

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: 1

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

DEST Question No. E096_06

Senator Nettle provided in writing.

Question:

(i) Does the government accept the crucial role of English as a Second Language (ESL) services in public schools in the educational development of some children from non-English speaking backgrounds, and the importance of English language skills in cultural, economic, social and political engagement?

(ii) Is the government aware that that many students in south, western and south western Sydney are missing out on ESL services and consequently are at risk of not being able to fully participate in the curriculum?

Answer:

ESL services in public schools

(i) Yes. The Australian Government provides significant support to State and Territory government education authorities to ensure that students from non-English backgrounds are given additional support in schools so that they will be able to participate fully in Australian society.

(ii) The Australian Government provided over \$18.8 million to the NSW Department of Education and Training in 2004 under the English as A Second Language New Arrivals (ESL-NA) Programme to support newly arrived non-English speaking primary and secondary state school students.

- The objective of ESL-NA is to improve the educational opportunities and outcomes of newly arrived primary and secondary school students of non-English speaking backgrounds by developing their English language competence and facilitating their participation in mainstream education activities. Education authorities receive a per capita grant for each eligible student under this programme.
- Eligible students are expected to receive a minimum of six months intensive English language tuition either in intensive language centres or units, or in schools. In the latter case, it is expected that students will be provided with a minimum of ten hours of assistance per week. The amount and duration of assistance to be provided for individual students is, however, a matter for education authorities to determine.

In addition, targeted assistance for students with special learning needs continues to be provided under the Australian Government's Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs (LNSLN) Programme. Over the next four years, this Programme will provide an estimated \$2.1 billion targeted at the most educationally disadvantaged students, including students from non-English speaking backgrounds. The Schools Grants element of the Programme will contribute an estimated \$1.87 billion nationally to government and non-government education authorities over the quadrennium. Under the Schools Grants element the initial allocation for the NSW Department of Education and Training for 2005 is

approximately \$100.77 million. Of this approximately 28% of funding has been calculated using the Language Background Other than English allocative mechanism based on the ABS Census.

The NSW Department of Education and Training is responsible for the administration of the Schools Grants element of the LNSLN Programme within their system as they are best placed to determine the students and schools that have the greatest need. Funding provided under the LNSLN Programme may be used to employ English as a Second Language teachers, teacher aides, professional development and learning resources for educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and non-English speaking students. Types of initiatives funded under the programme include early intervention programmes to identify those students in need of additional assistance in literacy or numeracy, intervention and support programmes for students with disabilities and intervention strategies such as reading recovery.