

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. E099_06

Senator Nettle provided in writing.

Question:

Is the government aware that:

- a) the number of full time ESL teaching positions in NSW public schools has remained static at 876 since 1993, despite an increasing need for ESL services,
- b) from 1983 to 2004, the ratio of ESL teachers to ESL students in primary schools increased from 1:55 to 1:110 and in secondary schools from 1:42 to 1:78,
- c) neither State nor Federal government has increased ESL funding to ensure that every child who needs it receives quality ESL education, and that this failure has effectively capped the number of ESL teachers employed by the Department of Education and Training?

What steps will the government take to ensure that this situation is rectified?

Answer:

Funding

- a) Adequate and appropriate staffing of NSW State schools is a matter for the NSW Minister for Education. The Australian Government provides significant resources to support the teaching of English as a Second Language teachers.
- b) Australian Government funding has increased proportionally to the increase in the number of students in need. The English as a Second Language New Arrivals (ESL-NA) Programme is demand driven. The NSW Department of Education and Training is responsible for allocating funding to the schools which enrol eligible students in need of intensive English Language tuition. Funding may be used to employ teachers. The Schools Grants element of the Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs Programme will provide an initial 2005 allocation of approximately \$100.77 million to the NSW Department of Education and Training. This programme aims to improve the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students, including non-English speaking students, and complements State Government funding. The NSW Department of Education and Training is responsible for the administration of the Schools Grants element and the funding may be used, for example, to employ English as a Second Language teachers, teacher aides and for teacher professional development.
- c) Australian Government funding under the ESL-NA Programme is demand driven and as such covers increases in numbers of students. In addition, the per capita funding of \$4,854 (in 2004) is supplemented each year in line with movements in the Average Government School Recurrent Costs Index.