

SUBMISSION No. 4 Reviews of Auditor-General Report's Nos 16 - 46 (2011)

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Auditor-General's Report Nos 16-46 (2010-11)

Outcome 2 - Schools

DEEWR Question. 1

Delivery: Recent Data of Rollout Progress and Target Projections for 1:1 by 31 December 2011

CHAIR (Robert OAKSHOTT): Thanks for that. I have a few more questions before handing over to others. The first is that, as a local member, anecdotally, there seemed to be just a flood of computers and last month. Do you have any recent data on the progress of the rollout, compared to today, and how close you are going to be to hitting the target on 31 December?

Answer

Computer installation projections provided by education authorities in the July 2011 progress reports indicate that at 31 December 2011 the number of computers required to reach a one to one student to computer ratio will have been provided under the National Secondary School Computer Fund.

As at 8 November 2011, 643 595 or 82 per cent of computers had been installed.

These computer installation figures are based on information provided to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) by education authorities through DEEWR's School Entry Point (SEP) system, an online reporting tool which allows schools and education authorities to report real time installations.

SEP users are required to sign a declaration on the validity of data prior to submission of reports.

Sector	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Grand Total
Catholic									
Computers Required	2,389	59,049	1,085	29,759	10,133	3,199	41,323	16,735	163,672
Computers Installed	2,007	62,136	605	26,973	6,296	3,302	34,882	13,747	149,948
Computers Installed %	84%	105%	56%	91%	62%	103%	84%	82%	92%
Government									
Computers Required	9,558	173,121	4,799	104,251	38,716	12,725	117,186	46,776	507,132
Computers Installed	9,265	191,968	4,431	57,635	32,726	8,145	63,483	38,007	405,660
Computers Installed %	97%	111%	92%	55%	85%	64%	54%	81%	80%
Independent									
Computers Required	3,994	34,676	1,006	25,724	10,108	2,100	23,974	14,462	116,044
Computers Installed	2,271	25,292	735	23,386	9,718	1,681	11,353	13,551	87,987
Computers Installed %	57%	73%	73%	91%	96%	80%	47%	94%	76%
Total Computers Required	15,941	266,846	6,890	159,734	58,957	18,024	182,483	77,973	786,848
Total Computers Installed	13,543	279,396	5,771	107,994	48,740	13,128	109,718	65,305	643,595
Total Computers Installed %	85%	105%	84%	68%	83%	73%	60%	84%	82%

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Hearing on Auditor-General's reports Nos 16 to 46 (2010-11)

Outcome 2 – Schools

DEEWR Question 2

The Hon Yvette D'Ath MP, Member for Petrie, asked on 2/11/2011

Question:

Usage/Benefits: Extent of the benefit of ICT in Schools

Mrs D'Ath: It is nice to hear how well the program is going and the positive outcomes. I am interested in the collection of data—and I do not know whether the department is collecting this sort of detail—identifying what the schools have invested in with regard to ICT, whether they are going for PCs, whether they are providing laptops and whether the laptops are being made available to students outside of school hours. That is just to get an understanding of the extent of the benefit from this technology being introduced into the schools.

Answer

Purchasing of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment through the National Secondary School Computer Fund (the Fund) is taking place at a state, sector or school level. This is because government and non-government education authorities (EAs) have primary responsibility for decisions about educational hardware and software best suited to the needs of their schools.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) has nonetheless encouraged EAs to take advantage of bulk purchasing arrangements to achieve the best outcomes for schools. Where economies of scale can be realised through bulk purchasing or other arrangements, DEEWR is allowing for residual funds to be used to ensure the effective deployment of computers, or to purchase complementary ICT equipment.

EAs are able to purchase a range of devices under the Fund, including desktop PCs, laptops, netbooks and tablets. Some jurisdictions have chosen to provide students with a take-home laptop or netbook, while others have chosen to install desktop PCs in labs. DEEWR does not require EAs to report the specific type of devices they deploy, as, in some sectors, the choice of device is made by the individual school.

An overview of the approaches being implemented in the government sector is attached for information.

