



Northern Territory Government

Department of Employment, Education and Training

Executive

GPO Box 4821 Darwin NT 0801

Telephone: (08) 8999 5857

Facsimile: (08) 8999 3537

email: peter.plummer@nt.gov.au

Our Reference: DOC2005/001869
2005/0227

Senator Trish Crossin
Chair - Employment, Workplace Relations And Education Committee
Suite SG.52
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Crossin

RE: SENATE INQUIRY - INDIGENOUS EDUCATION FUNDING

I am writing in response to your letter of 7 December 2004 regarding the inquiry into new Indigenous education funding arrangements.

Please find attached the NT Department of Employment, Education and Training submission.

Mr John Glasby - Acting Executive Director Strategic Initiatives, Mr Trevor Saunders – Chief Financial Officer and Ms Christine Fitzgerald – Director Policy, Planning and Resources will be available to appear before the committee to expand on the submission as necessary.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide the Northern Territory's perspective on the implications of the new Indigenous education funding arrangements to this inquiry.

Yours sincerely

PETER PLUMMER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

23/2/05.

Inquiry into the implications of funding policy changes contained in 2004 Amendments to the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000.

Terms of Reference

The implications of the Government's proposed changes to funding arrangements for targeted assistance in Indigenous education, as contained in the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2004, and in particular:

1. Proposed changes to the IEDA and IESIP programs with reference to:
 - a) The new tutorial assistance arrangements and Whole of School Intervention strategy under IEDA, and
 - b) New strategic initiatives for indigenous students in remote areas and the new flagship project for teaching literacy under IESIP.
2. The likely educational outcomes of the Commonwealth's new indigenous-specific funding measures with reference to:
 - a) The Indigenous Youth Leadership and Indigenous Youth Mobility Programs, and
 - b) The Government's objective of accelerating educational outcomes for indigenous students, as stated in the 10-point national agenda for schooling announced in Nov 2003.
3. The accountability requirements applying to funding agreements made under IEDA and IESIP programs, with reference to:
 - a) The new framework of performance monitoring and reporting on educational outcomes, and
 - b) The new financial reporting arrangements.
4. The effect of the proposed funding measures on current state and other systemic indigenous programs, and future implications for the operation of ASSPA committees.
5. The extent of consultation between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, schools and parents, especially ASSPA committees, about policies and details of changes to the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000.

Department of Employment, Education and Training
Response to Senate Inquiry

1. Proposed changes to the IEDA and IESIP programs with reference to:

- a) The new tutorial assistance arrangements and Whole of School Intervention strategy under IEDA, and**
- b) New strategic initiatives for indigenous students in remote areas and the new flagship project for teaching literacy under IESIP.**

The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) did not respond to the views expressed by all jurisdictions in August 2004 in relation to the limitations of the new Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) as set out in the draft Provider Guidelines 2005 – 2008.

The timing of the implementation of the changes has been unsatisfactory, and this has resulted in delays to the delivery of tuition to students, and in addition impacted on continuity of employment for Indigenous tutors in schools.

The Australian Government's support for the Accelerated Literacy (Scaffolding) program was well received. While PSPI has replaced the previous Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) program and the Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS), the changes to IEDA and IESIP programs will not result in any significant new money flowing into the Territory.

It is evident that the proposed changes to ITAS will not support the Australian Government's commitment to address greatest need, particularly those Indigenous students in remote areas. The ITAS program will provide a lower level of tuition than that provided in the previous ATAS program - \$7m in 2004 across all Northern Territory schools down to potentially two thirds of that in 2005.

Following the release of the initial exposure draft Indigenous Education Programme Provider Guidelines, further consultation with DEST has resulted in an expansion of the definition of the use to which ITAS funds may be utilised, but the eligibility criteria for determining funding has remained unchanged. The main issues of concern with each element of the IEDA program are noted below.

In-Class Tuition

Eligibility:

The originally proposed criteria to determine student eligibility for the In-Class Tuition program would certainly have limited the access of the majority of students in the Northern Territory - those who are most in need of additional tutorial support.

In comparison to the initial draft provider guidelines, the eligibility rules have now been widened to provide improved flexibility in the use of

Department of Employment, Education and Training
Response to Senate Inquiry

funding. As well as allowing tuition to be approved for Indigenous students who did not meet one or more Year 3, 5 and 7 literacy or numeracy benchmarks in the previous year's literacy and numeracy benchmark tests, the guidelines also allow tuition to be approved for Indigenous school students who are at risk of not meeting the relevant literacy and numeracy curriculum outcome levels for their age.

