

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment - Education

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2014-2015

Outcome 1 - Early Childhood Education and Care

Department of Education Question No. ED0225_15

Senator O'Neill provided in writing.

Question

Programme of Early Childhood Education (Program 1.4)

Under the Programme of Early Childhood Education (Program 1.4) the government has allocated \$9 million for early learning languages in Australia: a) While early language education is important, what is the government's justification for \$9 million for an online program that will only reach 40 services? b) How is this priority more important than funding family day care or child care benefit or preschool? c) Who is undertaking the trial and how were they chosen? d) What reporting, assessment and evaluation standards will be in place for this program? e) Will this program meet the goal outlined in The Coalition's Policy for Schools: Students First that "400,000 pre-school children would benefit as part of the online language learning trial for one year"? f) Can the Department provide a list of all those preschools that will participate in the program? g) Was there – or will there be – a competitive purchasing process for this program? If not, what are the reasons competitive purchasing was not pursued?

Answer

The ELLA trial was an election commitment announced in the Government's *Policy for Schools: Students First* and was announced in the 2014-15 Budget.

The Australian Government is providing \$9.8 million for the Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA) trial to test the effectiveness of providing preschool children with early exposure to a language other than English through online learning programmes.

The funding will be used to develop new language learning software suitable for preschool children, as well as develop guidance for teachers, parents and children and to support services in delivery. The department has also allocated funding for the trial infrastructure, staffing and trial evaluation.

It is anticipated that approximately 1600 children in up to 40 services will participate in the trial during 2015, depending on the size of the services involved.

A direct source procurement process was undertaken to engage Education Services Australia (ESA) to assist the department to project manage the trial and conduct the tender process for a software vendor. ESA was chosen because of its previous online language software development expertise.

Preschool and long day care services that provide an early childhood education programme will be invited to volunteer to participate in the ELLA trial during 2015.

An evaluation will be undertaken in late 2015/early 2016 to determine the effectiveness of the trial and feasibility of a national roll-out.