Level 10, 151 Clarence Street
Sydney NSW 2000

BER Community Liaison Strategy Survey

FINAL REPORT

Background

405 schools were surveyed. This represents 23% of all schools who received funding under the Building the Education Revolution (BER).

Schools were chosen at random across all regions, all schools sizes and classifications, all completion dates and all construction costs, both over and under budget. Care was taken to maintain an accurate proportional representation between those schools surveyed and all BER schools and this representation is accurate to within 3%. The tables on pages 2 and 3 shows the full statistical details of schools surveyed according to school classification and region.

182 primary, SSP and central schools were registered with the Building the Education Revolution Implementation Taskforce (BERIT), 43 of these schools were surveyed, this represents 24% of schools with a BERIT involvement.

858 of the 1781 BER schools were under budget as at 19 September, 2011; this represents 48% of all schools, 197 or (48%) of the 405 schools surveyed were under budget.

The ten schools that were over and under budget by the largest percentage were identified. Four of the ten schools most over budget were surveyed and five of the schools most under budget were also surveyed.

38 schools received projects that were not co-ordinated by one of the seven major Managing Contractors (MCs). Four of these were surveyed.

The Community Liaison Strategy Survey consists of 23 questions including three procedural questions for identification purposes. Questions were developed by the Director, Implementation with some input from the Implementation and Principal Liaison Officer (PLO) teams. The survey was confidential for school identity and did not allow for analysis based on school classification or region.

A PLO from the Building the Education Revolution Integrated Program Office (BER IPO) administered the survey using "Zoomerang" software. Data was entered during a telephone conversation with the principal.

Over 1,000 phone calls were made in order to obtain 405 responses from principals. 30 principals had retired or were on long term leave and therefore not able to provide a response for the survey. 63 principals did not take up the opportunity to participate when their school was contacted.

A clear majority of principals surveyed were well placed to make an authoritative comment on the P21 Project. 82% of principals contacted were involved with the project from initial nomination to completion. All others were able to demonstrate significant experience with the project at their school.

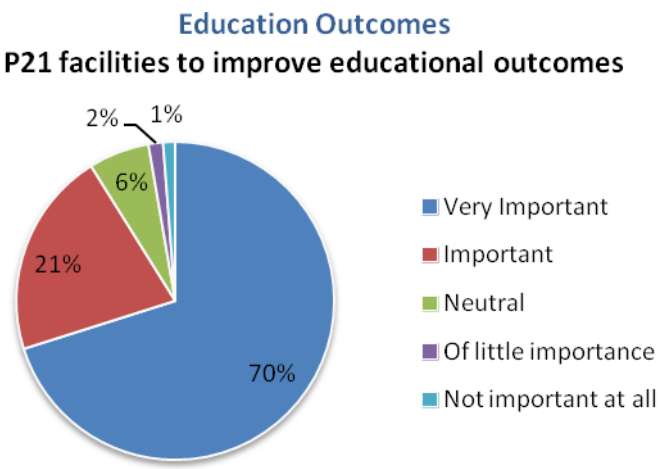
School classification	Total number of schools with BER projects	% of total schools	Number of schools surveyed	% of schools surveyed	% variation
P1	54	3	14	3	0
P2	259	15	63	16	1
P3	300	17	70	17	0
P4	419	23	86	21	2
P5	420	24	103	25	1
P6	173	10	40	10	0
Central	69	3	10	3	0
SSP	87	5	19	5	0
Total	**1781**	**100**	**405**	**100**	

Region	Total number of schools with BER projects	% of total schools	Number of schools surveyed	% of schools surveyed	% variation
Hunter/Central Coast	242	14	60	15	1
Illawarra and South East	187	10	31	8	2
New England	106	6	26	6	0
North Coast	233	13	59	15	2
Northern Sydney	127	7	26	6	1
Riverina	162	9	36	9	0
South Western Sydney	206	12	53	13	1
Sydney	172	10	27	7	3
Western NSW	160	9	34	8	1
Western Sydney	186	10	53	13	3
Total	**1781**	**100**	**405**	**100**	

Educational Outcomes

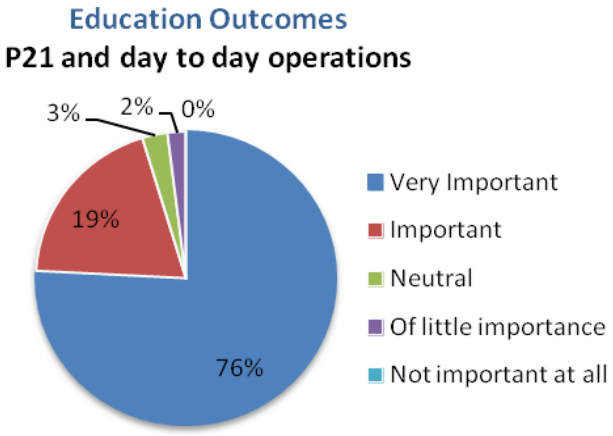
BER projects have made a very positive contribution to educational outcomes for students.

