

*Department of the
Parliamentary Library*



INFORMATION AND RESEARCH SERVICES

Bills Digest

No. 170 2000–01

States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2001

ISSN 1328-8091

© Copyright Commonwealth of Australia 2001

Except to the extent of the uses permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means including information storage and retrieval systems, without the prior written consent of the Department of the Parliamentary Library, other than by Senators and Members of the Australian Parliament in the course of their official duties.

This paper has been prepared for general distribution to Senators and Members of the Australian Parliament. While great care is taken to ensure that the paper is accurate and balanced, the paper is written using information publicly available at the time of production. The views expressed are those of the author and should not be attributed to the Information and Research Services (IRS). Advice on legislation or legal policy issues contained in this paper is provided for use in parliamentary debate and for related parliamentary purposes. This paper is not professional legal opinion. Readers are reminded that the paper is not an official parliamentary or Australian government document. IRS staff are available to discuss the paper's contents with Senators and Members and their staff but not with members of the public.

Inquiries

Members, Senators and Parliamentary staff can obtain further information from the Information and Research Services on (02) 6277 2646.

Information and Research Services publications are available on the ParlInfo database.
On the Internet the Department of the Parliamentary Library can be found at:
<http://www.aph.gov.au/library/>

Published by the Department of the Parliamentary Library, 2001

I N F O R M A T I O N A N D R E S E A R C H S E R V I C E S

Bills Digest
No. 170 2000–01

States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education
Assistance) Amendment Bill 2001

Marilyn Harrington
Social Policy Group
30 June 2001

Contents

Purpose	1
Background	1
Main Provisions	3
Endnotes.	4

States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Bill 2001

Date Introduced: 7 June 2001

House: House of Representatives

Portfolio: Education, Training and Youth Affairs

Commencement: Royal Assent

Purpose

The Bill will amend the *States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act 2000* (the current Act) to provide additional funding for literacy and numeracy programs for the years 2001-02 and 2002-03.

Background

In 1996 the new Government declared early its intention that improving the literacy skills of young people would be a central education policy objective. To achieve that objective Dr David Kemp MP, then Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training, advocated a national goal be set to ensure that every child leaving primary school should be able to read, write and spell at an 'appropriate level'. He also stated that:

In addressing the issue of literacy effectively we are addressing a key source of a number of the difficulties and problems faced by young people including the national priority issue of youth unemployment. That is why the Government places so much importance on literacy as the essential key we must give our students with which to unlock their, and Australia's future.¹

The endorsement of the [National Literacy and Numeracy Plan](#) in March 1997 by Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Ministers was an acknowledgment that in spite of considerable debate at the time over alleged levels of literacy, literacy standards needed to be improved.² This debate and subsequent policy development at both the Commonwealth and State level, has been accompanied by continuing evidence of the links between literacy skills, socioeconomic disadvantage, and future life outcomes, notably the links between literacy levels and employment outcomes.³

Warning:

This Digest was prepared for debate. It reflects the legislation as introduced and does not canvass subsequent amendments.

This Digest does not have any official legal status. Other sources should be consulted to determine the subsequent official status of the Bill.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Plan includes:

- early assessment of all students to identify those at risk of not achieving minimum required standards in literacy and numeracy
- early intervention to assist those students identified as at risk
- national reporting of student achievement against nationally agreed benchmarks, and
- teacher professional development to support the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan.

An additional strategy, the [National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy](#), aims to improve the educational outcomes for indigenous students.⁴

In April 2000 Commonwealth and State and Territory Education Ministers approved [literacy and numeracy benchmarks for years 3, 5 and 7](#).⁵ To facilitate nationally comparable reporting of student achievement, a nationally agreed procedure was developed to equate State and Territory tests. [The 1999 Year 3 reading national benchmark results](#)⁶ are the first results of that process. These results show that on average 86.9 per cent of Year 3 students achieved the reading benchmark, with girls outperforming boys by 89.7 per cent to 84.9 per cent. The achievement of indigenous students was significantly lower, with only 66.1 per cent achieving the benchmark.

