

# Submission

to

The Senate Standing Committee on  
Employment, Workplace Relations and Education

## ***Inquiry into the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment (Cape York Measures) Bill 2007***

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**Australian Government**

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**Department of Education,  
Science and Training**

**Submission to:**

**The Senate Standing Committee  
on Employment, Workplace  
Relations and Education**

**Inquiry into the *Indigenous  
Education (Targeted Assistance)*  
Amendment (Cape York Measures)  
Bill 2007**

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*Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment  
(Cape York Measures) Bill 2007***

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Education, Science and Training welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Inquiry into the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment (Cape York Measures) Bill 2007*.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

On 19 June 2007, the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership presented its *From Hand out to Hand up: Welfare Reform Design Recommendations* to the Australian Government. In response to this Report, in July 2007, the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs announced a number of Australian Government initiatives to address the key recommendations of the Report.

This Report touched on the importance of remedial instruction in core learning areas, particularly literacy, and also highlighted the importance of families having access to tools and mechanisms to meet their child's on-going education costs.

Further detail on these measures, was provided to the Australian Government through the Cape York Institute's submissions to the Australian Government on *Student Education Trusts (SET 4 Life!)* and the *Proposal for the Implementation of Making Up Lost Time In Literacy (MULTILIT)*.

## **3. PURPOSE**

The *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment (Cape York Measures) Bill 2007*, seeks to amend the *Indigenous Education Targeted Assistance Act 2000*, provides funding of \$2 million over 2007-2008 in additional support for Indigenous students in the Cape York communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. Approximately \$8.1 million will also be provided in support beyond 2008.

The Amendment will provide approximately 800 Indigenous students in these Cape York communities with additional support. Families will also be able to put in place support mechanisms to ensure that they can meet the on-going expense of their child's education.

These measures seek to build on the previous success of the MULTILIT and Student Education Trusts (SETs) initiatives experienced through the Cape York Institute's Every Child is Special Project, conducted in Coen in 2005.

## 4. OVERVIEW OF THE MEASURES

The *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment (Cape York Measures) Bill 2007* will enable the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership to:

- embed the successful MULTILIT teaching methodology in classrooms and in MULTILIT Tutorial Centres to enhance literacy teaching and to improve the literacy levels of those Cape York students identified as requiring additional support; and
- establish SETs to enable parents/guardians, and members of a child's extended family, to save to support a child's education costs.

### ***MULTILIT (Making Up Lost Time In Literacy)***

The Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership estimates that Cape York Indigenous students are behind every other group of students against every literacy measure. For example, the national benchmark tests in Years 3, 5 and 7 provide an indication of how few students are satisfying the basic minimum requirement for that year level. Against the Queensland average – the most relevant comparable average – Cape York Indigenous students are two to four years behind.

The Cape York Institute also identifies that poor literacy outcomes are exacerbated by the fact that, upon entering the school system, many Indigenous children fail to make literacy gains and in some cases slip increasingly further behind. The Cape York Institute estimates that by the time Indigenous students are in Year 2, some 60-80% already require additional support, compared with 10-25% of non-Indigenous Cape York children.

The Institute recognises that intensive and systematic reading instruction is often required by children who have failed to learn to read through the usual teaching methods in the first few years of school. As a result, MULTILIT will be specifically targeted at those students most in need of remedial literacy support.

In looking at a range of best practice early literacy engagement strategies, the *2007 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators Report* identified the establishment of MULTILIT in the Cape York community of Coen, as an example of an initiative that worked to improve the educational outcomes experienced by Indigenous students (*Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators Report 2007*, Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, pg 6.10).

### ***MULTILIT - What will be delivered?***

#### Teaching Instruction

The teaching component of the MULTILIT roll out will include embedding MULTILIT teaching methodologies into Cape York classrooms to better enable teachers and school support officers to provide targeted remedial literacy support.

