

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

SENATE ESTIMATES SESSION

Supplementary Budget Estimates 18-22 November 2013

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Truancy

Senator: Senator the Hon Jan McLucas

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Type of Question: Written

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Question:

I refer to Minister Scullion's comments in an ABC radio interview with ABC Darwin Mornings on 18 September 2013:

I'll be meeting with all those Ministers at a state and territory level that are responsible for attendance. I'll certainly be speaking with the Chief Minister in the Northern Territory about this matter and others who can play a role in that and I want as a Federal Minister to have a greater focus on what is absolutely fundamental to Closing the Gap and that's getting kids to school.

The Coalition's policy document states that the "Coalition will also work with States and Territories to ensure their truancy laws are enforced."

- (a) How is this being implemented?
- (b) Has the Minister met with States and territories to discuss implementation?
- (c) What has been discussed and/ or agreed to?
- (d) Will the government contribute Commonwealth funding and resources to this policy commitment? How much money will be given to States and Territories?
- (e) Will the government require States and Territories to collect and provide data on school attendance and enrolment?

Answer:

The Commonwealth Government is committed to improving school attendance for Indigenous children. This will require flexible approaches that ensure both support and compliance with families obligation to ensure children attend school.

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The Minister has made an announcement about the school attendance strategy. In advance of this announcement, the Minister contacted the First Ministers and/or relevant Ministers in each relevant jurisdiction.

At the 13 December 2013 COAG meeting, states and territories agreed to work on a range of measures to improve Indigenous school attendance, including: minimum school attendance benchmarks; publishing twice-yearly data on school attendance for all students broken down by Indigenous and non-Indigenous; support and compliance, such as truancy officers, to ensure children attend school; and conducting audits of attendance, including on-the-spot audits.