In 2004 over 3,800 Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) students accessed In-Class Tuition in the Territory at an approximate cost of \$5 million. All these students were assessed as not meeting expected curriculum standards. Under the new funding formula only 1666 of these students will be funded. To deliver tuition to all students not achieving at appropriate curriculum levels, it will be necessary to use the funding attracted by only a small number of students to provide tuition to all those students achieving at lower than expected levels. It is anticipated that in 2005 DEET will receive approximately \$3.71 million for this program.

Administration:

There appears to be a clear case of cost shifting from the Australian Government to the Northern Territory Government through changes to the student eligibility criteria and administration of the program.

The funding directly available to deliver In-Class Tuition to students will be reduced by the impact of administration costs such as travel, professional development, superannuation and insurance being deducted from the total funding pool. Meeting these costs from within the funding pool, as proposed in the guidelines, will reduce the funding available for delivery of tuition in what is already a reduced program in comparison with the 2004 program in the NT.

The previous Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) provided capacity for approximately 177,536 tutor hours (3,800 students x 32 weeks x 1.46 hours/week) in the Northern Territory. The proposed arrangements will allow a maximum of approximately 133,280 tutor hours (1,666¹ eligible students x 32 weeks x 2.5 hours/week). This represents a 25% reduction to the volume of tutor hours available for tuition. This is a significant reduction in the capacity to provide tuition programs for Indigenous students in the Northern Territory. This reduction has resulted from the policy shift, which clearly flows against any of the published reports into ATAS and the support expressed by educators and administrators alike of the critical role tuition provides in bridging the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes.

Further, the \$30 funding rate does not cover the direct costs (identified below) for the employment of tutors at legislated pay rates, nor their

¹ 2004 DEET Benchmark Data

Department of Employment, Education and Training
Response to Senate Inquiry

administration. Excluded from this calculation are additional costs for professional development, travel and indirect costs. The capacity of tutor hours will further decline in future years as the \$30 funding rate is not indexed – unlike other programs (eg IESIP SRA, ESL-ILSS).

From the funding rate of \$30 per hour, the following costs will need to be met:

26.05	Part Time Instructor rate (Level 2)
1.30	EBA - 5% in 2005 (Future years not included)
2.46	Superannuation 9%
2.07	Workers Compensation and Public Liability Insurance
3.00	Administration
<u>\$34.88</u>	Total

These costs amount to approximately \$34.88 – an inadequate amount to meet identified direct costs in 2005 alone, with the explicit outcome that the delivery of tuition hours to individual students will need to be reduced to cover costs.

The actual rate paid to tutors is also likely to be higher when the Teachers and Educators Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) is announced in coming months. DEET will be obliged to ensure tutors are paid in accordance with this agreement.

The allowance for systemic education providers such as DEET to utilise a maximum of 10% of the funding pool for administrative costs is clearly dissimilar to that allowed for tertiary providers - 15% and brokers of the \$700 Tutorial Credit Scheme – over 23%. This is inconsistent, particularly when you consider that DEET is faced with multiple school campuses, geographic dispersion and remoteness.

The option has been provided for Year 10 - 12 Tuition to be administered by either the Department of Education, Science and Training, or by another provider – such as the Department of Employment, Education and Training. This option has not extended to In-Class tuition, resulting in the potential for a mixed delivery system for what is essentially the same program.

Further, providers have not been given the option to choose if they wish to administer the In-Class Tuition program, but rather have been advised that DEST no longer have an In-Class Tuition program. This is closely coupled to the implication that if DEET wishes to have an In-Class Tuition program in schools, they must administer the program. It would have been more desirable if there had been more consultation and negotiation on this aspect.

Department of Employment, Education and Training
Response to Senate Inquiry

Year 10, 11 and 12 Tuition

Eligibility:

Ungraded secondary aged students will not be eligible to access this program. It should also be noted that year 9 students, in what is commonly acknowledged by many as a critical year of schooling, are not eligible for either In-Class Tuition or Year 10 – 12 Tuition.

Administration:

For 2005, DEET has declined the opportunity to administer the Year 10 – 12 Tuition program. DEET will review this position during 2005 and decide whether to administer the program in future years. This decision is premised on DEST's existing resource capacity and familiarisation with administrative requirements to rapidly commence provision of tuition delivery. These are critical factors in implementing a timely service for 2005.

DEET has strongly urged DEST to reconsider the proposed changes in relation to the eligibility of students and administration of both ITAS programs. It has been reiterated to DEST that it is unusual for a program that is so highly respected for the outcomes achieved to be diminished to this extent.

