



Room for improvement in National Partnership implementation

A major literacy and numeracy funding program was examined in the latest review of Auditor-General reports by federal parliament's Public Accounts and Audit Committee.

The committee's report, tabled today, included a review of the government's administration of the \$540 million *National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy*, amongst other programs. The agreement provides funds to states and territories to deliver literacy and numeracy programs, focusing on students who are falling behind.

Overall, while the partnership appeared to be having a positive impact, the committee identified design and implementation issues to be addressed in future agreements.

In particular, future partnerships would benefit from:

- implementation plans and reform targets being negotiated at the same time as the initial high level agreements are made;
- performance checking mechanisms being built into agreements; and
- more time being allowed for facilitation payments to take effect before reward payments are made to states.

"Australia must lift its literacy and numeracy standards", Committee Chair, Rob Oakeshott MP, said. "The withholding of \$64 million of Commonwealth–State funding raises the concern that results are still too low."

"For these results to be turned around, the performance of National Partnership agreements and the combined efforts of COAG must first be lifted", Mr Oakeshott added.

"This is urgent and matters a lot".

The review also linked to the committee's earlier report on *National Funding Agreements*, which recommended more parliamentary scrutiny of funding agreements, particularly during their implementation.

Four other audits were also discussed in the committee's report, examining the following programs: the *Health and Hospitals Fund*, the *Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy*, the *Processing and Risk Assessing of Incoming International Air Passengers*, and the *Renewable Energy Demonstration Program*. A range of recommendations were made across the reports.

The committee also highlighted to the government the problems that can occur when programs are fast tracked, emphasising the importance of considering the capacity of agencies to deliver programs while still complying with administrative requirements.

An electronic copy of the report can be downloaded from the Committee's website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa>

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