

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004-2005 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 1
Output Group: 1.1 – Funding for Schools

DEST Question No. E654_05

Senator Crossin provided in writing.

Question:

The Minister has recently announced a National Inquiry into Literacy Teaching and in doing so said “Australians need to ask themselves why..... children can spend 5 years {in school}...and cannot read a word...”.How long has the government known about these low standards? What advice (and when) had DEST given the government to alert them to the problem?

Answer:

National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy

(i) Three years worth of data are available on the national Reading and Writing benchmarks for Year 3 and 5 students (1999-2001).

The 2001 results show that:

Reading: 90% of Year 3 students and 90% of Year 5 students achieved the national benchmark.

The estimated number of students not meeting the national Year 3 reading benchmark was 24,190 in 2001. This estimate has been derived from figures contained in the *National Report on Schooling in Australia : Preliminary Paper, National Benchmark Results Reading, Writing and Numeracy Years 3 and 5* and the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Schools* publication (Cat No 4221.0).

Writing: 90% of Year 3 students and 94% of Year 5 students achieved the national benchmark.

(ii) The Australian Government has led the establishment of benchmarks from 1997 when an agreement was reached on a National Literacy and Numeracy Plan. The development of agreed benchmarks for Years 3,5 and 7 under the Plan has allowed the measurement of student progress using rigorous assessment procedures, and the national reporting of student achievement against the benchmarks.