

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: 1

Output Group: 1.2 – Assistance to individuals including those with special needs.

DEST Question No. E715_05

Senator Ridgeway provided in writing.

Question:

We heard in Senate Select Committee into the Administration of Indigenous Affairs that the government plans to have the positions in regional ICCs be perceived as “a good career move” – presumably like teachers and nurses have had as incentive systems across the states. Given that the problem with a system of enticing people to outer areas with the promise of promotions or “better” placements, and the like, is that regional areas usually get the most inexperienced teachers. Are you concerned about sending inexperienced staff to deal with people in the most complex and disadvantaged of circumstances? How do you plan to ensure that staff stay in the regional ICCs for the medium to long term to develop solid relationships with the communities they serve?

Answer:

ICCs

DEST’s approach since the new arrangements for Indigenous service delivery were announced has been to co-locate its staff with other ICC staff in areas where DEST has a regional presence and there is also an ICC office. In locations where there is an ICC and DEST does not have a district office, the Department has identified regional staff that have a thorough knowledge of the Department’s Indigenous education programs and have experience in working with Indigenous people and education providers for transfer to the ICCs. DEST Staff in the regional network have longstanding relationships with Indigenous communities and has developed excellent working relationships with these communities.

The Department has invested heavily in ongoing skills development and training for its regional network to ensure that staff have the capabilities to do this and as a result staff survey results point to high staff morale and engagement.

DEST staff are well remunerated compared to other Australian Public Service Agencies and the Department has a range of family friendly conditions that allow it to claim employer of choice status and to retain its workforce. Voluntary turnover rates for ongoing State Office staff are relatively low (8.27% and 8.05% respectively in the 2004 and 2005 calendar years).