

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Australian Electoral Commission

Additional Budget Estimates Hearings – 14 February 2006

Question: F55

Outcome: Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)

Topic: AEC School Programs

Written Question on Notice

Senator Carr asked:

1. What programs or support do the AEC offer Australian primary schools?
2. How many primary schools ran these programs or requested support in 2005?
3. What is the annual cost of the provision of primary school programs and support?
4. Is the 2005-06 AEC budget sufficient to ensure the provision of programs and support to primary schools?
5. Has the AEC ceased to provide any programs or support to primary schools over the last 5 years?

Answer:

1. As part of the AEC's Schools and Community Visits Program, AEC staff visit primary schools throughout Australia to deliver electoral education sessions. AEC staff conduct professional development for teachers, including primary school teachers, to help them teach electoral processes as outlined in their subject curriculum. The AEC's Electoral Education Centres (EEC) located in Adelaide, Canberra and Melbourne also provide electoral education sessions designed for primary school students.
2. In 2005 AEC staff visited a total of 632 primary schools nationally to deliver electoral education sessions. During 2004-05, 68,237 primary students participated in a session at one of the EEC.
3. The AEC's Financial Reporting system is unable to split Electoral Education program costs between primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions. In financial year 2004-05 the AEC spent approximately \$2.2 million on the Schools and Community Visits program. In addition, approximately \$1.7 million was spent on EEC programs.

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4. The 2005-06 AEC budget is sufficient to continue to provide programs and support to primary schools.

5. The AEC reviewed its electoral public awareness program in 2002-03 and decided to adopt a more targeted approach than previously. This meant directing resources to specific areas such as young people at or near voting age, new citizens, people from non-English speaking backgrounds and indigenous voters.

The AEC has recently reviewed that decision and while assistance with school elections (and public awareness activities) will continue to be focused on secondary students near voting age, the AEC will provide election and education services to primary schools, whenever possible. Where it is not possible for AEC staff to be involved directly in school elections, the AEC will continue to provide assistance in the form of voting and polling equipment. Obviously this assistance would be based on operational capacity.