

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee**

**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**HEALTH PORTFOLIO**

**Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 3 March 2017**

**Ref No:** SQ17-000112

**OUTCOME:** 2 - Health Access and Support Services

**Topic:** Indigenous Hearing Services

**Type of Question:** Hansard Page 60, 3 March 2017

**Senator:** Siewert, Rachel

**Question:**

Dr Southern: Ear checks are part of the MBS item, the 715. They are very much part of that. Then particularly through the Aboriginal medical services it encourages people, particularly children, to have regular ear checks every time they visit their practices. Another thing that we are doing is some work with the Department of Education on a program called Connected Beginnings, which is about a dozen trial sites where we will be working with the Aboriginal medical services who would do outreach into the schools as well and hearing would be part of the health checks and the kind of health literacy approach that they would be taking.

Ms Hefren-Webb: I might just add that we have been in touch with all of the schools involved in the Remote School Attendance strategy to check whether they have an active hearing screening process, and the vast majority have that happening at the beginning of the first year of school.

Senator SIEWERT: The vast majority?

Ms Hefren-Webb: There is probably a couple where it operates a bit differently because of the relationships between the clinics, the school and the locations.

Senator SIEWERT: I really want to follow that up. Can you provide, on notice, where those trials are and a little bit more detail around them because that sounds very positive.

Dr Southern: Yes.

**Answer:**

The Departments of Health (Health) and Education and Training (Education) are working together on the Connected Beginnings Program (the Program). The Program is focused on integrating early childhood, child and maternal health, and family support services with schools in a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities experiencing disadvantage. The aim is to support children to be healthy and ready for school.

Education will fund selected organisations to perform the 'lead agency' role and lead case management and other integration activities in the selected communities, identifying developmental and health needs of identified children. These needs will be met through access to specialist services that will comprise early childhood education and care, child and maternal health, and family support services. Education has not targeted locations in the ACT

or Tasmania, but Health will in order to ensure a Connected Beginnings presence in all jurisdictions.

Health will fund access to the health services identified as essential for those children to meet developmental milestones by school age. Health service delivery will be co-located on or adjacent to school grounds and serve the catchment area of the lead agency/school. Health services will provide child and maternal health services to address health issues that might compromise children being healthy and well prepared for school. This will include ear checks and any necessary referrals.

Health will lead a formative evaluation of the Connected Beginnings program covering both Health and Education funded activities. The process of selecting an evaluator is nearing completion.

The approved locations for the initial funding round are listed below.

<b>Locations to be funded by both Health and Education</b>		
1	NT	Alice Springs <sup>1</sup>
2	NT	Tennant Creek <sup>1</sup>
3	NT	Galiwinku <sup>1</sup>
4	SA	Ceduna
5	QLD	Doomadgee <sup>1</sup>
<b>Locations to be funded by Health only</b>		
6	ACT	Canberra
7	Tasmania	Hobart <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Indicates sites where Education has contracted a lead agency.

<sup>2</sup> Education is currently considering a potential location with the Tasmanian state government.