ATTACHMENT

Summary of implementation of the Fund by state and territory governments

New South Wales

The New South Wales Department of Education and Training provides a Lenovo netbook computer to students for their individual use at the commencement of their Year 9 enrolment. Ownership of the netbook is transferred to the student at the end of Year 12.

Victoria

While the decision as to device is made at a school level in Victoria, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is recommending that schools use the Fund to purchase netbook devices.

Queensland

The Queensland Department of Education and Training (QLD DET) previously allowed schools to purchase a range of devices under the Fund. QLD DET recently entered a bulk purchasing arrangement with ACER which will provide for the rollout of a large number of laptops in October and November 2011.

Western Australia

The Western Australian Department of Education provides funding directly to schools which choose from one of several approved desktops or notebooks. Where alternative devices such as netbooks, iPads, or Android devices are preferred, the school is required to comply with government procurement policies.

South Australia

The South Australian Department for Education and Child Development utilises a panel of four suppliers from which its schools can select a choice of desktops, laptops and netbooks.

Tasmania

The Tasmanian Department of Education (TAS DET) allows schools to determine the type of device to be purchased, provided the school determines this in the context of an annual ICT plan agreed with TAS DET.

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training allows schools to select higher-end computers with extended onsite warranty support. Where schools chose lower specification netbook computers, residual funds are being used to purchase greater numbers of devices to accelerate their rollout program.

Australian Capital Territory

Early in the Fund, the ACT Department of Education and Training (ACT DET) allowed schools to choose from a range of devices including higher-end computers and Apple iMacs. Under the National Partnership Agreement, ACT DET selected the HP 5102 netbook through a bulk purchasing arrangement.

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Auditor-General's Report Nos 16-46 (2010-11)

Outcome 2 - Schools

DEEWR Question No. 3

Question

Matching skills with Demand

Ms O'NEILL: The question was really at the end point. We have further educators. We have skills service providers for students in post secondary contexts. How much are they engaged in helping identify what they would see as performance indicators that would show that there is some development in technology capacity? I would like to see if they are involved, what their feedback is and whether they are consulted.

Dr Arthur: We could take that on notice, certainly.

Answer

A Digital Education Revolution (DER) Evaluation Strategy has been developed in consultation with the Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee (AICTEC) on which the schools, vocational and higher education sectors are represented. The Strategy has been endorsed by AICTEC and government and non-government schools education authorities.

In line with the agreed Strategy, the DER Evaluation will be undertaken thematically against the four strands of change articulated in the DER National Partnerships with the government sector and the DER Funding Agreements with the non-government sector. These are: Leadership, Infrastructure; Teacher Capability and Learning Resources.

Evaluation indicators have been developed for each of these themes. In the case of Teacher Capability they include:

- How confident and competent teachers are at effective use of ICT in teaching and learning;
- Teacher confidence in using ICT in the classroom;
- Perception of ICT capability within their school or jurisdiction;
- Perception of benefits associated with teachers' and students' use of ICT hardware and digital resources and tools;
- How online collaboration or peer networking is facilitated;
- Number of schools where teacher coaching about the use of ICT for teaching and learning is facilitated and how it is facilitated.

A number of evaluation instruments will be utilised in the conduct of the evaluation including teacher and principal surveys and focus groups.

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Outcome 2 – Schools

Chair (Mr OAKSHOTT) provided in writing.

DEEWR Question No. 4

Question

Government advice: Procurement

Will you use the residual funding incentive contemplated in the report in future or refine that mechanism for future similar programs?

Answer

Under the National Secondary School Computer Fund (the Fund), education authorities and schools have been encouraged to take advantage of bulk purchasing arrangements to achieve economies of scale in a highly competitive information and communication technologies (ICT) market.

In those circumstances, education authorities and schools have been allowed to use residual funds for the purchase of complementary ICT equipment. As noted by the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) in its performance audit, this approach provided strong incentives for education authorities to achieve value for money objectives and would be a valid approach to any similar ICT programs in the future.

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Auditor-General's Report Nos 16–46 (2010–11)

Wednesday, 2 November 2011

Outcome 2 - Schools

DEEWR Question No. 5

Mr Oakeshott asked on notice.

