

CHAPTER 2

Review of annual reports

2.1 This chapter examines selected annual reports in greater detail, and provides the Senate with information that may be of particular interest. The reports of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Safe Work Australia, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, the Coal Mining Industry (Long Service Leave Funding) Corporation and the National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training 2009 are discussed in this chapter.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

2.2 The Secretary's overview emphasised the role the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) played in the Government response to the economic downturn in 2010–11, and mentioned the resilience shown by the Department during its response to those affected by the natural disasters that struck many parts of Australia.¹ The years 2010–11 saw the enactment of the Education and Care Services Law, the implementation of the National School Reform Plan and the launch of the *MySchool* website.² DEEWR recorded a 30 per cent increase on job placements for Job Services Australia, as well as a rise in job placement numbers for disadvantaged groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.³

2.3 DEEWR also saw its first departmental downsizing in over a decade. This incorporated a reduction in staff of more than 500 people, as well as a departmental review and restructure.⁴ Staffing policies would still remain responsive to business needs, to ensure that its business systems continue to drive further improvements and efficiencies across DEEWR.⁵

2.4 The first of 38 Children and Family Centres funded through the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development was opened in

1 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p. 2

2 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p. 3

3 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p. 4

4 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p. 4

5 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p. 4

Belconnen in Canberra 2011.⁶ This centre focuses particularly on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from birth to the age of eight. It offers a range of services to support children's health, learning and development and trained professionals are made available to families at the centre. A total of \$292.62 million in funding is being provided to establish the total of 38 centres across Australia.⁷

2.5 The Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership reward paid over \$138 million to states and territories for improvement in raising educational outcomes in schools. Queensland and South Australia were able to achieve 100 per cent of the available reward funding.⁸

2.6 The Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program provided \$56.4 million to assist universities to undertake strategies that improve access to undergraduate courses for people from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The funding also assists the implementation of plans to increase retention and completion rates of this group.⁹

2.7 The new Disability Employment Services (DES) model was supplied with \$1.7 billion to help increase the employment of people with a disability, as well as creating sustainable employment. DES provides access to tailored and personalised services to assist each individual in overcoming their own specific barriers to employment.¹⁰

2.8 DEEWR has had positive feedback from the impact of the Homeworkers Code of Practice program. The Department received reports from workers on improvement of working conditions, an increase in workers receiving superannuation and a greater understanding of companies' obligations as well as employee legal entitlements.¹¹

2.9 The Department also restated its commitment to reconciliation and noted the announcement of the first Indigenous Rhodes Scholar in December 2010; Rebecca Richards, who partook in multiple DEEWR programs in the past including the

6 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p. 19

7 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p. 19

8 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p. 41

9 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p.58

10 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p. 106

11 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p. 122

Indigenous Youth Mobility Program, the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme and the Indigenous Youth Mobility Program and the Indigenous Cadetship Scheme.¹²

2.10 The committee considers DEEWR's 2009–10 annual report to be well presented and in compliance with the reporting requirements of a Commonwealth department.

Safe Work Australia

2.11 Safe Work Australia was established as an independent statutory agency in 2009 to improve work health and safety (WHS) and workers' compensation arrangements in Australia.

2.12 The report detailed a number of goals that Safe Work Australia achieved in the 2010–11 period. These included the development of model WHS regulations and Codes of Practice that were due to be implemented by the end of December 2011 and the formation of a new work health and safety strategy to replace the *National Occupational Health and Safety Strategy 2011–2012*. Safe Work Australia also began the implementation of the *National Workers' Compensation Action Plan 2010–2013* with work continuing into later years in order to achieve the four objectives laid out in the plan.¹³

2.13 Safe Work Australia Week celebrated its sixth year and was held between 24 and 30 October 2010. The event is held annually to raise awareness of workplace safety. In order to promote the week, a variety of activities were organised both inside and outside the agency.¹⁴

2.14 This annual report is well presented and easily navigated and the committee considers that this report has fulfilled all requirements. It is noted that the report was received by the Minister on 17 October, but not tabled until 9 November 2011.

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)

2.15 The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was established in 2008 and is responsible for delivering a national curriculum, a national assessment program, and national data collection and performance reporting programs to improve the performance of school education.

2.16 ACARA announced that the first four learning areas of the Australian Curriculum were endorsed by federal, state and education ministers in 2010. These included English, Mathematics, Science and History. This represents a curriculum that

12 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p.146

13 Safe Work Australia, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p. 8

14 Safe Work Australia, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p.9

all young Australians will study from foundation to year 10 with educational resources common to all students and teachers, regardless of their location.¹⁵

2.17 The *My School* Website 2.0 was released in March 2011 and recorded 150 000 visitors within the first twenty four hours. The new website helped parents and teachers access information on schools including the Index of Socio–Educational Advantage and comparable data on recurrent income and capital expenditure of schools.¹⁶

2.18 In 2011, one million students across Australia partook in the NAPLAN tests. ACARA succeeded in improving the reliability and consistency of the administrative arrangements as well as testing accessibility options for students with a disability.¹⁷

2.19 ACARA has fulfilled all requirements necessary for its annual report and is commended for its comprehensiveness. However, the committee encourages timeliness in the presentation of annual reports and notes that this annual report was tabled on 7 February 2012.

Coal Mining Industry (Long Service Leave Funding) Corporation

2.20 The Coal Mining Industry (Long Service Leave Funding) Corporation was established in 1992 and provides reimbursement payments to employers providing long service leave to workers in the black coal mining industry in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania.

2.21 While performing its role the corporation reviewed the investment strategy of the Fund using a consulting asset consultant and reported its confidence that the Fund would record modest and sustainable investment returns in the following years. The reporting period saw a continued recovery in financial markets which improved the financial standing of the Fund.¹⁸

2.22 The committee notes this report does not include information on the Corporation's environmental performance, disability strategy or occupational health and safety strategy. In addition, to improve useability of the report, the committee encourages the Corporation to include glossary, alphabetical and compliances indices in future annual reports. It is also noted that this report was tabled on 27 February 2012.

15 Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, *Annual Report 2010–2011*, p. 3

16 Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, *Annual Report 2010–2011*, p. 3

17 Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, *Annual Report 2010–2011*, p. 3

18 Coal Mining Industry (Long Service Leave Funding) Corporation, *Annual Report 2010–11*, p. ii

National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, 2009

2.23 The National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training was last tabled on 10 May 2011. This included the 2007 Annual Report and the 2008 Annual Report. The committee notes once again that the National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and training has not been produced this year and strongly encourages the tabling of the 2009 edition to take place as soon as possible, to provide Parliament with the information necessary to properly assess indigenous education programs and progress.

Comments made in the Senate

2.24 The committee is obliged, under Senate Standing Order 25(20)(d), to consider any remarks made about these reports in the Senate. The committee is satisfied that there were no comments to consider for these reports.

Bodies not presenting annual reports to the Senate

2.25 The committee is required to report to the Senate each year on whether there are any bodies not presenting annual reports to the Senate which should. The committee is satisfied that there are no such bodies at this time.



Senator Gavin Marshall

Chair