

## EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

### SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004-2005 SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES HEARING

**Outcome:** All  
**Output Group:** All

#### DEST Question No. E339\_05

Senator Ludwig provided in writing.

#### Question:

For the following question, please answer with respect to both the Department and all agencies constituted under it:

- a) For each of the i) 1999-2000, ii)2000-01, iii)2001-02, iv)2002-03, v)2003-4 financial years, how many Departmental programs or services were delivered via an intermediary service provider, such as another level of government or non-government organisation?
- b) Of these, in each financial year how many did the funding conditions in contracts specify relevant access and equity accountabilities (for example, collection and reporting of information on client characteristics)?
- c) For each of these, is the provision of a standard clause? If so, can the Department please supply the clause?
- d) If there is no standard provision, is a copy of the provision available for each of these? Are the provisions subsequently audited? If yes, what were the results? (please supply)

#### Answer:

##### *Service providers and access and equity*

- a) The Department does not have centrally aggregated data listing the number of services delivered via intermediaries by individual program and the volume of service contracts administered by the Department precludes the provision of that information without an unreasonable diversion of resources.

Outcomes are delivered by the Department via more than 100 programs. Under this structure there are a multitude of services delivered via intermediary service providers, for example, over 2003-2004 more than 15,401 contracts were implemented under a single program, the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme [ATAS] program. In addition to the ATAS contracts some 1500 individual contracts for service were implemented by the Department between 1 November 2001 and 30 June 2004.

- b) "Access and equity accountabilities" is taken to mean clauses in contracts which require the provider to give equal access to programs or services for all people and to report on those requirements to the Department.

Many programs administered by the Department are not accessible by all people but on the contrary are designed to overcome disadvantage, eg, programs which target youth and indigenous people such as the ATAS. The program guidelines set eligibility criteria for these programs. Programmes are delivered by a number of different providers which results in multiple individual contracts for each program.

DEST has used a suite of standard contract templates for a number of years. The current templates are based on templates developed as a result of the More Accessible Government Initiative taken in 2000. Departmental staff are required to use the templates for all contracts.

The current templates require providers to comply with all relevant laws and requirements of any Commonwealth, State, Territory or local authority and relevant Commonwealth policies. All Commonwealth and State laws applicable to the activities of the provider apply regardless of whether they are specifically mentioned in the standard contract templates.

Some laws and policies are specifically mentioned in the schedule to the standard template, eg, the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999, Commonwealth policies on employment (including the Workplace Relations Act 1996), and obligations under relevant occupational health and safety laws. Other relevant laws and policies can be added to the schedule on a case by case basis. Although relevant laws apply to the provider in any event, they are sometimes mentioned in the schedule as a way of raising provider awareness.

The standard templates also have clauses which require the provider to provide reports to the Department. Specific requirements will be set out in the schedules to the contract as necessary. Provisions are tailored for each contract and vary greatly. There is no standard obligation in the template to collect and report on access and equity issues but, if necessary for a particular contract, this will be included in the schedule.

Provision of copies of all relevant clauses and contract schedules is considered an unreasonable diversion of resources due to the number of relevant contracts.

- c) See (b) above.
- d) (i) See (b) above; and
- (ii) Where appropriate, programs and services may collect data on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of clients or participants. This information may be used for analysis including with respect to access and equity aspects. Some of this information is subject to audit and or compliance analysis. The scale and variation across the many programs in the Department preclude providing a more detailed response.