

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
References Committee

Inquiry into indigenous education funding arrangements

Submission no: 3

Received: 14/02/2005

Submitter: Mr Graeme Robinson
Teaching Principal

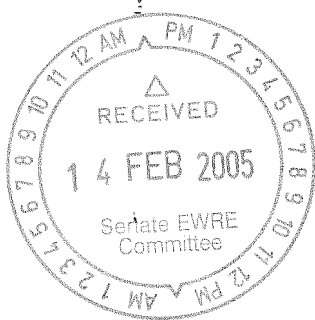
Organisation: Amanbidji School

Address: PMB 16
Via KATHERINE NT 0852

Phone: 08 9168 7380

Fax: 08 9168 7359

Email:

**AMANBIDJI SCHOOL**

PMB 16
VIA KATHERINE
N.T. 0852
PH. 08 9168 7380
FAX 08 9168 7359

THE SENATE ENQUIRY COMMITTEE

Attention: Senator Trish Crossin

4TH February 2005

The implication of the changes to the tutorial assistance is of paramount concern to this school as outlined in the copy of the letter I sent on behalf of the Amanbidji School Community to Dr. B. Nelson last year. (Incidentally, there has not been a reply.)

The students at this school have succeeded in their benchmark achievement because of the intensive, long-term commitment provided by both the tutor and the teacher.

Students in small communities such as this are only immersed in Standard English language (written and oral) while at school. There are no street signs, road signs, shops, newspapers, libraries, etc. unlike that which urban people are exposed to.

Students in communities like this need intensive one-on-one time to develop their knowledge. Results cannot be achieved in the year that they would now receive tutoring, i.e. on failure in year 4 or year 6. This school, like many others, has clearly demonstrated what some long-term assistance can achieve.

All our school students require continued support in the primary learning years to achieve as much success as possible. The students in remote communities then would have a greater chance of succeeding in the secondary system.

Secondary school for students from this small community means a culture shock for them. They must board at that school for the entire year, which means flying to Darwin (over 1000 km. by road). To be confident in their level of knowledge/learning when they attend these schools must be regarded as a key element to their continuing attendance as their confidence in most other ways is shattered by the complete change of culture.

Enclosed is a copy of the letter sent to Dr. B. Nelson and Mr. W. Snowden.

Sincerely

Graeme R. Robinson
Teaching Principal

Enc.



AMANBIDJI SCHOOL



PMB 16
VIA KATHERINE
N.T. 0852
PH. 08 9168 7380
FAX 08 9168 7359

3rd November 2004

The Honourable Dr. Brendan Nelson
Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training

Dear Minister

I am writing to you again with regard to ATAS at this school. Unfortunately, your staff sent an acknowledgement only of my previous letter indicating that the government was in caretaker mode.

This is a small school. We have a general enrolment of 16 each year. My wife and I have been here for 4 years.

The first MAP benchmark tests after we arrived indicated only one student from years 3, 5 and 7 who achieved the level.

Now in 2004, after consistent, ongoing delivery of the ATAS tutoring by my wife, we have received results from the MAP testing to show 100% benchmark pass in Year 3 and 85% benchmark pass in Year 5. No students were in Year 7.

These results clearly show very positive improvement.

In this small Community, without the revision and consolidation on a one to one basis by the tutor, (my wife), the results would not have been achieved.

Our school has clearly demonstrated how the ATAS has significantly improved all outcomes measured under the benchmark testing.

Prior to ATAS, this school had **no** students who reached such levels.

Without the ongoing support from the tutor in 2005, the students who have achieved benchmark will not continue with accelerated learning. It is only with the one on one session that the students receive extra support and consolidation. Communities such as Amanbidji cannot supply this outside the school.

This Community is small and remote. It has very few services. A clinic – staffed by one SRN, a general store open part-time and a school. It has one basketball court. There are no police, newspapers, libraries, street names, footpaths, buses, taxis, etc.

Unfortunately many indigenous people here have issues related to 'grog' and either are not able or do not wish to assist the students in learning at home. However, the Community and visiting personnel have recognised the levels of learning shown by the students and support what the tutor and myself have done.

The high level of enrolment and attendance, the respect and pride the students have towards themselves and the school and the lack of vandalism all indicate that this school is being supported and is succeeding in its education goals.

In many small communities it is very difficult to find highly skilled and dedicated staff willing to put in the long-term commitment.

This school has been fortunate to have, for the first time, a teaching principal and tutor who are very committed. This is another important reason behind why this small remote school has achieved. The school cannot employ my wife, the tutor, in any other capacity to assist the students. The role of Teacher Assistant has been vacant for 8 months and can only be filled by an indigenous person from the Community.

I am at a loss as to how any further improvements in student learning will occur and feel that we won't be able to maintain what we have gained.

The ATAS hours for next year will be reduced to 25% of the current allocation.

Please consider the impact of these new changes to ATAS/ITAS in 2005.

Both my wife and I are extremely upset about the consequences for the students. Especially for those who have achieved so well this year.

We are despondent about the future and would like to hear from you.

With concern



Graeme (Reg) Robinson
Teaching Principal
Amanbidji School