THREE YEARS LATE, $15MILLION OVER BUDGET

The Education Minister’s latest visit to the new Rosebery schools raises more questions than it answers.

Shadow Education Minister, Peter Chandler, said the fact the schools are expected to be at capacity within two years shows the Government should have committed to building some time ago.

“I welcome the development of these new schools and was one of many involved in the Palmerston community who lobbied Government for several years to have them built,” Mr Chandler said.

“Our appeals fell on deaf ears until just before Paul Henderson called the 2008 Territory election.

“During that period Bakewell Primary, of which I was school chairman, was operating significantly above capacity with in excess of 700 students – about 300 more than optimum.

“There were eight demountables being used as classrooms, and split assemblies and lunchtimes.

“The Rosebery schools were needed at least three years ago to ease demand at Palmerston High and its feeder schools, like Bakewell.

“It is important the Government creates a master plan for school development as Palmerston continues to grow over the next few years and identifies where the next school will be constructed – and when.”

Mr Chandler said it was noteworthy Minister Burns pointed out today the school was built on time, because the project certainly appears to have blown its budget.

“The Government committed $48.8million to the project but recently in Parliament Education Minister, Chris Burns, said the schools would cost $65million.

“Today he told media it would be $60million. Minister Burns should clarify the exact cost of the schools and explain why they have blown out by upwards of $15million.

“There might be a perfectly good reason, or it might be that the Government was using rubbery figures in the lead-up to an election.

“While I enthusiastically support the development of the Rosebery schools, the Government has a duty to be accountable and transparent about the budget blow-out.”

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