

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. ED0313_15

Senator Wright asked on 4 June 2014, Hansard page 92

Question

Additional funding for schools - Northern Territory

Senator WRIGHT: Through the Senate select committee, we have been made aware that the Northern Territory is still yet to decide how they will spend the additional funds. That was the evidence from the director of education in the Northern Territory. He said it was their intent to spend the money on schools but he could not guarantee that every dollar would go to education costs. Is the department aware of that? Mr Cook: No. I have had no discussions with the Northern Territory department. Senator WRIGHT: Has the minister or the department followed that up with the Northern Territory? Ms Paul: What is the last piece of what you said he said? Senator WRIGHT: He said it was their intent to spend the money on schools but they could not guarantee every dollar would go to education costs. Ms Paul: I think it has to. I think it has to under the act. We will have to go and look at the— Senator WRIGHT: Well, it has to. But if it does not, it is not quite clear. How do you monitor? You monitor by results? Ms Paul: I think we might be asking them tomorrow. Senator WRIGHT: That is what I am asking you now. You obviously were not aware of it. That was my first question. Did you follow that up with the Northern Territory government? Clearly not, if you did not know about it. Ms Paul: We will now. Senator WRIGHT: I do not know if you would know that, Senator Payne, but maybe you could take that on notice for me.

Answer

Section 78 of the *Australian Education Act (2013)* (the Act) sets out the ongoing funding requirements for Approved Authorities under the Act. This section also states that Approved Authorities must also comply with the relevant regulation.

Regulation 29 of the *Australian Education Regulation (2013)* (the Regulation) outlines that Approved Authorities for non-participating schools must spend funds, provided under the Act, for the purpose of providing school education. Regulation 34 requires Approved Authorities to provide the Secretary with a certificate stating whether the amount of funds provided to the Approved Authority have been spent in accordance with Regulation 29.

Section 110 of the Act provides a number of actions the Minister may take if an Approved Authority fails to comply with the Act or the Regulation. This includes raising a debt, recovery from future payments and the suspension of payments.

The Northern Territory Department of Education is the approved authority for government schools in the Northern Territory. Like all Approved Authorities, the Northern Territory Department of Education must spend funds provided under the Act for the purpose of providing school education and must provide a certificate to the Secretary stating that this has taken place.

At this time the Department has no reason to believe that the Northern Territory Department of Education is in breach of its obligations.