These results have been heralded as a significant improvement on the results of the National School English Survey conducted in 1996. However the degree of improvement since that survey is debatable, given that two reports from that same survey produced significantly different results, ranging from 4 per cent of Year 3 students achieving below an estimated range of achievement for reading to 27 per cent not achieving against the required standard.⁷

The Commonwealth delivers its literacy programs through its targeted assistance programs for schools under the current Act. Grants for literacy and numeracy programs are provided through the Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes Programme and the Grants for National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects Programme. The former includes the provision of assistance to school education authorities to improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students. The latter supports projects that identify, research and implement strategic national initiatives and developments in literacy and numeracy. Funding for the indigenous literacy strategy is provided under the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000* through the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme.

The Bill amends the current Act to provide additional funding of \$33.3 million for literacy and numeracy programs for the years 2001-02 to 2002-03. Most of this money (\$23.9

Warning:

This Digest was prepared for debate. It reflects the legislation as introduced and does not canvass subsequent amendments.

This Digest does not have any official legal status. Other sources should be consulted to determine the subsequent official status of the Bill.

million) will be directed to education authorities to improve student outcomes. The remainder of \$9.4 million will be provided for strategic initiatives.

Main Provisions

In effect there are two sets of alternate provisions for the Bill. The base figures for Part 1 of Schedule 8 of the current Act vary depending on whether or not related provisions in the proposed Innovation and Education Legislation Amendment Act 2001 have commenced at or before the commencement of section 1 of the proposed States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Amendment Act 2001 (the proposed Act).

If the proposed Innovation and Education Legislation Amendment Act 2001 has not commenced at or before section 1 of the proposed Act, the first alternative in Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Bill applies:

Item 1 substitutes an increased funding level of \$290 788 (from \$289 488) for Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes for the year 2002.

Item 2 substitutes an increased funding level of \$290 788 (from 267 845) for Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes for the year 2003.

Item 3 substitutes an increased funding level of \$7,452 (from \$1,198) for Grants for National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects for the year 2002.

Item 4 substitutes an increased funding level of \$4,292 (from \$1,171) for Grants for National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects for the year 2003.

Items 5 and 6 repeal Items 3 and 4 of Schedule 2 of the proposed Innovation and Education Legislation Amendment Act 2001 if Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Bill applies.

If the proposed Innovation and Education Legislation Amendment Act 2001 has commenced at or before section 1 of the proposed Act, the second alternative in Part 2 of Schedule 1 of the Bill will apply:

Item 7 substitutes \$290 788 for \$289 678 for Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes for the year 2002.

Item 8 substitutes \$290 788 for the original base figure of \$268 035 for Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes for the year 2003.

Items 9 and 10 are the same as items 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Bill.

Warning:

This Digest was prepared for debate. It reflects the legislation as introduced and does not canvass subsequent amendments.

This Digest does not have any official legal status. Other sources should be consulted to determine the subsequent official status of the Bill.

Endnotes

- 1 Hon Dr David Kemp MP, 'A national literacy goal', address to the Australian College of Education Conference on General and Vocational Education, Sydney, 21 June 1996.
- 2 For further information about this debate and a history of Commonwealth literacy policy development see Harrington, M. *Literacy: A Chronology of selected research and Commonwealth policy initiatives since 1975* (Chronology No. 2 1999–2000), Canberra, Department of the Parliamentary Library, 1999, <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/chron/1999-2000/2000chr02.htm>.
- 3 See, for example, Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Education and training in Australia*, Cat. No. 4224.0, ABS, Canberra, 1998.
- 4 Launched in 2000, the Strategy is available at <http://www.detya.gov.au/schools/Publications/2000/LNS.pdf>.
- 5 Further information about these benchmarks, published by the Curriculum Corporation, is available at <http://online.curriculum.edu.au/litbench/intro.asp>.
- 6 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *National report on schooling in Australia 1999 preliminary paper: 1999 Year 3 reading national benchmark results*, Melbourne, MCEETYA, 2000, <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mctyapdf/3648-report.pdf>.
- 7 See Management Committee for the National School English Literacy Survey, *Mapping literacy achievement: results of the 1996 National School English Literacy Survey*, DEETYA, Canberra, 1997 and Australian Council for Educational Research, *Literacy standards in Australia*, Canberra, 1997.

Warning:

This Digest was prepared for debate. It reflects the legislation as introduced and does not canvass subsequent amendments.

This Digest does not have any official legal status. Other sources should be consulted to determine the subsequent official status of the Bill.