70% of principals felt that the new P21 facilities had definitely improved educational outcomes for students and 21% felt they had somewhat improved outcomes, a 91% positive response.



A majority of those principals who gave a neutral (6%) or negative (1%) response cited as the reason for their response a belief that teaching was far more influential than buildings as buildings had little impact on learning; or the primary function of the building was not educational – admin block or COLA .

95% of principals made positive comments concerning the importance of the project in terms of day to day school operation. 76% rated P21 buildings as very important, 19% as important.



Features of the project that principals identified as playing a significant role in improving educational outcomes included:

- Students now occupy a modern, attractive learning facility (41%)
- Up to date, improved technology and potential for increased technology (28%)
- Greater teaching space (22%)
- The opportunity for more flexible school organisation to fully utilise available teaching/learning spaces and to more effectively accommodate all Key Learning Areas (21%)
- Improved community involvement in learning and use of the facility (13%).

Other comments made by a number of principals but with less than 5% of overall responses included:

- Staff and students feel more valued and reported an increase in general school morale (4%)
- Storage is improved significantly (1%)
- Teaching improves student outcomes, buildings are not a significant factor (1%).

Building Design

The buildings were rated as very well designed overall.

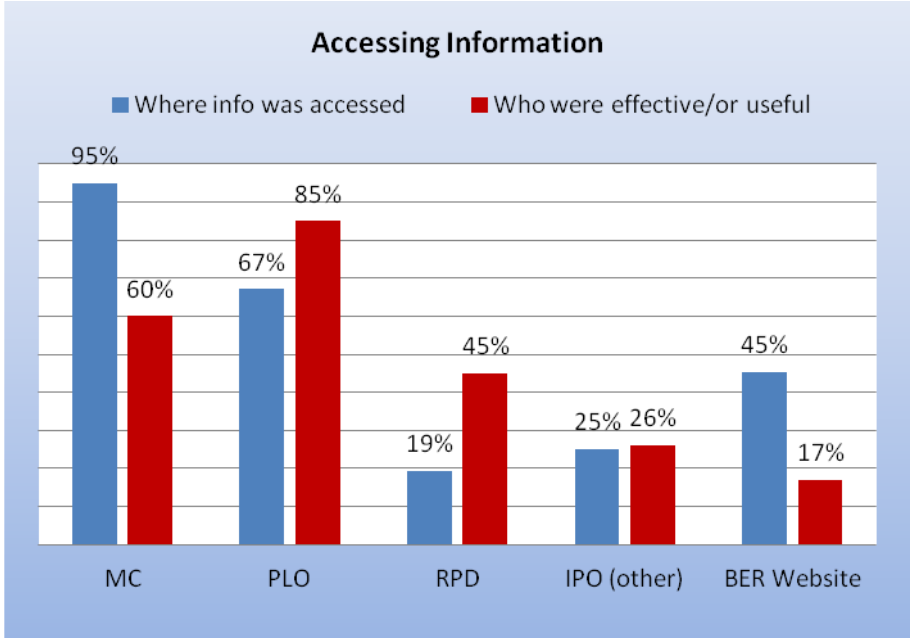
91% of principals believed the buildings functioned well as an educational space.

However, 68% of principals believed there were aspects of the design they would change. Suggested changes included:

- The size of the stages in school halls, which were too large for the internal hall area, especially when a disabled ramp was included (8%)
- Storerooms, shelving and storage in general was inadequate (7%)
- BER projects were inappropriate for the size of the school, particularly the Basic Design Range (BDR) and halls (7%)
- Cooling and heating were inefficient (7%)
- Impractical spaces in the BDR buildings (4%)
- Drainage problems, especially the run-off from down pipes on Covered Outdoor Learning Areas (COLAs) (4%)
- Debris entering rooms via the seal for roof ventilators (3%)
- Covered walkways were inadequate or not provided (3%)

Accessing Information

Principals accessed information about their project from a number of sources with varying degrees of success.