Parent School Partnership Initiative

While some initial concerns regarding the submission based process have been mitigated by more recent advice and the detail in the draft guidelines, residual concerns remain. These concerns relate to the lack of detail relating to the pool of funds available, the timing of initial submissions for the 2005 year and the current uncertainty within school communities as to the impact of this initiative on existing programs and the cessation of Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) committees.

Information on the budget for PSPI in the Northern Territory has not yet been disclosed by DEST. Informal advice in January 2005 suggests there is an over-subscription of submissions for the anticipated level of funding available. It appears the amount of funding available for PSPI in the Northern Territory will be a residual amount, once funding for other programs has been met. This suggests that the PSPI program may be under-funded for the purpose of meeting its objectives.

Some principals have also advised that the Concept Plans presented to DEST have been returned seeking much higher levels of detail than was advised by DEST officers at initial briefings. This appears contrary to the original advice for Concept Plans outlined in the Program Guidelines. It would appear the level of information being provided by DEST in support of school's submissions is less than necessary to satisfy the internal assessment of submissions by senior management

Department of Employment, Education and Training
Response to Senate Inquiry

within DEST. This also appears to imply a less than adequate level of input by DEST field officers into the Concept Plans formulated by schools – again, contrary to the views clearly articulated to DEET during briefings with DEST officers at the time the draft guidelines were discussed.

National Accelerated Literacy Program (Scaffolding)

The introduction of the Accelerated Literacy program is welcomed by DEET. The NT Accelerated Literacy pilot 2001 – 2003 achieved widespread recognition through demonstration of significant improvements in Indigenous student literacy outcomes.

DEET is cautious to ensure expectations are not over-extended as to the achievements that this program will deliver for Indigenous students. There exist a range of challenges that will require considerable efforts to address, including: engaging experienced Accelerated Literacy teaching practitioners; delivery to multiple, remote sites throughout the Territory and ensuring a mobile, dispersed teaching workforce receives appropriate and timely professional development.

To ensure success, these factors will also need system support such as orientation sessions for school staff, program co-ordination, start-up grants, provision of teaching and assessment tools, on-going professional learning for teachers and centralised data collation and data monitoring.

**Department of Employment, Education and Training
Response to Senate Inquiry**

2. The likely educational outcomes of the Commonwealth's new indigenous-specific funding measures with reference to:

- a) The Indigenous Youth Leadership and Indigenous Youth Mobility Programs, and**
- b) The Government's objective of accelerating educational outcomes for indigenous students, as stated in the 10-point national agenda for schooling announced in Nov 2003.**

DEET does not access either the Indigenous Youth Leadership or Indigenous Youth Mobility Programs.

The Australian Government's objective of accelerating educational outcomes for Indigenous students is supported by DEET.

While achievements have been made in the attainment of 'gap closure' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' educational outcomes (as measured in MAP benchmark results), these have not been achieved on a large scale or with system-wide consistency across the years.

The Australian Government Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) is supplementary funding for Indigenous students, providing crucial, marginal funding in support of the Northern Territory's delivery of mainstream education.

While welcoming the Australian Government's provision of supplementary funding for Indigenous education, the transformation of educational outcomes for remote Indigenous students is compounded by comparatively poor levels of Indigenous health, high levels of Indigenous residential overcrowding, remote and dispersed service delivery requirements, social dysfunction, the lack of sufficient, adequate and appropriate infrastructure, few employment opportunities and differing cultural values to the uptake of schooling.

A comprehensive, holistic approach to dealing with these issues is more likely to achieve the desired turn-around in educational outcomes of Indigenous students. DEET is a strong supporter of working in partnership with the Australian Government to address and accelerate an improvement in Indigenous outcomes.

**Department of Employment, Education and Training
Response to Senate Inquiry**

3. The accountability requirements applying to funding agreements made under IEDA and IESIP programs, with reference to:

- a) **The new framework of performance monitoring and reporting on educational outcomes, and**
- b) **The new financial reporting arrangements.**

In-Class Tuition Assistance Scheme

Online reporting:

The On-line reporting facility being developed by DEST may provide an opportunity for a more efficient, timely and less burdensome administrative workload to DEET. DEET will require operational time with the new on-line reporting system before being in a position to comment on its usefulness.

Reporting Timeframes:

Changes made to the reporting requirements have now established 31 May each year as the reporting deadline, a much-improved outcome.

