

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
References Committee

Inquiry into indigenous education funding arrangements

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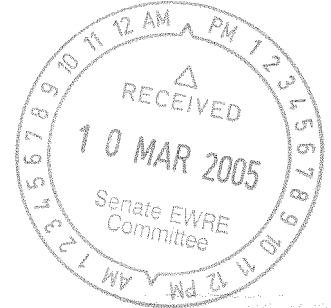
KATY GALLAGHER MLA

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

MINISTER FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY SUPPORT

MINISTER FOR WOMEN MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

MEMBER FOR MOLONGLO



Senator Trish Crossin
Chair
Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committees
Suite SG 52
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator *Trish*

Thank you for your letter of 7 December 2004 inviting a submission from the ACT Government on the significant implications arising from changes to targeted assistance in Indigenous education.

The ACT Government welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the implications of these changes, and a submission is enclosed.

I look forward to learning of the outcomes of the committee's inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Katy Gallagher

Katy Gallagher MLA
Minister for Education and Training

3/3/05

ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

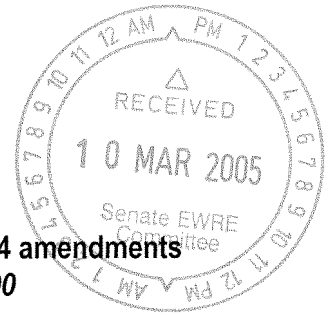
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SUBMISSION FROM THE ACT GOVERNMENT

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



The ACT Government holds the view that the 2004 Indigenous education funding policy changes will not have a positive impact on the education of Indigenous students in the ACT. At this early stage of examination of the documentation, not all ramifications of the changes are clear. A bi-lateral meeting with Commonwealth representatives, on 28 February 2005, provided a forum in which the ACT Department of Education and Training raised their points of contention.

1. The new tutorial assistance arrangements under the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) and the Whole of School Intervention strategy under the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) are both problematic for the ACT. These changes are likely to result in Indigenous students in the ACT receiving less supplementary assistance from the Commonwealth than has been the case in previous years.
 - ITAS will only be available to students in Years 4, 6 and 8 who have failed to meet the benchmarks in the previous year and who attend schools with 20 or more Indigenous enrolments. It is likely that only four ACT schools will meet this criterion in 2005 and with Indigenous students enrolled in approximately 90 schools, the majority of Indigenous students who failed to meet the benchmark in 2004 will not gain any benefit from the ITAS program. This decision ignores the costs within the ACT of meeting the educational need of Indigenous students who are dispersed across a large number of schools.

Indigenous students in the ACT who fail to meet benchmarks, require additional support in the same way as Indigenous students in other jurisdictions with higher number of students.
 - The Whole of School Intervention strategy that is replacing the Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS) and Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) programs is likely to leave Indigenous students in the ACT with less supplementary assistance than in the past, as all Indigenous students previously received direct benefit from the per capita based ASSPA program. Under the new arrangement of submission based funding there is no guarantee that submissions will be funded and there will need to be concerted efforts to ensure that schools and communities participate in this program. This is a concern for the ACT given the dispersed student population and the possible need for a number of school communities to combine in order to access funding.
2. Indigenous Youth Leadership and Indigenous Youth Mobility Program/ 10 point national agenda for schooling.
 - The Indigenous Youth Leadership program appears to have limited application for the ACT – unless some of our schools are considered by the Commonwealth to be amongst the “best Australian Schools”. The nature of the program and its emphasis on

scholarship provision for particular students with nominations generated by local communities may prove to be problematic for the ACT. As mentioned previously, students are dispersed across schools in the ACT and this is often reflected in limited Indigenous representation within some school communities.

- The Indigenous Youth Mobility Program's applicability to the ACT will depend on the choice of training facility and availability of supporting and base accommodation.

3. Accountability requirements under IEDA and ISIP.

- The applicability of some of the performance indicators are questioned and need further examination, especially in relation to the mobility of Indigenous students in the ACT. The new framework of performance monitoring and reporting on educational outcomes introduces aspects that were not in the 2001-2004 agreement. For example, Intellectual Property Rights that give carte blanche permission for use of materials to the Commonwealth, and the provision of data to the Productivity Commission direct from the Commonwealth without the necessary contextual information that comes from the individual States and Territories.
- The new online reporting arrangements appear to be a positive step, as does the later submission date for (Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program) IESIP, May rather than March. However, the imposition of financial penalties in relation to timing and accuracy of information is unrealistic. The Commonwealth representatives will need to make themselves available to respond to points of debate within a timeframe that permits compliance.

4. The ACT Government has for some time set targets for its Indigenous students in collaboration with the Indigenous community and provides reports to the ACT Legislative Assembly every six months. In support of this action, the ACT Government has recently committed significant additional funds to Indigenous education. Past supplementary Commonwealth funding further enhanced this support and the withdrawal of funds will potentially disadvantage students who in the past would have qualified as beneficiaries. The former ASSPA committees may choose to amalgamate or form clusters in an endeavour to access funding for their programs however, some of the stronger existing committees see this as a likely dilution of their relationship with their particular schools.

5. The ACT notes that opportunities to raise matters of concern in relation to the changes to the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000*, have been limited. During 2004, the ACT voiced concerns about the implications of the proposed changes however, some directions taken were a fait accompli and no opportunity for discussion was made available.

Should further specific detail be required the ACT Government would be pleased to respond.