

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016

Outcome: Schools and Youth

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000349

Senator O'Neill, Deborah asked on 04 June 2015, Proof Hansard page 97

Letters to states and territories about use of Commonwealth funding

Question

Mr Cook: This is the requirement under the act. Under the act, they must use it for the purposes of schooling. There is a definition in the act about what the purpose of schooling is. Therefore, I am asking them to have their Auditor-General or the person in their department responsible and who has the authority to acquit to me that they have done that—they have used the money for those purposes.

Senator O'NEILL: Are you able to track that acquittal process through the system to individual schools and programs?

Mr Cook: I am happy to table the letters at some point as part of a question on notice.

Answer

Extracts from letters sent to state and territory education department directors-general informing them of their financial accountability requirements for funding provided for recurrent purposes under the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act) are below.

Extract to NSW, SA and the ACT.

The acquittal certificate must be confirmed by either the Auditor-General for your jurisdiction or a person who has approval from the Minister responsible for Education to authorise financial reports in your Territory. The certificate confirms that the funds provided under the Act have been spent, or committed to be spent, for the purpose of providing school education and implementing national policy initiatives for school education.

{Relevant department} is also required to report on the distribution of financial assistance paid by the Commonwealth under the Act for the programme year, broken down to base and loading amounts for each school in line with the needs based funding approach implemented in your jurisdiction. This process is known as block allocation and allows the Government to understand how Commonwealth funding has been applied to individual schools, ensuring transparency in school funding.

Return of the properly completed acquittal documents will satisfy your financial accountability obligations under the Act and Regulation in respect of the 2014 programme year.

Extract to other jurisdictions.

The acquittal certificate must be confirmed by either the Auditor-General for your jurisdiction or a person who has approval from the Minister responsible for Education to authorise financial reports in your State. The certificate confirms that the funds provided under the Act have been spent, or committed to be spent, for the purpose of providing school education and implementing national policy initiatives for school education.

{Relevant department} is also required to report on the amount of Commonwealth financial assistance paid to each government school in your jurisdiction. This process is known as block allocation and allows the Government to understand how Commonwealth funding has been applied to individual schools, ensuring transparency in school funding.

Return of the properly completed acquittal documents will satisfy your financial accountability obligations under the Act and Regulation in respect of the 2014 programme year.

I am also seeking your assistance with the provision of further detail in respect of each school showing a breakdown of the amount provided to each school by reference to base (or person student) amounts, and any additional funding targeting areas of additional need. This additional information ensures participating and non-participating jurisdictions have the same level of accountability for receipt of Commonwealth funding. This is consistent with the Government's approach to fund all States and Territories on the same basis under the Act, with greater funding provided to your jurisdiction than would have been paid using the formula that was brought forward from the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations.