

BER Summary

By Lauren Djakovac

At the beginning of 2009, the Rudd Government announced 'Building the Education Revolution' (BER). The aim of this investment was to provide school building funding and, at the same time, combat the effects of the global financial crisis by stimulating the building industry. As such, construction and refurbishment was to commence as quickly as possible to provide immediate support for local employment.

Now that all BER rounds have been announced, it's been revealed that the estimated total of \$14.7 billion has been exceeded, to a total of \$16.2 billion. The increase has been blamed on the Government's reliance on old school data when estimating calculations, and a loophole in funding rules allowing some schools to win double the funding.

Money for the BER is being managed by the state governments, rather than being given directly to schools, as with previous federal grants. While many schools have been pleased with the approval of their applications, in other cases there have been complaints of wastage, rigid guidelines and inflated construction costs. This has resulted in the launch of an inquiry by the Auditor-General. In addition, the Senate of the Australian Parliament has announced that they will be conducting their own separate inquiry, investigating what are being called 'irregularities and anomalies' in funding.

Although there were several rounds of BER funding announced throughout the year, the data below is a summary of all allocations.

The three key elements of BER are:

- National School Pride Program - \$1.3 billion to refurbish and renew existing infrastructure and build minor infrastructure in all schools.
- Primary Schools for the 21st Century - \$14.1 billion to build or refurbish large scale infrastructure in primary schools, K-12s (primary component) and special schools; including libraries, halls and classrooms.
- Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Secondary Schools - \$810 million to build science laboratories or language learning centres in secondary schools, with funding allocated on the basis of demonstrated need.

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National School Pride Program

Round One

5,994 Australian schools received \$828.16 million for 8,663 projects. In South Australia, 511 schools received \$67.5 million for 783 projects.

Round Two

- 3,496 Australian schools received \$439.7 million for 4,513 projects. In South Australia, 277 schools received \$35 million for 388 projects.
- In total, both rounds of National School Pride will see 9,490 Australian schools receive \$1.3 billion for 13,176 projects.
- In SA, a total of 788 schools will receive \$102.7 million for 1,171 projects.

Primary Schools for the 21st Century

Round One

1,499 Australian primary schools received \$2.8 billion for 2,010 projects. In South Australia, 142 primary schools received \$315 million for 196 projects.

Round Two

3,716 Australian schools received \$6.3 billion for 4,973 projects. In South Australia, 318 primary schools received \$520 million for 430 projects.

Round Three

2,746 Australian primary schools received \$4.6 billion for 3,718 projects. In South Australia, 233 primary schools received \$357 million for 308 projects.

- In total, all three P21 rounds will deliver \$14.1 billion for 10,701 projects in 7,961 eligible primary schools across Australia.

- In SA, 693 primary schools will receive \$1.2 billion for 934 projects.

Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Secondary Schools

\$810 million in funding for Australian schools to build or refurbish 537 science laboratories and language learning centres. In South Australia, nearly \$78 million will be distributed to 61 schools.

For a full list of successful SA schools, visit: <http://www.saasso.asn.au/educationrevolution/building-the-revolution/funding-allocation-update>. ■