

## EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

### SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2006-2007 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

**Outcome:** 1  
**Output Group:** 1.2

#### DEST Question No. E849\_07

Senator Carr provided in writing.

#### Question:

Reading Assistance Voucher Scheme

1. The Reading Assistance Scheme – formerly known as the Tutorial Vouchers scheme – will be run again in 2007 – is that correct?
2. Can you explain the differences between how this one will operate, and the initial Tutorial Voucher Initiative that ran in 2005?
3. What is the funding? Will you be providing more than the \$700 per student that you allocated back then?
4. The initial program assisted 6200 students – is that correct? How many students were eligible – am I right in thinking that the take-up rate was unexpectedly low? What was it?
5. In 2006 you estimated that 17 500 students would be eligible for this assistance in 2007 – in that they would fail to meet the Year 3 national reading benchmark. What do you expect the take-up rate to be this time? On what numbers is your \$20.6m of funding based?
6. In 2005, was the take-up rate equivalent across the country? Were there variations by state or region? What were they?
7. Are you expecting the same thing to happen this time? What are you doing to improve the take-up rate?
8. Can you confirm that the students assisted in 2005 were those who had not met the Year 3 benchmark in 2003?
9. This time, are they students who didn't reach it in 2006?
10. What about those who failed to meet the benchmark in 2004 and 2005? Will they be assisted? How and when will they receive assistance?
11. Do you have plans to offer assistance on the basis of, say, Year 5 testing?
12. Or will those students miss out on assistance?
13. Have you worked out yet whether private providers will participate in the Reading Assistance program? Will they do so on the same basis as in the pilot in 2005? There were some problems associated with private providers back then if I remember rightly – what were they?

#### Answer:

### *Reading Assistance Voucher Scheme*

1. The Reading Assistance Voucher programme is a new programme, developed out of the pilot Tutorial Voucher Initiative, to be delivered during the 2007 school year.
2. The key difference is that the Reading Assistance Voucher programme will be administered by a National Programme Manager, Curriculum Corporation.
3. The budget allocation is \$20.6 million over the 2006-07 and 2007-08 financial years. Under the Reading Assistance Voucher programme eligible students will receive up to \$700 worth of tuition.
4. Yes. The estimated total of eligible students was 19,079 (based on 2003 benchmark data). The take-up of students who registered for tuition was 40 per cent which, for a national pilot, was a successful result.
5. Parents/caregivers of eligible students will register them for assistance. Registrations are still being received, so it is not yet possible to provide an estimate on the take-up rate. The budget allocation is based on the latest available benchmark data from 2004 (17,500 students).
6. No. In States where parents/caregivers were advised directly of their eligibility by the education authority (NSW, SA, TAS & the ACT) the take-up ranged from 47-70 per cent. In States where the education authority did not inform parents directly the take up was lower and many eligible students missed out on the reading assistance. The take up rates were 12% in Victoria, 18% in Queensland and 30% in West Australia.
7. The evaluation results for the pilot Tutorial Voucher Initiative indicated that direct notification to parents would have a significant impact on take-up. States and Territories have all notified parents/caregivers of their child's eligibility for the programme.
8. Yes.
9. Yes.
10. The Reading Assistance Voucher programme will not be available to children who were in Year 3 in 2004 or 2005. These students are able to receive support through the Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs Programme.
11. On 7 February 2007 the Minister announced that the Australian Government was looking at providing assistance to students in Year 9 who experience difficulty with reading.
12. See 11. The most educationally disadvantaged students are also supported through the Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs Programme. An estimated \$2 billion will be provided over the 2005-2008 quadrennium. The schools element of this programme will provide an estimated \$1.8 billion nationally over the quadrennium to States and Territories.
13. Private tuition providers can register their tutors for the Reading Assistance Voucher programme.

The National Programme Manager will work collaboratively with education authorities, schools and tuition providers to arrange employment of suitable tutors.