



## Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2006

Dr Coral Dow  
Social Policy Section

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## Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2006

**Date Introduced:** 22 June 2006

**House:** House of Representatives

**Portfolio:** Education, Science and Training

**Commencement:** Royal Assent

### Purpose

The purpose of the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2006 (the Bill) is to amend the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000* (the current Act) to appropriate an additional \$43.6 million from 2006 to 2008 to:

- extend tutorial assistance to Year 9 Indigenous students
- extend tutorial assistance to Indigenous vocational education and training (VET) students
- fund school-based sporting academies
- fund the Indigenous Youth Festivals component of the Community Festivals for Health Promotion programme and
- fund an educational component of a substance abuse initiative aimed at discouraging petrol sniffing in remote communities.

### Background

Until 2000, Commonwealth assistance to Indigenous education was provided through the *Indigenous Education (Supplementary Assistance) Act 1989*. Although the 1989 Act was not repealed, the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000* now provides the funding for, and implements, the Government's Indigenous education policy.

The current Act provides quadrennium funding for the years 2005–2008, primarily for the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP) to assist Indigenous students in government and non-government schools, including small independent Indigenous schools. Funding may go to all education sectors from pre-school to tertiary. It includes 'Away From Base' funding for ABSTUDY students attending compulsory course activities and funding for special projects. Funding is provided through agreements made with education providers.

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In November 2004 amendments to the current Act brought the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) programme, including the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS), under the current Act to ensure program funding for the quadrennium and align the IEDA program with calendar rather than financial years.<sup>1</sup>

### Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS)

The Bill appropriates an additional \$25.7 million to extend ITAS to Year 9 students (\$14.5 million) and to vocational education and training students (\$11.2 million).

ITAS, formerly the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme, has operated since 1990 providing individual and in-school tuition of up to five hours a week for school and post-secondary students. Since the IEDA review in 2004 the Government has emphasised in-class tuition for students not meeting the Year 3, 5 and 7 literacy and numeracy benchmarks, and individual and small group tuition for Years 10, 11 and 12 students.

In the 2006–07 Budget the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs announced funding of \$15.6 million over three years to December 2008 to extend tuition, currently available to Years 10, 11 and 12 Indigenous students, to Year 9 students.<sup>2</sup> The Bill appropriates \$14.5 million. The \$1.1 million discrepancy between the Budget announcement and the appropriated amount is not explained.

In 2003 the grade progression ratio of Indigenous students from Year 9 to Year 10 was 89.2 per cent compared to 99.0 per cent for non-Indigenous students.<sup>3</sup> Improving this transition point at the end of compulsory schooling has been identified as a contributing factor to achieving increased Year 12 retention rates. The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) expects the initiative to assist 4800 Year 9 students, 50 per cent of whom are enrolled in remote areas or remote schools and 10 per cent in non-remote schools, from 2007 to 2008. Students would receive four hours tuition per week for 35 weeks.<sup>4</sup> The *Indigenous Education Programmes Provider Guidelines 2005–2008* describe in detail how the current Act is to be implemented. The Guidelines state: ‘Assistance is based on an assessment of students’ need for tuition and the availability of funding. Students in remote locations will be given priority’.<sup>5</sup>

In the 2006–07 Budget the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs announced funding of \$21.8 million over four years (to 30 June 2010) to extend ITAS to VET students studying at Certificate Level III and higher.<sup>6</sup> Previously ITAS was not available to VET students. The second reading speech states that \$11.2 million will be appropriated until December 2008. The Minister for Education, Science and Training estimates 20 000 Indigenous VET students undertaking courses leading to a Certificate Level III qualification, or above, will benefit from access to tutorial assistance for up to two hours per week.<sup>7</sup>

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More than 58 000 Indigenous students undertook some publicly funded vocational education and training in 2003. This training took place in a wide range of environments including TAFE colleges, schools, with a private provider or in an Indigenous-specific environment. However Indigenous students are under-represented in courses at the Certificate III and IV levels and Diploma and higher levels, courses that if successfully completed significantly increase the employment prospects for Indigenous Australians.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore Indigenous students are under-represented in course completions. In 2003 Indigenous students comprised 3.4 per cent of VET students but course completions by Indigenous students made up only 2.5 per cent of the AQF level course completions.<sup>9</sup> Extending tutorial assistance to VET students should assist in improving Indigenous completion rates.

### School-Based Sporting Academies

In the 2006–07 Budget the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs announced \$19.6 million over four years to 30 June 2010 to fund school-based sporting academies.<sup>10</sup> The Bill appropriates \$9.1 million to December 2008. The initiative is based on the successful model of the [Clontarf Football Academy](#) which was established on-site at the Clontarf Aboriginal College in January 2000. It has since expanded to five other West Australian schools. Participation in the sporting academy is based on attendance and meeting educational outcomes. Average attendance by Clontarf Football Academy students is around 78 per cent, retention rates around 82 per cent and about 83 per cent of graduates proceed to full-time work. DEST expects that there will be twenty similar academies in place by the end of 2008. It is expected that, like Clontarf, funding will come from a mix of Commonwealth, State, corporation and philanthropic sources.<sup>11</sup>

### Indigenous Youth Festivals

‘Community festivals for health promotion’ is a 2006–07 Budget education measure. The Government will provide a total of \$16.1 million over four years to sponsor festivals such as ‘Croc Festivals’ for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in remote areas and the Rock Eisteddfods for high school students.<sup>12</sup> The Bill appropriates \$7.3 million for Croc Festivals for 2006–2008.

