Dear Parents and Carers,

I understand that there are still some in the Gol Gol Public School community who retain concerns about work undertaken at the school in recent weeks. Could I address those concerns?

The project was supervised for the Department of Education and Communities by a specialist government agency, NSW Public Works.

The department’s expectation is that any contracted work carried out on its behalf, including this project, will be carried out professionally and according to Occupational Health and Safety and Workcover guidelines.

As soon as the issue was identified and brought to Department of Education and Communities’s attention, cleaning of the areas was undertaken and an occupational hygienist was employed to assess the area where work had taken place and issue certificates of clearance. The hygienist noted that no air-borne fibres were present. This clearance was issued on the 15 July 2011 and a copy of the clearance is attached.

The department and the school relied on the professional advice of the NSW Public Works and the hygienist. Mr Glenn Walker, the Principal based decisions about resuming classes in rooms where work had been undertaken on this advice.

The school provided written advice to parents from the first day students returned to school this term and staff have been kept informed. Mr Walker has also communicated with the P&C.

When there were continuing concerns following the initial cleaning and inspection, the department arranged for further work and cleaning and a second independent inspection of all rooms by a qualified occupational hygienist. This additional work took place over the weekend of 23 and 24 July 2011. This verified the initial clearance certificates with the second clearance issued on the 24 July 2011. Again a copy of this certificate is attached.

The hygienist believes that any level of exposure would be low.

At the meeting with parents on the night of Monday, 25 July 2011 further concerns were expressed in relation to the possibility of fibres being distributed prior to the cleaning process being completed. In response to these concerns the consultant hygienist has taken sample swabs throughout the school for testing. These results are not yet available and will be communicated as soon as they are provided.

The department has asked for a review of the project, and the Regional Manager,
Department of Education and Communities, Asset Management Unit has commenced an investigation. At the conclusion of the review, the department will take appropriate action and will communicate with parents.

I invite any parent with questions or concerns relating to this work to e-mail them to Richard.Connolly@det.nsw.edu.au so they can be addressed as part of the review.

Yours sincerely

Carole McDiarmid PSM
Regional Director
Western NSW Region

27 July 2011