

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: 1

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

DEST Question No. E494_04

Senator Crossin asked on 5 November 2003, EWRE Hansard pages 102-103.

Question:

I want to go to the NIELNS strategies and have a look at some of the six key elements under that. One of the key elements is overcoming hearing, health and nutrition problems, with one of the objectives being joint action between government agencies and communities. Can you give me a breakdown or an understanding of the way in which DEST is working with other agencies: Hearing Australia, the Department of Health and Ageing or FaCS? I am not talking about the COAG trial you are responsible for.

Answer:

National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS)

In March 2000 the Department of Health and Aging committed \$2 million toward the health and nutrition key element of NIELNS, bringing the total NIELNS funding committed to this element to \$5.7 million over the four years of the strategy. There are 33 hearing and health initiatives being conducted under NIELNS.

While there are no direct contractual arrangements in place between DEST and the various health agencies connected with NIELNS, at the provider level collaboration is occurring with health organisations. For example:

- SA Department of Education and Children's Services have an agreement with Hearing Services Australia and Nganampa Health to test the hearing of Indigenous children in the Anangu – Pitjantjatjara Lands of northern SA. This agreement, supported by \$445,000 of NIELNS funding over four years, provides for some ongoing care and management of student hearing health after the initial health assessments.
- Also in SA, DECS are the lead agency in a \$900,000 health initiative being implemented over 2001 – 2004. Partners in this initiative are the Department of Human Services Child and Youth Health, the Tobacco Control Unit, Health Promotion SA and the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services. These agencies are working in partnership under NIELNS to deliver health and nutrition education to Indigenous children and their families. Initially aimed only at preschool, this initiative has now been expanded to incorporate primary and secondary children.
- In the NT, NIELNS is providing \$1,375,660 in support for Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker courses at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. These courses train Indigenous people as health professionals, and place them in clinics in their home communities. Part of the responsibility of clinics in communities is working

with schools and parents on student health issues. Nyangatjatjara College in Central Australia is implementing a NIELNS initiative that promotes healthy nutrition among its students, and as a secondary outcome promotes regular attendance among students. This initiative is funded at \$216,000 over 4 years.

- NIELNS is providing \$1,250,000 over 4 years to the WA Department of Education to coordinate a hearing health programme between government and non-government education providers. This programme consists of a research exercise, followed by staff professional development in teaching hearing impaired children, identification of children requiring assistance, fitting out of some classrooms with acoustically enhancing technology and raising community awareness of hearing health and nutrition issues.
- The NSW Department of Education and Training is working with schools and Indigenous communities to provide information and support for teachers and families in connection with Otitis Media Conductive Hearing Loss. Partnerships have been formed between schools, communities and local health services to raise awareness of this hearing health issue and to provide advice on its management and prevention. \$276,000 has been provided over 4 years under NIELNS in support of this initiative.

NIELNS is currently being evaluated. Early indications are that projects have been very successful, with over 90% of hearing and health initiatives reporting that they have achieved performance targets or significantly improved their outcomes.