

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment - Education

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2014-2015

Outcome 2 - Schools and Youth

Department of Education Question No. ED0273_15

Senator Xenophon provided in writing.

Question

Remote Distance Education

For 1500 families living in remote locations throughout Australia, the only access to education for their children is through Schools of Distance Education. Distance education services are well structured and the centres are capably staffed but it is clear that distance education provision, and the policy surrounding it, is based on the assumption that all children have ready access to a person able to act as a tutor who oversees the day to day, on-site delivery of the distance education program. 1. Who is responsible for supervising and teaching the programs in the home on a daily basis? 2. If this responsibility lies with the family, why won't government recognise this vital role, which takes a family member out of the work force or necessitates the employment of additional staff? 3. Why won't government provide a specific allowance to families in receipt of the Assistance for Isolated Children's Distance Education allowance to take this into account? 4. Has the department done any modelling on the benefits of introducing such an allowance? 5. What support does the government offer, other than financial, to parents who are acting as tutor?

Answer

1. Parents, in consultation with distance education providers, are responsible for home schooling arrangements.

2 & 5. In circumstances where children are unable to attend a government school due to geographic isolation or other constraints, the Australian Government provides some financial support through programmes such as the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme. The AIC Distance Education Allowance contributes towards incidental costs, not the actual cost, of distance education; helping with associated costs such as books, enrolment fees, and internet use.

3. The introduction of a distance education allowance to family members acting as home tutors is a matter for the Department of Social Services, who manage the AIC Scheme.

4. The Department of Education has not undertaken any financial modelling on the introduction of a further parent allowance.