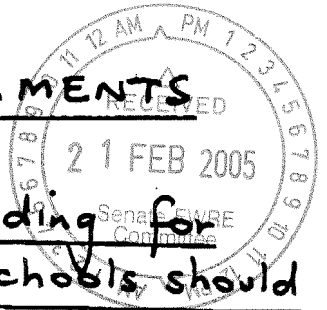


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INDIGENOUS EDUCATION FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS



This submission aims to demonstrate that funding for tutorial assistance to URBAN indigenous schools should be maintained.

I know that the Brisbane Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School at Acacia Ridge is worried that it will lose its Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme funding under the proposed new arrangements.

While on the surface it may appear that the success of this school should render it ineligible to receive further ATAS (or its equivalent) funding, I believe the need will continue for some time.

I am a non-Aboriginal citizen who spent many hours at the school as volunteer librarian from 1990-1996. I have kept in touch, to some extent, with the progress of the school since then.

I think my observations on the needs and clientele of this school would apply to similar urban indigenous schools around Australia.

I have nothing but praise for the way this school is run, and for its longstanding Administrator (Principal) Philomena Downey and her staff. During the years I was there I observed remarkable progress in the behaviour of the students. I was impressed by the way the teachers successfully blended the Queensland Education curriculum with indigenous cultural activities.

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Indigenous education funding (continued) ...

However, among urban indigenous school-children there will always be a proportion who need extra tutorial assistance. Most of the parents of children at the Brisbane school are on social security benefits and some spend time in prison. Some children have come from other urban schools from which they have truanted over a long period of time. The school originally began in 1986 to take in street-kids, who would not attend mainstream schools due to the racism they suffered there. No doubt this still occurs.

In many cases children do not get the parental support they need to overcome the learning difficulties which emerge from social disadvantage and disruption.

Aboriginal people move around quite a lot, seeking employment and a better lifestyle. Consequently indigenous children from around the large State of Queensland may come to this urban school.

Health and language issues can cause learning difficulties for such children. A notable example of this occurred when I was there. One morning three children appeared who had come from Cape York. They barely spoke a word of English. In such cases extra tutorial assistance is necessary.

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Indigenous education ... (continued)

I understand that the aim of the new funding arrangements is to redirect funding to where it is most needed around Australia, specifically to schools in remote areas.

I have demonstrated that re-direction is not desirable. Rather, assistance to urban indigenous schools should be maintained.

Certainly schools in remote areas need to be properly supported. To achieve both goals it is obvious more money is needed.

I believe that the comparatively small amount of funding needed to maintain tutorial assistance to urban indigenous schools is money very well spent. I trust the Brisbane school will not lose its funding.

Sincerely

E. J. Edwards

ELISABETH EDWARDS.

18.02.05