

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2013-2014**

Outcome 1 - Early Childhood, Working Age and Indigenous Participation

DEEWR Question No. EW0257_14

Senator Back asked on 6 June 2013, Hansard page 66

Question

Living Away from Home Allowance exemptions

Senator BACK: Perhaps you could tell me either now or on notice: what is the regulatory or legislative instrument which allows ABSTUDY to be paid for these students at that particular hostel? Are you able to tell me what that instrument is? Ms Hippit: I will need to take that on notice. Senator BACK: Also, as an extension, who requested that this exemption be made so that they could receive the boarding allowance whilst still being in their home town? Ms Hippit: I would need to take that on notice. Senator BACK: As an extension, again, I want to know if it is true that the department has been approached about extending eligibility for ABSTUDY Living Away From Home Allowance to residents of Napranum if they choose to reside at the Weipa boarding school, which is, I understand, a very short distance from where they live. Ms Hippit: I will need to take that on notice. Senator BACK: Could you also take on notice to tell me who requested that exemption? That is the extent of my questions in 2.9.

Answer

The ABSTUDY scheme is an ongoing special measure to address the particular educational disadvantages faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by improving educational outcomes to a level commensurate with the Australian population in general. ABSTUDY policy is governed by the ABSTUDY Policy Manual which can be viewed at <http://www.employment.gov.au/ABSTUDY> pending the finalisation of the Machinery of Government changes. The ABSTUDY Policy Manual is approved by the Minister for Social Services.

The use of Away from Home rate of entitlement by students at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic School in Wadeye is not an exemption to ABSTUDY policy. The ABSTUDY Policy Manual provides at Chapter 25.1 that a student can be approved for the Away from Home rate of entitlement where the student does not have reasonable access to an appropriate education institution while living in the permanent home. An appropriate education institution is defined at Chapter 25.3.1 as any government school that offers tuition at the student's level. The manual further clarifies what travelling time and/or access between the permanent home and the appropriate education institution makes daily travel impossible or unreasonable.

As there is no government school at Wadeye, the students may qualify under ABSTUDY policy to receive away from home entitlements. ABSTUDY eligible students in Weipa are generally not eligible for boarding payments under the same policy provisions used by Wadeye as they have reasonable access to a local government secondary school, the Western Cape College.

The Department has received approaches from leaders of the Indigenous community of Napranum regarding access to ABSTUDY Away from Home entitlements for Napranum students attending Western Cape College.