Through this measure, a MULTILIT consultant will provide daily training on the MULTILIT instructional model for teaching staff, and where appropriate aides, peers, and parents/community members. The MULTILIT instruction will focus on the five key elements of effective literacy instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension to improve literacy instruction.

## Tutorial Centres

The Amendment will also enable the establishment of MULTILIT Tutorial Centres in the communities of Aurukun, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge, and will provide continued support for the previously established Coen MULTILIT Tutorial Centre.

Tutorial Centres will work with those students identified with the greatest need for remedial literacy instruction. Each Tutorial Centre will accommodate up to five low-progress readers (from Years 4 - 7 students) at any one time. The Tutorial Centres will also provide intensive literacy instruction to selected students in Years P-3 for one hour each afternoon.

Through the Tutorial Centres, students will be provided with three hours of daily MULTILIT instruction which will include: intensive instruction in reading accuracy, sight word recognition, supported text reading, reading fluency, reading comprehension and spelling.

### ***MULTILIT - What outcomes can be expected?***

The successful trial of MULTILIT by the Every Child is Special project proved that students from Indigenous backgrounds, in Cape York, who are low-progress readers, can make very large gains in reading and related skills when offered intensive skills-based instruction through MULTILIT.

The previous MULTILIT trial, which commenced in Coen in 2005, found that in the first intake into the program, students who were approximately four years behind their grade peers in both reading accuracy and comprehension, made the following average gains over a 17 week period, through participation in the trial:

- 13.6 months in reading accuracy;
- 4.3 months in reading comprehension;
- 12 months in single word recognition;
- 24.3 months in phonic decoding;
- 15.9 months in spelling; and
- 43% more words read correctly per minute.

The second intake of low-progress readers were over three years behind their grade peers in terms of reading accuracy and four years behind in reading comprehension. These students made average gains over an 18 week period of:

- 15 months in reading accuracy;
- 7.5 months in reading comprehension;
- 14.6 months for single word recognition;
- 25.4 months in phonic decoding;
- 11.4 months in spelling; and
- 50% more words read correctly per minute.

It is anticipated that similar outcomes will be continued in Coen and experienced in Aurukun, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge.

## ***Student Education Trusts (SETs)***

Some Indigenous parents in Cape York already contribute financially to their child's education. However, the Cape York Institute acknowledges that the high number of school children who start school without the required equipment, or with minimal learning support in their homes, indicates that some families require additional support.

SETs will enable families in Cape York to save for their child's on-going education costs. These costs can include institution-based expenses, such as fees, uniforms, textbooks and excursion fees; and home-based expenses such as reading books, a computer and other learning aids.

SETs will provide low income families with the right support to better use their limited income, to ensure that their child is school ready, and has the education support needed at home. SETs will establish normalised financial expectations in relation to a child's education and in turn will increase the perceived value of, and commitment, to education. This commitment is seen by the Cape York Institute as a powerful trigger for increasing the demand for education in Cape York.

### ***SETs - What will be delivered?***

SETs are voluntary education trusts that enable low income parents/guardians or extended family members, to support their child's education and development needs from 'birth to graduation'.

SETs have been designed by the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership as an important component of the project's broader education reform initiative. The Institute will work with those families who wish to establish a SET to create and manage a trust account. Family members are then able to make regular contributions to their child's SET which can only be used to meet a child's education-related expenses. Families with SET's will also have access to education products and financial advice on education, in addition to money management assistance.

### ***SETs - What outcomes can be expected?***

A previous trial of SETs, conducted in Coen in 2005, achieved an outstanding 80% take up in the first two months. Today there are approximately 102 SETs for Coen children, which equates to approximately 90% of children under the age of 18 in the community, with up to two donors contributing an average of \$30-40 per child per fortnight. Successes from this trial have included:

- 70 percent of primary school children had their school uniforms purchased and were ready to start school on time;
- 80 percent of primary school children had, on average, two books purchased through the school book club; and
- 11 children participated in sporting/education excursions subsidised by savings from their SET.