

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2009-10**

Outcome: 2

DEEWR Question No. EW0135_10

Senator Mason provided in writing.

Question

Rural Student Hostel Funding

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace relations wrote to the Rural Student Hostels in Queensland advising that under the 29 November 2008 COAG national Education Agreement, it had been agreed that from 2009 Commonwealth funding for hostels would be provided to the States under the NEA. Was it the Commonwealth's expectation that the funding for hostels would be continued by the states?

Answer

Under the National Education Agreement (NEA), each jurisdiction is now responsible for the allocation of Commonwealth funding. The funding for Non Government School Term Hostels has been incorporated into the NEA. In January 2009, DEEWR advised the hostels that received funding in 2008 of the new NEA arrangement and that they should contact their state education department regarding arrangements for 2009.

DEEWR also advised the relevant state governments of the new arrangements and indicated our understanding that hostels may wish the State government to continue the program in its current form for at least 12 months while they determine how best to support rural students.

Question

In the letter to Rural Students Hostels, the Department advised hostels to contact the Queensland Department of Education Training and the Arts regarding payment arrangements for 2009 and gave a contact name. Are you aware that the Queensland Government has not made any subsidy payments to these hostels, and has given no indication whether or not payments will be made?

Answer

No.

Question

Is it reasonable for the State Government to use money provided to it from the Commonwealth for funding student hostels for other purposes?

Answer

The National Education Agreement (NEA) contains a statement of the agreed objective and outcomes for school education in Australia and provides greater flexibility for states and territories to allocate Commonwealth funding to areas which they believe will produce the best outcomes for students.

Question

What actions does the Commonwealth propose to take to ensure the financial viability of hostels which have not so far received any subsidy payments?

Answer

The purpose of the Non-Government School Term Hostels program was to provide additional funds to enhance the standard of student care in order to improve their outcomes at school. It was not intended to maintain the viability of a facility.

It is a matter for each jurisdiction to determine how they may wish to support rural students.