[Croc Festivals](#) began in 1998 when the former Queensland Minister for Health, Mike Horan, asked the producers of the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge to find a way of involving young people from Cape York and the Torres Strait Islands in the event. Croc Festivals aim to encourage school attendance and promote healthy lifestyles without substance abuse. Commonwealth Government sponsorship of Croc Festivals commenced in 2000 and Commonwealth Government funding for the six years to 2005 has totalled \$11.9 million.<sup>13</sup> Croc Festivals have been funded from the health portfolio with additional funding from other government grants such as the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation (\$600,000), National Crime Prevention Program (\$382,000), Department of

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Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs grants (\$124,000, 2002–2006), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS) (\$84,000 in 2003–2004) and the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* (\$105,000 in 2005).<sup>14</sup>

In the 2006–07 Budget the Minister for Education, Science and Training announced that from 2007 DEST will be the lead agency responsible for community festivals for Indigenous young people.<sup>15</sup> DEST expects to spend ‘around \$3 million or thereabouts as a contribution toward conducting Indigenous youth festivals and probably around \$700,000 a year as a contribution toward other initiatives’.<sup>16</sup> Funding will now be appropriated by the current Act rather than from the previous diverse range of grants.

## Financial implications

The Bill will increase the appropriation under section 14A of the current Act by a net \$43.6 million over the 2006 to 2008 calendar years.

## Main provisions

**Items 1 to 3** update the appropriations for each calendar year in Schedule 1 of the current Act to increase net quadrennium funding by \$43.6 million.

## Concluding comments

The Bill continues the Government’s emphasis on providing a greater weighting of resources towards Indigenous students in remote areas. The Government regards these Indigenous students to be at greatest disadvantage. The initiatives further implement the Government’s policy aimed at improving school attendance and retention rates, particularly in remote communities, and closing the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.<sup>17</sup>

Debate on Indigenous education should recognize the important context of Indigenous demographics. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are a young population with a median age of 20.5 years, 39 per cent of whom are under 15 years, compared to 20 per cent for the non-Indigenous population.<sup>18</sup> Although the Bill extends funding for ITAS, this funding is capped. Considering the significant growth in the Indigenous school-age population this could result in a shortfall of tuition places—a conclusion supported by the 2004 IEDA review in which DEST staff noted that the IEDA program had not received any major increases in funding, other than annual indexation, since its establishment in 1991.<sup>19</sup>

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## Endnotes

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1. The changes resulted from [Review of the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance Program](#), 2004. See also, [Indigenous Education: Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity: Australian Government Indigenous-Specific Funding For The 2005-2008 Quadrennium: Discussion Paper](#), The Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra, 2004.
2. M. Brough (Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs), [Expanding the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme to Year 9 students](#), fact sheet, 9 May 2006.
3. [National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, 2003](#), The Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra, 2005, pp. 28–29.
4. Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee, [Proof Committee Hansard](#), 31 May 2006, p. 121.
5. [Indigenous Education Programmes Provider Guidelines 2005–2008 Part A](#), Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra, 2005, p. 17.
6. M. Brough (Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs), [Expanding the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme to vocational education and training students](#), fact sheet, 9 May 2006.
7. J. Bishop (Minister for Education, Science and Training), [Budget 2006: strengthening Indigenous communities: tutorial assistance for Indigenous vocational and technical students](#), media release, 9 May 2006.
8. National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), [Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics: Indigenous Australians' Training Experiences 2004](#), NCVER, Leabrook, S. Aust., 2005.
9. [National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, 2003](#), Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra, 2005, p. 66.
10. M. Brough (Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs), [Using sport to improve young Indigenous people's education and life prospects](#), fact sheet, 9 May 2006.
11. Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee, op. cit., p. 123.
12. The Commonwealth Government '[Budget measures 2006–07](#)', *Budget Paper No. 2*, p. 156.
13. J. Bishop (Minister for Education, Science and Training), [Strengthening Indigenous communities – community festivals for drug prevention and education](#), media release, 9 May 2006.
14. Grants information reported in Hansard and Attorney-General's Department, [Proceeds of Crime Act 2002: Overview](#).
15. J. Bishop, op. cit.
16. Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee, op. cit., p. 132.

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17. See for example: Dr Brendan Nelson, Minister for Education, Science and Training, Second reading speech: Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2004, [House of Representatives, Debates, 23 June 2004](#), p. 31212; Dr Brendan Nelson, Minister for Education, Science and Training, Second reading speech: Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2005, [House of Representatives, Debates, 2 June 2005](#), p. 30; for further information see: Coral Dow, '[Indigenous Education \(Targeted Assistance\) Amendment Bill 2004](#)', *Bills Digest*, no. 57, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2004–05; and The Department of Education, Science and Training, [Indigenous Education: Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity: Australian Government Indigenous-Specific Funding For The 2005-2008 Quadrennium: Discussion Paper](#), [Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra], 2004.
18. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2002](#), ABS Cat. No. 4714, ABS, Canberra, 2004.
19. The Department of Education, Science and Training, [Review of the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance Program: Final Report](#), Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra, 2004, p. 14.

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