Question

Audit report No. 30 2010-11: *Digital Education Revolution program—National Secondary Schools Computer Fund*

"I have two questions to put on notice. One is around professional development. Please come back to the committee with any policy work that is happening in parallel with what is effectively an infrastructure rollout on teacher development and professional development—anecdotally noticeable as something that is desperately needed—and whether that parallel work is happening."

Answer

Teachers are being provided with ongoing support in the effective use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in teaching and learning through the:

- Information and Communications Technology Innovation Fund (ICTIF), and
- Supporting the Australian Curriculum Online (SACOL) project.

ICT Innovation Fund

On 29 October 2010, the Hon Peter Garrett AM MP, Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth announced that four projects worth more than \$16 million would receive Australian Government Funding under ICTIF.

The projects support in-service and pre-service teachers as well as school leaders to achieve proficiency in ICT and work towards embedding these skills across the curriculum and teaching practices. They will enable teachers to use ICT to access professional learning and share innovative practice and resources with their peers.

The projects are:

- *Teaching Teachers for the Future* which is being implemented in collaboration with all teacher training institutions in Australia and will focus on developing pre-service teacher capability.

- *Pathways for Learning Anywhere, Anytime – Network for Educators* which will provide teachers and school leaders with access to a safe virtual environment where they can evaluate and build on their ICT skills.
- *ICT in Everyday Learning: Teacher Online Toolkit* which will bring together existing and new online teaching resources representing the best strategies available to improve teachers' skills and teaching approaches for engaging students through the use of technology in key areas of the Australian Curriculum.
- *Leading ICT Learning in Technology Enabled Schools* which is focused on supporting school leaders to develop the necessary skills to plan and create new learning environments and understand the appropriate and purposeful integration of ICT into learning.

Supporting the Australian Curriculum Online

The \$31.4 million SACOL project announced by Minister Garrett on 23 September 2011 will provide support and professional development for teachers in their implementation of the Australian Curriculum as an online curriculum. The professional development elements are:

- \$10 million to support teachers by providing high-quality online professional learning resources that further their professional development. These may include helping teachers learn how to use wikis and blogs; advice on using online assessment tools for individualised teaching; and exchanging information and ideas online about implementing the curriculum.
- \$5 million to support teachers in the flexible delivery of language teaching and learning. This includes developing a Language Learning Space comprising podcasts, webinars, lesson plans, and videos to help teach languages to students and a professional development program for teachers.

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Auditor-General's Report Nos 16–46 (2010–11)

Outcome 2 - Schools

DEEWR Question No. 6

Question

ICT Infrastructure

You made some comments before about the school now being well-connected via wireless and any other means as a consequence of this program. In regard to linking policy, has any policy work been done or is any proposed to be done on the nine-year rollout of the National Broadband Network, and, regarding the school hub, is any policy work on that becoming a community hub for internet technology and ICT improvements generally? Any work in that regard would be appreciated.

Answer

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is working closely with the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (DBCDE) and schools' authorities to ensure that the broadband needs of the education sector are understood through the progressive rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN).

The NBN has the potential to enhance broadband connectivity across and within education sectors and with the community (including students in their homes and workplaces). This enhanced broadband connectivity will provide the basis and an incentive for the development of a range of new services which can enhance the teaching and learning experience at all levels of the education sector. It will also provide improved accessibility for the increasing number of individuals pursuing learning opportunities online.

To that end, the Australian Government is providing \$27.2 million over four years from 2011-12 for the NBN-Enabled Education and Skills Services Program¹ to support the development and trialling of online and interactive education, training and skills services taking advantage of the high-speed broadband connections being made available through the NBN. The Program will seek to develop and trial services that provide more interactive and effective learning opportunities for all Australians, no matter where they live.

The Program is being administered by DEEWR in cooperation with DBCDE. Funding decisions will be made jointly by the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations and the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

¹See www.deewr.gov.au/department/Pages/nbeducationandskills

The Australian Government will also provide \$23.8 million over three years from 2011–12 for the Digital Communities initiative, a focus of which is to establish a Digital Hubs program that will help communities to gain the skills needed to maximise the benefits provided by the NBN. The program will establish a Digital Hub in the first 40 communities to benefit from the NBN. Digital Hubs will provide local residents with online training and the opportunity to experience NBN-enabled services and technology.

