

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. EW0243_14

Senator Back asked on 6 June 2013, Hansard page 27

Question

Closing the Gap Report 2012 - percentage of pre school aged children with access to a preschool program

Senator BACK: In the Prime Minister's Closing the Gap report for 2012 I believe it was stated that 91 per cent of preschool-aged children had access to a preschool program. Could you either advise or take on notice as to whether that claim was based on a standard of 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year, and if it was not could you advise against what standard it was reported? Ms Paul: My recollection is that it was against that standard—the point being they had access to it. If you go back to when those targets were set, several years ago, particularly in remote Australia there literally were not the preschools— Senator BACK: Exactly. Ms Paul: Senator Mason asks us each time here, 'How are those constructions going on those early learning centres?' All those things had to come together to get to that 91 per cent ability to access a program like that. I will check, because we do not have the people here, but I think it would be access to a service which would be able to provide your child with 15 hours per week. I will double-check. Senator BACK: I appreciate that.

Answer

The Prime Minister's Closing the Gap report tabled in 2013 states 'Data from 2011 reveals that 91 per cent of Indigenous children in remote areas are enrolled in a preschool program'.

This data is derived from the 2011 National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection and is based on children's enrolment in early childhood education programs for various numbers of hours per week nationally.

The proxy measure for access is enrolment in recognition that participation in early childhood education programs in Australia is voluntary.

Early childhood education programs for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year are being delivered this year, consistent with the commitment in the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.

It is anticipated that families will take up this offer. The states and territories have all expressed confidence that the early childhood education Closing the Gap target will be met in 2013.