

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 1
Output Group: 1.1 – Funding for schools

DEST Question No. E833_04

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

Kinma School, Terrey Hills, NSW

This is a former category 3 school, with an SES score of 119 – one of the highest in NSW.

It received a capital grant for \$55,000 in 2002 for 'installation and upgrading of sewerage, playground, remedial equipment and ground works'.

The school only has around 50 students. The per capita capital grant is over \$1000 – compared with an average for government schools of around \$300.

And the school will receive a 69% increase in Commonwealth general recurrent grants under the SES scheme by 2004.

How can this grant be justified on a 'needs' principle? Even if the needs for sewerage upgrading and remedial equipment were justified, why was it funded from public sources without taking into account the financial capacity of the schools' community?

Answer:

Capital grants to non-government schools

Block Grant Authority (BGA) Schedules of recommended projects for funding must comply with requirements listed in the *Commonwealth Programmes for Schools Quadrennial Administrative Guidelines 2001-2004* and the *Administrative Arrangements for Block Grant Authorities*. These include specific requirements that BGAs: ascertain whether there is a need for a project and what level of funding the school itself can provide; and then, within the total Australian Government funding available, prioritise projects on the basis of relative educational disadvantage of the students at the applicant schools.

In assessing projects for grants, BGAs take into account the total resources available to the school, such as fee income or borrowings, to determine whether the school can fund the project from its own resources. Projects are rejected if the BGA determines that the project could be funded by the school.

In each yearly funding round, BGAs rank eligible projects according to the relative educational disadvantage of the students at the school, and funds are allocated progressively from the most disadvantaged to the less disadvantaged until the BGA's allocation is exhausted.

In making its recommendation to fund Kinma School, the BGA took into account the total resources available to the school and its financial capacity. The Department does not obtain

detailed information on a school's financial resources for the purposes of the Capital Grants Programme.