

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: 2

Output Group: 2.4 – Funding for higher education.

DEST Question No. E028_06

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

Indigenous Teachers

Last time I asked a question about the action recommendations about Indigenous teachers in the Final Report of the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education (Reference: E734_05 *Australia's teachers, Australia's future: Final report of the review of teaching and teacher education*, page 21). In the Department's response, with reference to Action 16 from the report, the Department has drawn attention to the *What Works* and *Dare to Lead* projects in schools.

- (a) What do these programs do to ensure that *all* graduating teachers have "as a core competency" an understanding of the needs and backgrounds of Indigenous students - as you apparently claim?
- (b) How will the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council advance this aim?
- (c) Action 17 calls for special incentives for prospective Indigenous teachers, including scholarships and payment of their HECS debt. You respond with reference to the Indigenous Higher Education Staff Scholarships.
- (d) Is it the case that only five of these will be available annually? And are they available only to Indigenous people who happen to work in higher education institutions?
- (e) How, realistically, can this extremely small and highly targeted program be said to advance the aim of Action 17?
- (f) Reference was also made to the Commonwealth Learning Scholarships Program. How many of these scholarships are available annually?

Responses:

- (a) The *What Works* and *Dare to Lead* projects enable teachers, and Principals, who work in schools across every State and Territory to access support to develop greater cross-cultural awareness, partnerships and inclusive teaching and learning practices which will improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous students. *What Works* delivers a professional development package to teachers through workshops aimed at improving their skills in working with Indigenous students and their communities and to share best practice in Indigenous education with Australian teachers.

The *What Works* project for the 2005-2008 quadrennium incorporates elements that will facilitate the development of an ongoing support process for tertiary educators concerned with preparing pre-service teachers for working with Indigenous students and will also provide professional development workshops for pre-service teachers in their last year of teacher education.

The *What Works* website provides practical and reliable support materials for teachers and enables all teachers to access case studies which explain best practice and successful programmes and strategies that schools and individual teachers can use. Both pre-service teachers and practising teachers can utilise this website to develop and support teaching practice.

The *Dare to Lead* project provides information and resources to support Indigenous education. Pre-service teachers can access the *Dare to Lead* website for this element of support.

Currently, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training is undertaking an inquiry into teacher education. The inquiry will examine the preparedness of graduates to meet the current and future demands of teaching in Australian schools, including meeting the needs of Indigenous students.

In addition, the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (NIQTSL) is developing a process for the national accreditation of teacher education courses. It is also developing a national approach to advanced professional standards for accomplished teachers and for school leaders. Both will be shaped by the National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching which were agreed to the Ministerial Council on Education Employment training and Youth Affairs in November 2003.

- (b) The Terms of Reference of the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council includes a reference aimed at encouraging Indigenous content in courses to ensure that *all* graduates understand Indigenous cultures. The Council is actively progressing work plans developed around their Terms of Reference.
- (c&d) Five Indigenous Higher Education Staff Scholarships are available annually. They are available only to Indigenous staff (academic or general) of higher education providers.
- (e) Reference to the Indigenous Higher Education Staff Scholarships was only part of the response to question E734_05. As stated, the scholarships are available only to Indigenous staff (academic or general) employed by higher education providers.
- (f) The Commonwealth Learning Scholarships (CLS) Program consists of Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships (CECS) and Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships (CAS). The allocation of the scholarships from 2005-2009 is as follows.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
CECS	5029	5056	5098	5131	5157
CAS	3518	3535	3562	3584	3603

Providers of CLS must ensure a fair proportion is awarded to Indigenous students. A fair proportion means that the proportion of scholarships to be awarded to Indigenous students should be at least equal to the proportion of all eligible Indigenous applicants. That is, if there are 100 total eligible applications for 20 scholarships and 20 eligible applications are Indigenous, a minimum of four Indigenous applicants (20% of total Indigenous eligible applicants) should be awarded scholarships.