

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

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2013-2014**

Agency - Australian Curriculum, Assessment & Reporting Authority

DEEWR Question No. EW0197_14

Senator Mason asked on 5 June 2013, Hansard page 24

Refers to previous DEEWR Question No EW0982_13.

Question

ACARA - NAPLAN breaches in Queensland schools

Senator MASON: I will keep going. Last estimates, I asked some questions on NAPLAN cheating and other breaches. You might recall that. Since then, it has been reported in The Courier-Mail of Thursday, 16 May, on page 14, that a teacher's employment was terminated after they instructed students to change responses following their completion of a test. That was reported under the headline 'NAPLAN breaches on rise—test cheat loses job'. What are you able to tell the committee about this case? I know you are not responsible for disciplinary action, but what do you know about the facts? Mr Adams: I am happy to take that— Senator MASON: Do you know the case, Mr Adams? Are you aware of it? Mr Adams: We are. As you rightly said, it is the test authority that investigates and determines what sanctions are put in place. In that case, the severity of the cheating was the determining factor. Where you get an incident of this nature, the severity of the incident is usually correlated with the severity of the sanction, from reprimand through to, as in this case, the dismissal of a teacher. I would agree that, certainly, that is what happened. I would not agree with the fact that the news item says there has been an increase in incidents, because that is not what the figures are showing. Senator MASON: No, that was just taken from The Courier-Mail report, 'NAPLAN breaches on the rise'. Mr Adams: But I do recall your question about that and yes, that is the case. We are aware of it, and the person was dismissed. Senator MASON: All right. Do you know how many students were told to alter their responses? Mr Adams: No, I do not know. We can find that out, certainly. Senator MASON: Do you know how the breach was discovered? Mr Adams: I would have to find out but I think it was probably self-reported. Normally, in these cases, students will tell parents— Senator MASON: I see. Mr Adams: But I would need to check that. That is not uncommon.

Answer

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment & Reporting Authority (ACARA) has provided the following response.

ACARA reports on test incident information received from Test Administration Authorities (as provided to them by the responsible entity¹ within each state and territory). The responsible entity in each jurisdiction investigates and takes appropriate action in relation to these matters.

While there was an increase in the number of reported test incidents in 2012 from previous years, the number of substantiated instances of cheating actually decreased (from nine in 2011 to six in 2012). Most test incidents in 2012 were procedural or administrative in nature, were self-reported, and did not affect the reliability of the data.

Following an investigation by the responsible entity in Queensland, an incident was substantiated as a case of cheating and resulted in the termination of a school employee. The incident affected two students in the 1 year level/class and was self-reported by the school.

¹ 'Responsible entity' is defined in the 2013 *National Protocols for Test Administration* as "The entity that has authority in relation to any particular school or school system to receive and assess initial reports of possible breaches of the *National Protocols* (e.g. school board, system authority, government department, depending on school type).