As regards tuition, the guidelines require a Progress Report to be provided by the end of June each year. The Progress Report is to include statements about the delivery of the In-Class tuition program, including difficulties encountered, student learning progress against Northern Territory curriculum standards, attendance and an assessment of the effectiveness of the tuition. Funding for the second part of the In-Class program will be released upon delivery of an acceptable Progress Report.

IESIP Reporting

The guidelines require a significant increase in the level of detail to be included in Performance Reports. For the Northern Territory, information is now required to be reported by geo-location. This means that for each literacy and numeracy indicator, each attendance indicator, and each employment indicator – there is now three times as much information that needs to be recorded, collated and reported. DEET acknowledges that reporting by geo-location shows the real state of Indigenous education in remote areas. If we are to address the areas of greatest need, this information is essential. Further, there is an increased requirement for qualitative reporting. A number of definitional issues remain to be finalised with regard to some of the performance indicators.

The extension of the reporting timeline to 31 May each year is helpful in maintaining an orderly approach to the administration of the program (NT DEET has met the 31 March deadline, although at times with some difficulty).

Department of Employment, Education and Training
Response to Senate Inquiry

4. The effect of the proposed funding measures on current state and other systemic Indigenous programs, and future implications for the operation of ASSPA committees.

The Australian Government funded programs are supplementary to DEET's mainstream service provision. The proposed \$8m for Accelerated Literacy across the quadrennium in the Northern Territory will provide a significant funding boost in support of the Northern Territory's continuing commitment to this program.

The Accelerated Literacy Program will add value to the current systemic initiatives being undertaken by DEET. The program focuses on the systematisation of a small research trial in order to allow widespread exposure to this specific approach across the system with an increasing focus on remote Indigenous students. Hence, with the underpinning development of professional development, education courses and teaching resources it is hoped to build the available capacity across DEET for students to access the Accelerated Literacy Program over the next four years.

The evaluation that will be conducted in parallel with the implementation program will explore the remote school context about which we currently have very little evidence base. It is hoped that through the evaluation project there will be a rigorous analysis of the conditions for success, the cost of sustainable implementation and the outputs required to achieve student outcome targets. In addition, an ongoing research program will broaden our understanding about what program features and learning contexts provide Indigenous ESL students with the same rates of academic success as their non-Indigenous peers.

The likely consequence of the proposed funding measures in relation to the Parent School Partnership Initiative (PSPI) is the cessation of ASSPA committees operating in the Northern Territory. This will result primarily from the change to a submission based system rather than a per-capita funding arrangement. This has the potential to significantly change the involvement of Indigenous parents and carers in school decision making and school activities, as there is no necessity for a committee to convene on a regular basis.

Although 'ASSPA type' committees may operate under the guise of the PSPI, it is considered that more favourable assessment will be given to submissions that more directly target the PSPI objectives of improvements in attendance, literacy, numeracy, retention, and completion of year 12.

The dilution of the tuition eligibility within the In-class Tuition program will potentially result in tuition being delivered from three separate programs: ITAS, PSPI and IESIP. At best this will result in differing program parameters being applied for what is essentially similar tuition, an increase in the complexity and burden of reporting and at worst, has the potential to result in duplication of activity.

Department of Employment, Education and Training
Response to Senate Inquiry

5. The extent of consultation between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, schools and parents, especially ASSPA committees, about policies and details of changes to the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000.

There was insufficient consultation between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) regarding proposed changes to the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000.

DEET provided feedback on the IEDA Discussion Paper No. 3 in March 2003. This consisted primarily of commenting on funding distribution models with varying links between DEST, education systems, schools and communities. There was no mention in the final IEDA Review Report of the changes to programs and initiatives that have come to light since the draft program guidelines were released in July 2004.

The first formal opportunity for DEET to comment on proposed programs occurred once the *Exposure Draft Provider Guidelines 2005 – 2008* were released in early July 2004. DEET were not provided with the opportunity to have input into the design of these criteria. They were presented as the Department of Education, Science and Training's (DEST) established position, setting out what programs were on offer.

DEET acknowledges that we were verbally 'briefed' by local DEST officers, and at various meetings during the year. However, these 'briefings' did not amount to consultation on the policy priorities or program design of the Australian Government.

Some criteria changes were included in the final Provider Guidelines 2005 – 2008 after significant urging from the Northern Territory that the criteria did not match the Australian Government's position that funding be directed to those students most in need – remote Indigenous students. For example, the criteria for use of ITAS funds was extended to include "...for Indigenous school students who are at risk of not meeting the relevant literacy and numeracy curriculum outcome levels for their age".

DEET is strongly committed to working in partnership with the Australian Government to improve Indigenous education outcomes.