Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment - Education

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2013-2014

Outcome 2 - Schools and Youth

Department of Education Question No. ED0078_14

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question
Transfer of functions from ACARA to Department of Education

The Government's election costings provided to the Parliamentary Budget Office indicate a $7 million reduction in funding for the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in the 2013-14 financial year, and a $6 million reduction in funding in each of the following years. The Government's election policy for schools promises that this reduction in ACARA's budget is associated with the transfer of responsibility for 'all data, reporting and compliance functions that are not curriculum related back to the Department of Education'. In relation to the changes in ACARA's budget and the transfer of these responsibilities:

1) Has the Department ever previously been responsible for the 'data, reporting and compliance' functions that ACARA is presently responsible for?

2) Precisely what 'data, reporting and compliance' functions will be transferred to the Department?

3) When will the transfer occur? What division/s of the Department will assume responsibility for these functions?

4) ACARA is currently based in Sydney, will the transfer of functions to the Department require the relocation of staff? In what office will the Department undertake these functions?

5) Will the reductions in ACARA's budget, and any associated reductions to staffing, be associated with a transfer of that budget and staff to the Education Department? If not, how will the education department fund these extra responsibilities? What programs will be reduces in size and scope to accommodate this new work?

6) What steps will the Government take to 'refocus' ACARA? When will the 'refocus' commence? What is a curriculum authority 'refocus'? And what will the outcomes of the 'refocus' be? What is the latest date that the details of the 'refocus' will be publically released?

7) On 20 November 2013, the Education and Employment Legislation Committee heard: Ms Paul: ACARA continues as a statutory agency. Senator O'Neil: In what form and what shape? Ms Paul: In the form that it has been, in terms of its main functions. Some of its functions will come into the department, but basically it continues doing what it has been doing by way of curriculum and so on.   How are the statement's by Ms Paul consistent with the Government's commitment to 'refocus' the agency? What changes if ACARA 'continues doing what it has been doing'?

SQ13-001023

Answer

1) No.

2) The Australian Government's decision to refocus ACARA means that the data reporting and analysis functions currently undertaken by ACARA will transfer to the Commonwealth Department of Education (the Department). These functions cover:

    a. the analysis of student assessment data and other data relating to schools and comparative school performance;

    b. facilitating information sharing arrangements between Australian government bodies and the non-government sector for the collection, management and analysis of school data

    c. co-ordinating the regular review and updates of the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia; and

    d. publishing information relating to school education, including information relating to school performance on *My School* and other reports.

3) The timing and resource impacts of the transfer of functions are currently to be worked through with the Department, ACARA and affected stakeholders.

4) As per question 3 above.

5) As per question 3 above.

6) As per question 3 above. Noting that the intention is that the transfer of functions will free ACARA to focus its resources into developing the highest possible standard of curriculum.

7) Ms Paul was acknowledging that until the timing and resource implications of the transfer of functions are worked through, ACARA would continue to operate under its existing mandate and budget.