

## EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

### SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004-2005 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

**Outcome:** 1  
**Output Group:** 1.1 – Funding for schools

#### DEST Question No. E141\_05 – Interim

Senator Crossin provided in writing.

#### Question:

A recent report by Trevor Cobbold, quoted in Canberra Times of 30<sup>th</sup> Page 3 finds that non-government schools increased their funding advantage over public schools from 7% in 2001 to between 12 – 17% in 2003/04 – so at least doubled their advantage.

1. What is the DEST estimate of such non government school funding advantage?
2. The same report found that on a per student basis and taking (as one should to be accurate) ALL income into account, government schools received an average \$8477 per student whereas independent schools received \$11,890. Again what figures do DEST have?
3. How are independent schools held accountable for funds given to them by the government? What financial and performance reports do THEY have to provide – how often and to whom?

#### Answer:

*Non-government school funding advantage*

1 and 2 require significant analysis by the Department and will be completed by the 10<sup>th</sup> of September.

3. Non-government schools and systems are subject to a range of accountability requirements in order for them to receive Australian Government funding. Apart from the requirements set out below, as legally incorporated entities, non-government school authorities are also subject to the accountability provisions of the Australian Securities and Investment Commission or their State or Territory registrar of associations. This entails the submission of audited annual financial statements which are available for public scrutiny.

- Non-government School authorities must provide financial accountability each year, in the form of a certificate, signed by an accountant, to the effect that funds have been spent, or committed, for the purposes for which they were provided. They are also required to submit a Financial Questionnaire which specifies all gross income received by the authority in operating the school and in providing activities for the students enrolled at the school and all gross expenditure (whether of a recurrent or capital nature).
- Schools provide educational accountability for Australian Government funding, mainly through participation in the annual *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (the ANR).
- The accountability provisions of the *States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act 2000* (the Act) are built on the premise that all schools are equally accountable for the public funds they receive for the education of the children in their care.

- Under the Act, all education authorities are required as a condition of funding to make a commitment to the National Goals for Schooling in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and to commit to achieve any performance measures, including targets, incorporated in the legislation. These commitments form part of the funding agreements between the Australian Government and each system/school. Performance targets and measures are incorporated in the legislation through regulations, though wherever possible national targets and measures are to be agreed first by MCEETYA.
- An important step in recent years has been the development by MCEETYA of an overarching measurement framework for national key performance measures, setting out the basis for reporting progress towards the achievement by Australian students of the national goals. A key feature is the regular assessment of student outcomes, with a proposed programme of assessments for the period 2002-2009. The framework sets out the broad nature of the performance measure in each domain, the year levels at which assessment takes place and the assessment cycle.
- Literacy and numeracy at Years 3, 5 and 7 is measured through annual, full-cohort skills testing undertaken by each State and Territory. In other domains, rolling triennial national sample assessments are being put in place. Reading numeracy and science literacy for 15 year olds are being assessed through the triennial OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which is already in operation. Both government and non-government schools/systems are required to participate in these assessments as part of their educational accountability for Australian Government schools funding.
- Capital grants to independent schools are made through independent Block Grant Authorities (BGAs) in each State. BGAs are fully accountable for the funds provided under the Capital Grants Program.
- BGAs also provide performance information covering broad indicators such as degree of educational disadvantage of the students supported by the grant, and relationships of projects to area standards and to Australian Government priorities for schooling.