accuracy in the reports.