- 79% of principals felt that they were able to access information about their school's P21 Project when they needed to, within a reasonable time frame.
- 95% of principals accessed information from their MC.
- 67% also spoke to a PLO.
- 19% made contact with the Regional Program Director (RPD) and 25% spoke to other IPO staff.
- 45% visited the BER website for information.
- 67% of principals commented that the Site Manager (SM) was their first and major point of contact with the MC and not the Project Manager (PM).

Of those who contacted BER and MC staff:

- 85% of principals who contacted a PLO found the PLO to be effective.
- 60% found the PM and MC to be effective.

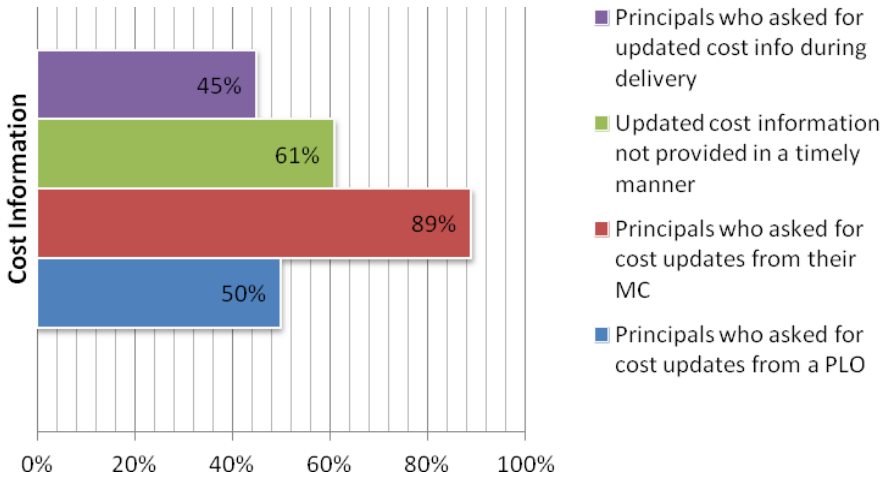
- 45% found the RPD to be effective.
- 26% found other IPO staff effective.
- 17% found the BER website useful.

The most useful sections of the BER website were “find your school” followed by “news” and “resources”.

A number of principals thought the BER newsletters were useful sources of information and therefore didn’t visit the BER website regularly.

Cost Information

The majority of principals who asked for updated cost information were not given this information in a timely manner.



45% of principals asked for updated cost information during the delivery of their school’s project.

61% of principals reported that their request for cost information was not provided in a timely manner.

89% of principals asked for cost updates from their MC and 50% from a PLO.

The Future

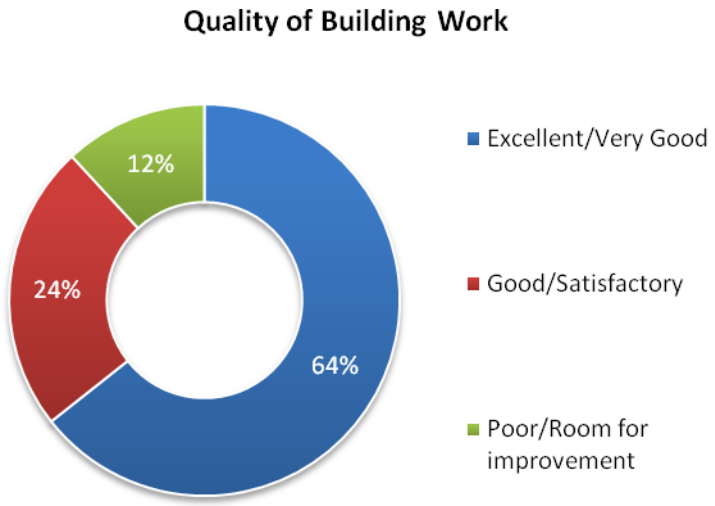
A clear majority of principals expressed the need for support with future capital works projects.

80% of principals thought that the DEC should provide cost information in future major capital works projects.

