

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: 2

Output Group: 2.5 – Assistance for post school students including those with special needs.

DEST Question No. E702_05

Senator Aden Ridgeway provided in writing.

Question:

At Nyangatjatjara College, the boys and the girls attend the Yulara campus for alternate school terms – girls attend terms 2 and 4 and the boys terms 1 and 3. For the other terms, the students attend day colleges in their communities. We have heard community concerns that in addition to not knowing where the Abstudy money is being spent by the Corporation, the students and families are not receiving any of that assistance when they are back in their communities for the other half year. Under DEST's NIELENS program, when the students are in the communities they are provided with meals when at school. But there is no visible contribution from Abstudy – eg clothes or shoes. There are no uniforms in the community colleges; the students leave the unisex uniforms at Yulara for the other group. What is the arrangement for the Abstudy payments to ensure that the payments are benefiting the students all year round? How is this enforced? In this specific case, what are the benefits to students for their half-year spent away from the Yulara campus?

Answer:

Nyangatjatjara College

Families of students who are less than 16 years of age and attend Nyangatjatjara College receive the ABSTUDY School Term Allowance for the terms that their students are attending school at home in the communities. These payments are made to the parent or guardian (as the applicant) at the beginning of each school term. Parents can use this money to purchase such items as shoes and uniforms for their children to wear while attending school in the community.

Students who have turned 16 years of age, and are living at home in the community, may be eligible for the ABSTUDY Living Allowance which can assist with the costs of school fees, books and clothing. In accordance with ABSTUDY policy, this payment is made to either the parent or guardian or direct to the student if the parent agrees to this arrangement.

Centrelink records indicate that all School Term Allowance payments have been made to individuals, as have payments of the ABSTUDY Living Allowance for those students who are aged 16 years of age and living at home in the community. In 2004 Centrelink made 183 such payments on behalf of 67 students.