

**Senate Select Committee on School Funding Investment
Question on Notice**

Department of Education and Training Question No. 1

Senator O'Neill asked on 8 April 2015, Proof Hansard page 3-4

Australian Government policies on funding

Question

Senator O'NEILL: Perhaps on notice I will give you the opportunity to do some research on the historical trends of why the federal government has been committing additional funding to the states since 1970, which is quite some time. I think we have seen that happening incrementally not because of overly generous federal governments but because of clear need.

CHAIR: Dr Bruniges, in your opening statement you went through some remarks, and I think you pointed out that, in the past 10 years, federal government funding in real terms—I think your figure was 36.7 per cent. I guess the question we are asking is why.

Mr Cook: Public servants work for the government of the day. Government policy is a decision of the government.

CHAIR: You can explain government policy. You are the department of education.

Mr Cook: You are seeking an opinion. In terms of an opinion, I cannot give one.

CHAIR: No—

Mr Cook: You are asking what our opinion is as to why these governments have done this.

CHAIR: I am asking what reason was provided for the increase in funding.

Mr Cook: In terms of government policy?

Senator O'NEILL: Yes.

Mr Cook: We are happy to take on notice the government policies of the day, over the various successive governments, on both sides, as to why they actually made that decision to increase. I am sure that is in policy documents, which would be, I am assuming, election platform documents and things like that.

Senator O'NEILL: That is exactly the question: what was the rationale. Clearly that historical trend is there.

CHAIR: Just taking a step back from the figure that was already presented to us.

Mr Cook: I am happy to take that on notice. That is not a problem.

Answer

A brief history of Australian Government funding for schools can be found at:

<https://federation.dpvc.gov.au/evolution-our-school-education-arrangements>

**Senate Select Committee on School Funding Investment
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Department of Education and Training Question No. 2

Senator O'Neill asked on 8 April 2015, Proof Hansard page 6

Department advice regarding comments by the Prime Minister

Question

Senator O'NEILL: So when did the department find out about the comments that were made by the Prime Minister on the 31st with regard to education funding for the country?

Mr Cook: It would have been on the day.

Senator O'NEILL: You found out on the day?

Mr Cook: I would imagine, but I am happy to take that on notice.

Senator O'NEILL: Can you provide us with any notification or documentation of advice if you received it prior to that. Other than that, we will assume that you found out when the newspapers broke the story.

Mr Cook: Sure. We can take that on notice.

CHAIR: Just to clarify that—I just want to be very clear—what you are saying is that you, personally, as acting secretary found out on the day. Whether there was someone within your department at a different level who knew, you will check.

Mr Cook: Sure. It could have been any of my staff. It could have been the school staff and things like that.

CHAIR: But you personally found out on the day.

Mr Cook: That is my recollection, yes.

Senator O'NEILL: Mr Pattie, you are here in your role as the group manager of the schooling group. Could you inform us if you were informed?

Mr Pattie: I will have to take that on notice as well, Senator. We have officer-level conversations all the time. We will just have to take that on notice as well.

Senator O'NEILL: Were you personally advised?

Mr Pattie: I was not, no. I can take it on notice.

Answer

The department was first aware of the comments by the Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, relating to public funding for schools on 31 March 2016.

**Senate Select Committee on School Funding Investment
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Department of Education and Training Question No. 3

Senator O'Neill asked on 8 April 2015, Proof Hansard page 7

Modelling by the Department

Question

Senator O'NEILL: Could I ask if the department did any modelling on the impact of the proposal for the federal government to walk away from funding schooling?

Mr Cook: I am happy to take it on notice. I think my answer is: the modelling we are doing is on the current act. The current act is the current act so that is what our modelling is always based on.

Senator O'NEILL: So there has been no modelling—

Mr Cook: I said I would take it on notice, Senator.

Senator O'NEILL: To the best of your knowledge, at this stage you would not be aware of any modelling to—

Mr Cook: Whether they have done any in Prime Minister Cabinet, Treasury or Finance, I am not sure but—

Senator O'NEILL: But certainly none has been done in your department.

Mr Cook: Not that I am aware of but I am happy to take it on notice.

Answer

The department has not undertaken modelling of this nature.

**Senate Select Committee on School Funding Investment
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Department of Education and Training Question No. 4

Senator Gallagher asked on 8 April 2015, Proof Hansard page 9

Educational policy advice provided by the Department

Question

Senator GALLAGHER: On a purely educational basis, that option of essentially handing responsibility to the states and territories for government school matters was not being actively pursued within the education department?

Mr Cook: I am happy to take it on notice. I am not aware of any further advice we provided on that matter.

Senator GALLAGHER: By all means take it on notice, but you were the acting secretary, so presumably—

Mr Cook: I was acting secretary from February this year.

Senator GALLAGHER: Okay. But you are a senior guy within the department, right? You are going to know what is going on. I am happy for you to take it on notice, but surely if you were developing up an option that, from an educational point of view, really did change the way that education policy was being handled in this country for many, many years, you would know about it, right?

Mr Cook: We have not been involved in further meetings with the central agencies of the states and territories—

Senator GALLAGHER: From the green paper process.

Mr Cook: around the issue from the green paper process. That is correct.

Answer

The department informed the Reform of the Federation green paper process in 2015 and has not since provided further advice to that process.

The discussion paper is available publicly at:

https://federation.dpmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/reform_of_the_federation_discussion_paper.pdf.

**Senate Select Committee on School Funding Investment
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Department of Education and Training Question No. 5

Senator Gallagher asked on 8 April 2015, Proof Hansard page 12

Number of teachers employed by the Department

Question

Senator GALLAGHER: And how many teachers do you employ?

Mr Cook: Teachers? I am a teacher.

Senator GALLAGHER: Yes, people who hold a teaching qualification.

Mr Cook: There are two here. I am a qualified, registered teacher. I would have to take that on notice. I do not even know whether we have that information on our records, as to whether they are a teacher or not.

Senator GALLAGHER: But it is full of teachers.

Mr Cook: Not necessarily. Our data analysts would probably not be teachers, because we want them to be data analysts.

Senator GALLAGHER: Yes, but a lot of your policy people.

Mr Cook: Some of our people would be teachers.

Senator GALLAGHER: If it is easy. I do not want people wasting time on it.

Mr Cook: Sure.

Answer

The department does not have this information readily available.

**Senate Select Committee on School Funding Investment
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Department of Education and Training Question No. 6

Senator Gallagher asked on 8 April 2015, Proof Hansard page 20

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

Question

CHAIR: I am very conscious of time. We have one NAPLAN question.

Senator GALLAGHER: The papers on the weekend ran the story that some of the schools with the most significant increase in performance had been subject to funding reductions. Was that information provided by the department?

Mr Cook: The internal analysis based on NAPLAN data?

Senator GALLAGHER: Yes, and what year of NAPLAN was it?

Mr Cook: If I look at the data in front of me, we are looking at 2010-15. Queensland, for example, made the biggest increase by far in the high-performing students in Queensland. In the same financial years around that, Queensland state funding was reduced by \$417 per student.

Senator GALLAGHER: So it was 2010 to 2015?

Mr Cook: That is my understanding. I can correct it if that helps you. I am happy to take it on notice.

Answer

The reported comparison of Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 'high gain' schools and financial changes was based on ACARA financial data from 2013 to 2014. The list of schools was based on NAPLAN results between 2013 and 2015.

Separate departmental analysis referred to in evidence examined NAPLAN performance in reading and numeracy from 2010 and 2015, and state and territory investment from 2009–10 to 2013–14.