

QUESTIONS on NOTICE: PUBLIC HEARING 17 JUNE 2010

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Question #1

Dr Stone (p. 8):

Prior to the Commonwealth investing in these school library infrastructure projects, was there a discussion between the department and the states about where these new libraries were to go, how they would be staffed and whether there was a sufficient pool of qualified teacher librarians to work in these libraries to ensure that with the new building, or rehabilitated building, there would be both the additional qualified teacher librarians and other appropriate staff?

---

Departmental Response:

Prior to the implementation of the *Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* element of the Building the Education Revolution (BER) Program, there were no discussions between the department and the states and territories about location, staffing or whether there was a sufficient pool of qualified teacher librarians. The department considers these matters to be the responsibility of the state and territory education authorities.

---

## Question #2

### Mr Oakeshott (p. 8):

Is there a figure you can give us that is not necessarily a dollar figure with regard to new space? What is new? I know you mentioned 'new' libraries, but I am not sure how much of this is new compared with an upgrade of existing facilities. That is what I would like a breakdown on. I accept your point that the Commonwealth is not responsible for day-to-day management and resourcing, but for us to have a clear handle on what is new in this space—what is the issue that we are dealing with in terms of what is new?—it would help if there was another figure used. I do not know whether it is square metres or what it is, but if you have something, that would help.

**CHAIR**—I will just clarify that the committee does not have a role in assessing the physical side of it, but I think what we are asking is: if we are looking at staffing, what is the increased size of the task?

... We acknowledge that even if it is a refurbishment that does not necessarily mean there was a teacher librarian attached to the old one. That is the sort of angle we are coming from, if you could address that.

---

### Departmental Response:

As at 31 May 2010, through the *Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* element of the Building the Education (BER) Program there are a total of 3,017 library projects, of which 2,650 are new library facilities. The table below provides a breakdown by state and territory of new facilities.

STATE/ TERRITORY	Number of New Libraries
ACT	20
NSW	584
NT	63
QLD	1,023
SA	140
TAS	40
VIC	522
WA	258
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,650</b>

Note: Data is aggregated across government and non-government sectors.

### **Question #3**

#### **Dr Stone (p. 14):**

The My School data identified schools which were having difficulties in terms of the standards. We understood that the My School program was then going to lead to additional resources for schools which were struggling. I am wondering whether those resources are flowing yet, particularly in relation to teacher librarians. My school focused on literacy, as you would be aware, as one of the key criteria that we use to determine the school was achieving what it should. Is there now additional funding going into the schools that were identified as struggling or not up to standard, particularly in relation to literacy?

---

#### **Departmental Response:**

Following the release of the My School website 110 schools were selected to receive additional Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership funding. These schools were identified using My School data as performing either below or substantially below both the national average and the average of their statistically similar schools group across all of the 2009 NAPLAN domains and year levels assessed at the school. Following endorsement by the states, the Australian Government provided a further \$11 million to support these schools under the Smarter Schools National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy.

The schools are from a variety of areas including country and inner city and a variety of socio-economic areas. They include schools from the Government, Catholic and independent sectors.

Funding for the additional 110 schools was made available by the Commonwealth treasury to State treasuries on 7 June 2010. Consistent with other Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership schools, the additional schools will be required to publish plans that include details on reform activities to take place at the school and the Commonwealth investment to support these activities. Each school sector, in consultation with principals, parents and the local community, will determine which strategies best respond to local needs.

---

#### **Question #4**

##### **Ms Bird (pp. 14-15)**

**CHAIR**—I am a bit concerned that we might be losing some of the story about the leadership role that teacher librarians can play in driving that literacy and numeracy. Based on what you collect so that it can inform better practice for a wider range of schools, do you have some idea on what might be happening there?

**Ms Banks**—I can comment in terms of where this national partnership and the literacy and numeracy partnerships are up to. It has been early days, but it is all moving to a more consolidated phase. There has been a literacy forum whereby good practice was shared. We are also about to commence an evaluation process that will more systematically be picking up on and building the evidence. There is also the development of an evidence base—this is not my area but I am aware of this and we can get you more information—where the results are coming forward.

**CHAIR**—And what drove those.

**Ms Banks**—And what are the practices that are happening. We are as interested in the staff arrangements, the configurations—whether they are using tutors, what sort of staff they have and how they organise—as much as the classroom pedagogy. We are doing things but—

**CHAIR**—Could you get the division that is doing that to provide us with some information on it?

---

#### **Departmental Response:**

The Australian Government is investing over \$41 million in 30 pilot initiatives that are driving changes at the school level and building an evidence base of what works for disadvantaged students. Over 400 schools nationally are actively involved in finding out what works to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for students most in need of support.

The pilots' focus is on improving literacy and numeracy outcomes through school leadership, teacher capacity, and using student performance data. Information from the pilots will assist states, territories and sectors in implementing broader reforms under the Smarter Schools National Partnerships.

In March 2010, the National Literacy and Numeracy Pilots Forum took place, bringing together principals, teachers and university partners involved in the literacy and numeracy pilots. The forum allowed for the sharing of information on what was being done in classrooms and schools to lift literacy and numeracy outcomes for students.

A national meta-evaluation of the pilots is currently underway. The main purpose of this evaluation is to identify and collate which strategies from the 30 pilots worked best, in improving student literacy and numeracy outcomes, how they were implemented and the reasons for their success.

The national evaluation is expected to deliver the following:

- i. description of strategies, the methods of implementation and reasons for success or failure of strategies used in each pilot;
- ii. the outcomes each pilot has achieved against their respective objectives;
- iii. the improvements or lack of, in literacy and/or numeracy outcomes for students participating in each pilot;
- iv. level of principals' and teachers' satisfaction with the pilots.

The final report from the national evaluation is due in June 2011. Findings from this report will assist education authorities and the Australian Government to further the literacy and numeracy reform agenda.

### **Evidence base of effective practice in literacy and numeracy**

All Australian Governments have committed through the Smarter Schools: National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy to establish and maintain an evidence base of effective literacy and numeracy strategies and approaches. The evidence base will help drive changes in teaching practice and assist states and territories to make better-informed decisions in supporting all students' literacy and numeracy development.

The evidence base will contain information on strategies and approaches which have shown to contribute to improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes for school students, particularly those falling behind, and provide evidence to support their success.

To progress the evidence base the Australian Government has established a cross-jurisdictional National Partnership Literacy and Numeracy Expert Group. The Expert Group consists of literacy or numeracy experts from each jurisdiction. It also includes representatives nominated by the Australian Government, the National Catholic Education Commission, the Independent Schools Council of Australia, Indigenous representatives and special education representatives with literacy or numeracy expertise.

It is anticipated that the evidence base will come online early 2011.

---

## **Question #5**

### **Ms Bird (p. 15)**

**CHAIR**—A lot of the evidence has pushed us to intervene at a level which, from your opening comments, is clearly not going to be appropriate for the national government in determining staffing and so forth. But one of the things we can do in the national quality agenda is encourage and drive, based on evidence, some good initiatives. I am wondering whether there is consideration for the My School website itself to record whether schools have libraries and whether they are staffed by teacher librarians.

---

### **Departmental Response:**

The range of information presented on the My School website will be added to over time as more nationally comparable data becomes available. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is working with education authorities to develop additional school performance indicators, including the numbers of students with disabilities and those from language backgrounds other than English, and satisfaction of parents, students and teachers. Later this year school financial data will be added.

As a measure of a school's capacity to support the education of its students, ACARA is investigating the feasibility of providing information that would allow fair and accurate comparisons between schools on the quality and condition of school facilities.

---