DBCDE is responsible for administering this program. Educational institutions are eligible to operate a Digital Hub. Applications for Round One of the Digital Hubs program closed on 5 October 2011. DBCDE has advised that applications are being assessed and announcements of the service providers who will operate the Digital Hubs will be made in due course. DBCDE will advertise future funding rounds on its website.²

Both the NBN Enabled Education and Skills Services Program and the Digital Communities initiative contribute to the government's vision for Australia as a leading global digital economy by 2020. More details about this vision and the Digital Economy Goals are available in the National Digital Economy Strategy³.

² See www.dbcde.gov.au/digital_economy/programs_and_initiatives/digital_communities_initiative

³ See <http://www.nbn.gov.au/the-vision/digitaleconomystrategy/>

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Auditor-General's Report Nos 16–46 (2010–11)

Outcome 2 - Schools

DEEWR Question No. 7

Question

ICT Infrastructure

Could you please provide information on the number of schools connected for each category listed below: (a) at the start of the program; and (b) the most recent data available.

- Wireless
- Fibre optic cable
- Satellite

Other (please provide details)

Answer

Since 2008, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations has undertaken an annual survey of schools' broadband connectivity. Responses reported in these surveys⁴ indicate the proportion of schools that reported using various technologies in 2010 as:

- 63.4 per cent reported using fibre (compared to 47.0 per cent in 2008)
- 32.8 per cent reported using copper (42.3 per cent in 2008)
- 1.9 per cent reported using satellite (2.4 per cent in 2008)
- 1.2 per cent reported using wireless (1 per cent in 2008)
- 0.1 per cent reported no broadband access (3 per cent in 2008)

In 2010 less than one per cent reported other types of technology to those listed above (such as microwave and frame relay) compared to 4.3 per cent in 2008. The proportion of schools reporting in the "other" category has reduced over the life of the survey, in part due to refined definitions of the technology types.

⁴ See <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/DigitalEducationRevolution/Pages/default.aspx>.

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Auditor-General's Report Nos 16–46 (2010–11)

Outcome 2 – Schools

DEEWR Question No. 8

Chair (Mr OAKSHOTT) provided in writing.

Question

Government advice surrounding technical training and support and maintenance costings

What advice was given to the Government as to how the costs of technical training and support, maintenance of the computers and infrastructure would be funded?

Answer

The costs of technical training and support, maintenance of computers and infrastructure were considered by the Australian Government in the context of decisions made by the Council of Australian Governments in 2008. The Australian Government commissioned the Review of Legitimate and Additional Financial Implications of the National Secondary School Computer Fund led by Dr Paul Grimes to provide it with advice on these matters. That advice was provided in a report delivered in September 2008 and is available at the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations website:

www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/DigitalEducationRevolution/ComputerFund/Documents/TheGrimesReview.pdf

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Auditor-General's Report Nos 16-46 (2010-11)

Outcome 2 - Schools

DEEWR Question 9

Chair (Mr OAKSHOTT) provided in writing.

Question

Review of accuracy of data.

When does the department intend to conduct a review on the accuracy of data as to how many schools are delivered?

Answer

The Department of Education, employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) will incorporate an audit of a sample of schools in line with Recommendation No.3 of the Australian National Audit Office Performance Audit Report No.30 2010-11 in the mid-program review of the Digital Education Revolution to be undertaken early in the 2012 school year.

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Auditor-General's Report Nos 16-46 (2010-11)

Outcome 2 - Schools

DEEWR Question No. 10

Chair (Mr OAKSHOTT) provided in writing.

Question

Government Advice: Applications

What advice was given to Government as to whether there would be issues in opening up applications in the first 100 days of the Rudd Government?

Answer

The timeline for implementing Round One of the National Secondary School Computer Fund (The Fund) was determined by the incoming Rudd Government on its election in 2007. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations was able to implement Round One in accordance with the required timeline through early and regular consultation with education authorities during that period. Round One of the Fund focused on the most needy schools with a computer to student ratio of worse than one to eight.

