Taxpayers have had to foot the bill for substantial cost blow-outs under the Federal Government’s Primary Schools for the 21st Century Program.

Opposition Leader Terry Mills said the cost variations per school – in some cases as high as half-a-million dollars – further highlight the Building the Education Revolution’s failure to deliver value for money principles or competent management of taxpayer funded projects.

Following the release of the BER Implementation Taskforce Report last week which identified serious gouging by contractors, the Henderson Government should also account for the millions of dollars in budget blow-outs identified in projects completed so far under P21.

‘Taxpayers have been seriously let down by the Commonwealth and Territory governments’ appalling administration of the BER scheme,” Mr Mills said.

‘Two Territory schools made complaints that were investigated by the BER Implementation Taskforce, but serious questions still remain about the delivery of facilities under the program.

‘As at April 19th, there were 16 completed projects in the Territory under the P21 program, of which all but one had gone over budget.

‘In one case – upgrades at the Kalkaringi school – the tendered amount of $1,038,181 was exceeded by $493,525 and had a project management cost of $69,284.

‘The Government needs to account for this substantial blow-out and explain how it will prevent such deplorable leakage from happening again.

‘At the Bakewell school, the cost variation is $468,651 and at Minyerri it’s $355,146.

‘Of the16 schools, the tendered amount was $17,431,099 compared to the final cost outcome of $20,486,566 – a cost discrepancy of $3,055,467.

‘The Commonwealth and Territory governments must ensure there are no more significant blow-outs as the project moves forward.”

Mr Mills said the glacial pace at which the scheme has been rolled out in the Territory means it has missed its intended function of boosting the economy during the Global Financial Crisis.

‘Prime Minister Julia Gillard is claiming the country avoided recession as a result of the BER.

‘Why then should many more millions of taxpayers dollars be squandered on a build program that is proving a huge windfall for project managers and builders, but is contributing to Government borrowings of $100million a day?’

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