

Fairfax Community Network

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# 'Gags' claim over site works

By Erin Bull

THE opposition has accused the state government of "gagging" school communities over funding problems following an \$850,000 cost blow-out in works at a Kingwood East school.

The school has declined to comment on the blowout in costs of building a multi-purpose and arts precinct.

Under the federal government's Building Education Revolution program, \$3 million has been earmarked for the construction of the precinct at Timmervale Primary School. It would include a gymnasium, music

room, multi-purpose learning area, toilets, change rooms, storeroom and a canteen.

Kilsyth MP David Hodggett said, after visiting the school earlier this month during Ride to School Day, that construction on the gymnasium site had come to a halt.

He said a project manager had informed him that a new slab design was necessary due to the soil condition.

"This apparently only became evident during the excavation works and the cost blow-out will add \$850,000 to the project," Mr Hodggett said.

"The questions come thick and fast from parents — why wasn't this picked up at the

soil testing stage? Who's paying for the cost blow-out? Why is it so expensive? How can these simple excavations cost \$850,000?"

"You can understand the frustration by local parents when some of this money could go towards a new bike shed for Timmervale instead of being wasted by an incompetent government that continually fails to deliver projects on budget."

Eastern Metropolitan MP Brian Tee criticised Mr Hodggett for "standing for nothing" and "criticising everything".

"He never supported stimulus packaged funding and doesn't understand how building packages work."

"Sometimes when you construct things, there are some unforeseeable circumstances, such as the soil."

Opposition spokesman Martin Dixon said the state government had resorted to "gags, bullying and intimidation to 'cover up the BER debacle'" and stop schools from speaking out.

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike described Mr Dixon's claims as unsubstantiated. "One of the first things our government did after being elected was to lift the state-wide gag that the Liberal Party had imposed on school principals and teachers," she said.