

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE – QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2005-2006 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 1

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

DEST Question No. E023_06

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

Indigenous literacy and numeracy

The National Report to Parliament for 2003 tells us that there has been little improvement – and some losses – in performance of Indigenous students in literacy and numeracy over the period 2001-2003.

Performance is still behind, and well behind in some states and territories and at some levels.

- (a) Given this situation, how seriously does DEST view the delays and problems in the funding and implementation of the in-class tuition program for 2005?
- (b) How many students needing assistance had funding for their program delayed?
- (c) Have the problems now been resolved?

Answer:

Indigenous literacy and numeracy

(a) The Australian Government's Indigenous-specific education programmes, including ITAS, are supplementary interventions to mainstream programmes, and particularly to jurisdictions' own source effort. DEST has been encouraged by the approach adopted by some jurisdictions, particularly the Northern Territory, in taking measures to underwrite the continuation of in-class tuition arrangements pending finalisation of quadrennial Indigenous Education Agreements.

(b) & (c) All major education providers (government and non-government) have agreed to deliver ITAS In-Class Tuition for the 2005-08 quadrennium. All jurisdictions other than the New South Wales, Victoria and Australian Capital Territory governments had signed Indigenous Education Agreements enabling ITAS funds to flow to schools as at end June 2005.

Of the more than 16,000 Indigenous students who did not meet one or more of the minimum national literacy and numeracy benchmarks in 2004 – a goal that all education jurisdictions have committed to since 1999 through the National Goals for Schooling – a maximum of 9,000 students may have had access to Australian Government supplementary funding delayed. The Department is encouraged that the finalisation of Indigenous Education Agreements with most providers has been secured well in advance of the comparable timelines in the previous (2001-2004) funding quadrennium.