Audit report No.30 – Digital Education Revolution
Questions on Notice

Broad topic	Question	Hansard Page or Written O
1. Delivery	<p>CHAIR: Thanks for that. I have a few more questions before handing over to others. The first is that, as a local member, anecdotally, there seemed to be just a flood of computers land last month. Do you have any recent data on the progress of the rollout, compared to today, and how close you are going to be to hitting the target on 31 December?</p> <p>Dr Arthur: We do have data; however, I would need to take your question on notice in that, to date, the government made a decision that it would only publish information derived from the six monthly consolidated reports from all the education authorities, the most recent one of which was halfway through this year and which contained the figures which the Auditor has already provided to you. As a matter of program management, we do have more recent information. We have a computer system whereby schools are able to update the installation of computers as they are installed either at school level or in some cases at the system authority level, so we do indeed have more recent figures available to us. I would just need to consult with the government on whether they wish to vary the policy they have had to date in order to provide information to this committee. So I would need to take it on notice for that reason.</p> <p>CHAIR: Anything you can provide, either on notice or now, would be appreciated.</p>	Hansard p.2
2. Usage/benefits	<p>Mrs D'ATH: It is nice to hear how well the program is going and the positive outcomes. I am interested in the collection of data—and I do not know whether the department is collecting this sort of detail—identifying what the schools have invested in with regard to ICT, whether they are going for PCs, whether they are providing laptops and whether the laptops are being made available to students outside of school hours. That is just to get an understanding of the extent of the benefit from this technology being introduced into the schools.</p> <p>Dr Arthur: I will make some general comments and we could take on notice what further information we are able to provide...</p>	Hansard p.3

<p>3. Matching skills with demand</p>	<p>Ms O'NEILL: The question was really at the end point. We have further educators. We have skills service providers for students in postsecondary contexts. How much are they engaged in helping identify what they would see as performance indicators that would show that there is some development in technology capacity? I would like to see if they are involved, what their feedback is and whether they are consulted.</p> <p>Dr Arthur: We could take that on notice, certainly.</p>	<p>Hansard p.9</p>
<p>4. Procurement</p>	<p>Ms SMYTH: Thanks very much for your evidence today. The question that I really had was around the residual funding incentive that was contemplated in the report. I just wondered if you had any particular comments on that, particularly around whether you would use that mechanism in future or refine that mechanism for future similar programs.</p> <p>Dr Arthur: I do not quite understand your question; my apologies.</p> <p>Ms SMYTH: The funding incentive whereby schools could use any residual funds for complementary equipment.</p> <p>Dr Arthur: Yes, that certainly is the policy. Overall, we are definitely not attempting to micromanage the expenditure of the funds at the school level, so schools certainly do have the flexibility to apply the funds for a range of complementary purposes and in many cases are doing so.</p> <p>Please note the bold text above. A response to that portion of the question would be appreciated.</p>	<p>Hansard p.9</p>
<p>5. Professional development</p>	<p>CHAIR: I have two questions to put on notice. One is around professional development. Please come back to the committee with any policy work that is happening in parallel with what is effectively an infrastructure rollout on teacher development and professional development—anecdotally noticeable as something that is desperately needed—and whether that parallel work is happening.</p>	<p>Hansard p.9</p>

6. ICT infrastructure	<p>You made some comments before about the school now being well-connected via wireless and any other means as a consequence of this program. In regard to linking policy, has any policy work been done or is any proposed to be done on the nine-year rollout of the National Broadband Network, and, regarding the school hub, is any policy work on that becoming a community hub for internet technology and ICT improvements generally? Any work in that regard would be appreciated.</p>	Hansard p.9
7. ICT infrastructure	<p>Could you please provide information on the number of schools connected for each category listed below: (a) at the start of the program; and (b) the most recent data available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wireless • Fibre optic cable • Satellite • Other (please provide details) 	Written
8. Government advice	<p>What advice was given to the Government as to how the costs of technical training and support, maintenance of the computers and infrastructure support would be funded?</p>	Written
9. Government advice	<p>When does the department intend to conduct a review in 2012 on the accuracy of the data as to how many schools are delivered?</p>	Written
10. Government advice	<p>What advice was given to Government as to whether there would be issues in opening up applications in the first 100 days of the Rudd Government?</p>	Written