

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND**  
**INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO**  
**2011-12 Additional Estimates Hearings**

**Outcome Number:** 7

**Question No:** 302

**Topic:** School Enrolment and Attendance Measure

**Hansard Page:** 17/02/2012 - CA18

**Senator Siewert** asked:

Could you provide information on where communities in the RSD sites have pursued a very close connection between the school and the community which has resulted in increased school attendance?

**Answer:**

I am aware of a number of schools working closely with the community to improve attendance and outcomes.

To discuss what is working, I convened an Education Outcomes and School Attendance Roundtable in Brisbane last year where representatives from a number of schools in Remote Service Delivery communities discussed some of the ways in which building community connection with the school resulted in improved education outcomes and school attendance in individual schools. Some examples of where close connections between the school and community are producing positive outcomes include:

- In South Australia at Mimili School, a number of boys were required to attend cultural business that would take them away from school for a term. The Principal and Anangu Coordinator worked with elders in the community to identify what skills and knowledge the boys would be gaining during this period and negotiated with the Education department to have this term considered part of their curriculum. At Mimili school there is also a dedicated attendance team that goes out into the community to meet with parents to discuss attendance issues. The team works in a collaborative way with parents to get children to school.
- In the Northern Territory at Groote Eylandt College and Shepherdson College courses are offered for all ages providing an the opportunity for all community members to get involved in education and connect with the school. These programs mean that children see their family members working and/or training at the school and the school becomes a community hub and a safe space. At Shepherdson College the teachers also have the opportunity to hand over supervision of classes to teacher aides for short periods so that they can go out into the community and spend time building relationships with parents and engaging parents in the school processes which the College advise has led to improved education outcomes.

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- In Western Australia at Fitzroy Crossing, an open day is held every year to invite parents into the school to see the classrooms and talk to the teachers. Teachers work closely with parents to explain the report process, NAPLAN and literacy and numeracy programs. The school also holds classes in the community so that community members can see what happens in the classroom. These programs have helped parents to understand the processes and explain how they can support their children's education.
- In Queensland Cape York Partnerships have partnered with Education Queensland to develop the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy which is operational in Coen and Aurukun. This program is designed to incorporate culture into the curriculum and build stronger links with the community in which the children are learning. At Aurukun school attendance rates have gone from 36% in 2008 to approximately 68% throughout 2009 which has been attributed to this new approach and a number of initiatives within the school including: improved pathways to boarding school, training and employment; Bound for Success, a strategy designed specifically for Cape York designed to encourage greater community input into schooling, improved education services across all stages of schooling and ongoing research to ensure that real progress is being made; and a focus on attracting and retaining resilient and dedicated teachers. In Coen, school attendance has been consistently above 90 per cent and having a dedicated person working with community and families to get children to school on a daily basis has had a very positive impact.
- In New South Wales at Wilcannia and Walgett schools, elders and community members meet with the Principal and staff once a term to discuss attendance and engagement issues and how local law and culture fits with the aims of the school. They also profile the student that has achieved perfect attendance for the term in the local paper. These activities not only reinforce the good behaviour of the students but involve the community in their successes.