

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 1

Output Group: 1.3 – Assistance for quality teaching and learning

DEST Question No. E416_04

Senator Carr asked on 6 November 2003.

Question:

- a) Can the Department please provide a report on the Discovering Democracy program, including details of expenditure on the various components and activities funded under the program since January 2001, and information on these activities and initiatives?
- b) Can the Department also provide information on the current status of initiatives originally intended under the program, including the course and resource materials originally prepared for distribution to schools?

Answer:

Discovering Democracy

a) *Discovering Democracy* was funded with \$18 million from 1997 to 2000. The programme was extended with funding of a further \$13.6 million in the 2000-2001 budget to help it become embedded in schools. Of the additional \$13.6 million, \$7 million has been allocated to teacher professional development, \$2.1 million to curriculum resources and \$4.5 million to strategic national initiatives supporting the programme.

Discovering Democracy project officers in each State and Territory coordinate the delivery of professional development activities (including school grants). These officers work with committees, including representatives from State and Territory Education Departments and the Catholic and independent education sectors, as well as teacher and academic representatives.

Curriculum resources produced as part of the extended programme include:

- *One Destiny! The Federation Story - the Centenary Edition* (a CD-ROM on Federation), *Australians All!* (a big book for early primary students) (distributed in 2001), and
- *Our National Flag since 1901* (video and teachers notes for primary students), *Australia's Democracy: A Short History* (for senior secondary students) written by Dr John Hirst; and *Australian Readers Discovering Democracy Upper Secondary Collection*. (distributed in 2002)

There are also comprehensive website resources including online versions of all the eighteen learning units from the original *Discovering Democracy* kits distributed to schools in 1998 (<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/democracy>).

National activities include *Celebrating Democracy Week*, national Achievement Awards, a national forum, support for the national Schools Constitutional Convention and the National Capital Educational Tourism Project, national projects involving key stakeholders, including teachers, principals and teacher educators' associations and, in addition, some support for the National History Project.

b) The *Discovering Democracy* resources produced since the commencement of the programme in 1997 are being used in schools in all jurisdictions and sectors. Resources produced up to 2000 included kits distributed to all schools in 1998, a series of *Australian Readers* (collections of illustrated fictional and factual, historical and contemporary texts dealing with civics and citizenship themes), and resources to support assessment by teachers and research work by students.

The *Discovering Democracy* kits distributed to schools in 1998 were principally aimed at students from mid-primary to Year 10. They were built around eighteen learning units which in turn were structured around four themes: “Who Rules?”, “Law and Rights”, “The Australian Nation” and “Citizens and Public Life”. The eighteen learning units and the book *Discovering Democracy: A Guide to Government and Law in Australia* by Dr John Hirst which was also distributed with the kits are now available online – through the *Discovering Democracy* website. The website (<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/democracy>) provides information on all the *Discovering Democracy* curriculum resources and support for teachers using them in the classroom. The website includes school showcases, case studies of schools addressing Indigenous issues in civics and citizenship education, professional development support for teachers and a web resource, *Parliament@Work*, which provides consolidated information on all parliaments in Australia.