

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2010-11 Additional Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 7

Question No: 223

Topic: Welfare Reform Trials

Hansard Page: 25/2/2011 - CA14

Senator Boyce asked:

Can you provide data on the impact of welfare reform trials on school attendance (on a state by state basis) from 2009 to date?

Answer:

There are two welfare reform trials focused on school attendance, the School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) and Cape York Welfare Reform.

The SEAM trials have been underway in six Northern Territory communities (including 14 schools) since January 2009 (Term 1), and in selected Queensland locations (including 30 schools) since October 2009 (Term 4). SEAM is the responsibility of the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and questions about this measure should be referred to them.

Cape York Welfare Reform has been underway since 1 July 2008 in the communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge.

For SEAM, the Northern Territory trial sites are Katherine, Katherine Town Camps, Hermannsburg, Wallace Rockhole, Tiwi Islands and Wadeye. The Queensland trial areas for SEAM are four suburbs within the Logan area of Brisbane (Logan Central, Kingston, Woodridge and Eagleby), and two remote areas (Doomadgee, and Mornington Island).

The impact of Cape York Welfare Reform and the SEAM trial on school attendance is being evaluated. It is not possible to assess the impact of the trials on school attendance from aggregate attendance rates. Cape York Welfare Reform is being evaluated through a multistage independent evaluation process which will undertake in-depth examination of a range of outcomes data. The evaluation framework is available on the FaHCSIA website http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/jobs/cape_york_welfare_reform_trial/Pages/default.aspx.

Information on current levels of school attendance for trial locations is publicly available from a range of sources.

For Queensland discrete Indigenous communities, the Queensland Government publishes quarterly and annual reports, which track a range of indicators over time including trends in school attendance.

Trends in school attendance for Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge (Cape York Welfare Reform sites) and Doomadgee and Mornington Island (SEAM trial sites) are available from the “Annual Highlights Report for Queensland's Discrete Indigenous Communities July 2009 - June 2010”. The chapter “General Trends” (page 12) summarises trends for these communities and other discrete communities for 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10. The Report is available at <http://www.atsip.qld.gov.au/government/programs-initiatives/partnerships/annual-highlights-report/>.

For Northern Territory schools, the Northern Territory Government publishes school attendance data by school. Enrolment and attendance data is collected eight times per year in Week 4 and Week 8 of each term. Enrolment is the number of students enrolled on the Collection day. Attendance is defined as the average student attendance over the four weeks preceding the Collection. Enrolment and attendance data collected in November 2010 (Collection 8) is compared with the corresponding Collection 8 in 2009. The data is available in table form at the Northern Territory website, at the “school” link: <http://www.det.nt.gov.au/students/at-school/enrolment-attendance/enrolment-attendance-statistics>.

In addition to material published by state and territory education departments, the ‘My School’ website has school profiles for over 10,000 schools in both the public and private domain across Australia. Specific information on the number of school enrolments and attendance rates can be sourced from www.myschool.edu.au.