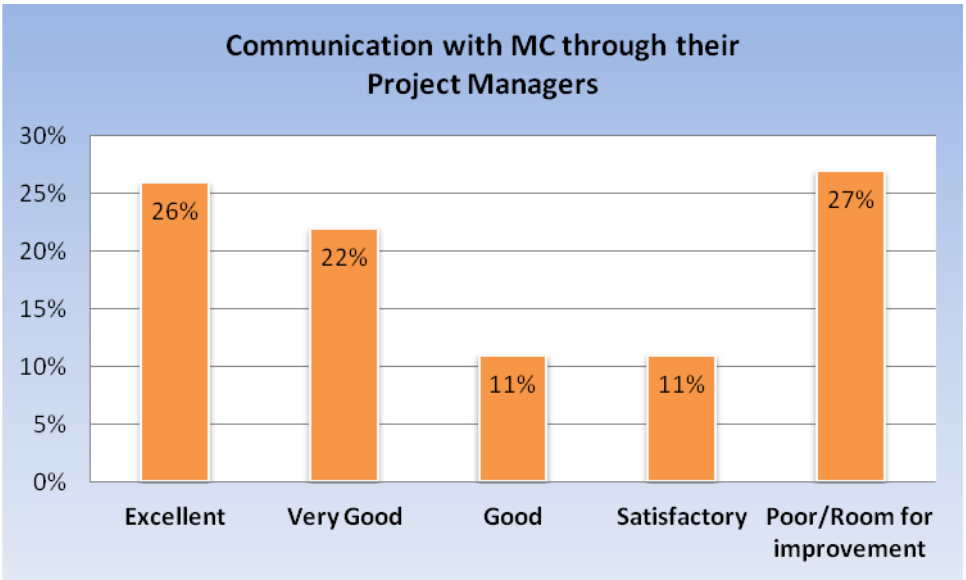
The most common reason for a negative response was the principal's feeling that it was of little use knowing costing information unless principals' had the power to make decisions about the use of those finances. Another reason for a negative response was the belief that a principal's prime role, responsibility and experience was in education and not construction.

88% of principals felt a PLO or similar support model would be helpful to principals involved in other capital works projects in the future. Knowledge of how schools actually operate was seen as essential for a successful construction with minimum disruption to student learning.

Managing Contractor Service



The quality of work undertaken by the MC and their builders and trades people was rated as excellent and very good by 64% of principals, good and satisfactory by 24%. 12% of principals rated the work as poor with room for improvement.



Communication with MCs through their project managers was seen as a significant issue for many principals and provided an extremely varied response. 27% of principals rated communication with the PM as poor with room for improvement and 26% as excellent, 22% very good, 11% good and 11% satisfactory. The majority of principals felt communication with their SM was more effective than communication with their PM.

Parental Involvement

58% of principals felt their P&C or other parent representative body was minimally involved, 19% moderately involved and only 9% felt their P&C as very involved.

However, the level of involvement varied. A large number of parent bodies were very involved early in the process when decisions on the school project were being made but the level of involvement then declined. Many principals who reported that the school's parent body was only minimally involved believed that there was little opportunity for ongoing involvement and the lack of flexibility in the program meant there were few opportunities for parents to be involved even in the beginning stages. Other principals reported that parental involvement increased when their buildings neared completion, especially if they perceived an inadequacy or defect.

Principal General Comment

When asked for any additional comment 386 of 405 principals chose to respond.

- 35% of principals who chose to comment stated that, despite any issues, they were very appreciative of the new, modern buildings and refurbishments that would never have been completed at their school without the BER project.

- 26% of principals reported that they and their school community were very happy with the new or refurbished buildings and found the P21 Project to be a positive experience overall.

- 16% of principals felt the buildings lacked value for money.

- 16% of principals felt that communication was poor and there was a lack of consultation, especially in the early stages and little transparency throughout the project.

- 12% of principals stated that there was a lack of flexibility throughout the project, from the original options offered to schools to the limited choices available during construction.

There was little statistical difference in each of these general comments between those schools that were over budget and those under budget.

However, 14% of principals with schools whose projects were under budget felt that funds originally allocated to their school and not spent should have been made available for further projects at their school.

Other comments made by a number of principals but with less than 5% of overall responses included:

- There was poor oversight of the Managing Contractors by the BER IPO (3%)
- Defects were slow to be rectified (3%)
- Projects would have benefitted from local/school management (2%)
- The entire BER project was frustrating and increased principals' stress levels (1%).

This report will form part of the "Lessons Learnt" BER Report.

BER Program Office
29 September 2011