

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment - Education

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014-2015**

Outcome 2 - Schools and Youth

Department of Education Question No. ED0678_15

Senator O'Neill provided in writing.

Question

Short term emergency assistance for non-government schools

With reference to the expenditure on short term emergency assistance for non-government schools outlined on page 52 of the PBS: - Why is the expected level of assistance more than doubled from 2013-14 to 2014-15? - For each of the last five years, which schools have been assisted, and how much has each school received? - What are the criteria for accessing this funding? Who makes the decision to provide funds? Do the funds have to be repaid? On what terms? - What method has the department used to estimate the future need for funding under this program?

Answer

The level of assistance has not doubled but has remained steady. The Short Term Emergency Assistance (STEA) programme operates on a calendar year basis, therefore the 2013–14 figure represents that portion of the annual funding for the period 1 January to 30 June 2014. The balance of the 2014 funding (1 July to 31 December 2014) is included in the 2014–15 budgeted amount.

The table below outlines the schools that have been assisted in each of the last five calendar years. No schools have been assisted in 2014.

Year	Name of School	State	Approved STEA Funding GST Inclusive (\$)
2013	Sutherland Shire Montessori School*	NSW	733,150.00
	Sutherland Shire Montessori School*	NSW	220,000.00
2012	Treetops Montessori School	WA	107,772.50
2011	No schools received STEA		
2010	Milkwood Steiner School	NT	181,775.00
2009	Korowal School	NSW	275,000.00
	Tiwi College	NT	132,000.00
Total			1,649,697.50

*Sutherland Shire Montessori School made two separate claims over the course of the year.

The funding is made available under section 69 of the *Australian Education Act 2013*, which came into effect from 1 January 2014. The Hon Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Education may make a determination authorising payment of financial assistance to a non-government school for one or more programme years if the minister is satisfied that special circumstances justify the determination.

Section 25 of the *Australian Education Regulation 2013* outlines matters that the minister may have regard to when determining whether a grant of financial assistance is appropriate given the particular circumstances of a school. These matters include whether a competent school administration should have reasonably foreseen the circumstances that have caused the school financial difficulty and the actions taken by the school to mitigate these issues, the school's financial and governance arrangements, and plans to ensure that the school will be able to resume normal operations, usually within a period of two years following the grant of additional financial assistance.

The minister or delegate is authorised to provide special circumstances funding to schools.

STEAs provide a one off grant that does not need to be repaid.

The STEA has been included in successive school funding Acts to provide a small contingency fund for non-government schools that might otherwise risk collapse. The amount of funding available for STEAs has been maintained consistently across successive Acts and increased in line with indexation arrangements applying to this appropriation.