

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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Question:

The Coalition's policy document states that it supports an expanded rollout of Seam to combat truancy. The Prime Minister has publicly advocated for on-the-spot fines for parents of truants and a scrapping of income quarantining to tackle truancy. Minister Scullion has admitted that the 'truancy army' which was reported in The Australian does not exist and has subsequently stated that punitive measures should be a last resort. Which one of these options is the Coalition's actual policy on truancy?

Answer:

The Commonwealth Government is committed to improving school attendance for Indigenous children. This will require integrated approaches that support children, families and communities. At the December 2013 meeting of COAG, states and territory governments agreed to support immediate action on school attendance as a first step towards achieving better educational outcomes for Indigenous children, including:

- minimum school attendance benchmarks;
- publishing twice-yearly data on school attendance for all students broken down by Indigenous and non-Indigenous;
- a 'no-excuses' messaging campaign;
- support and compliance, such as truancy officers, to ensure children attend school; and
- conducting audits of attendance, including on-the-spot audits.