

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 31 May 2011

Question: E11-571

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: SENATE INQUIRY REPORT: HEAR US

Hansard Page: CA 121

Senator Siewert asked:

In relation to recommendations 22 and 23 of the Senate Inquiry report *Hear Us: Inquiry into Hearing Health in Australia*, what else is the Government planning to do regarding supplying and maintaining sound field amplification systems in all new classrooms, and in all existing classrooms where there is a significant proportion of Indigenous children?

Answer:

In 2009 the Government provided funding of \$1.3 million via the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations to support the Kimberley Sound Amplification Project. The cross sectoral project provided sound amplification equipment for all classrooms in Kimberley schools in the Government, Catholic and Independent sectors. The project sought to demonstrate good practice in taking a regional approach addressing hearing issues for students. The location of the project was recognition of the evidence that on any one day in a Kimberley classroom, up to 65 per cent of Aboriginal students can experience intermittent hearing loss. The project has informed the Government's response to the *Hear Us* Inquiry conducted by the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee, and is also expected to provide useful information to education providers as they develop strategies to meet the needs of students with hearing issues, particularly those in remote locations.

To ensure that students with disabilities, including hearing loss, are supported, the *More Support for Students with Disabilities* initiative funding also provided via the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations will be used to increase support for students with disability by strengthening the capacity of schools and teachers to better meet their individual needs. This could include provision of assistive technology to support students' learning in the classroom, such as sound field amplification in schools. Under this measure the Australian Government will work with government and non-government education authorities to determine the types of supports from a specified menu, including assistive technology that will be implemented under this initiative, based on the needs of students with disability in each state and territory.

The National Partnership and funding agreements with state and territory education sectors will acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians experience rates of ill-health and disability substantially higher than other Australians.