

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016

Outcome: Schools and Youth

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000461

Senator O'Neill, Deborah asked on 04 June 2015, Proof Hansard page 155

Funding for Students with Disability

Question

Senator O'NEILL: I understand that there was a release from the minister that was put out before the election that says the data collection would lead to more funding from 2015. I knew there was something in the back of my head that there must be a 2015—

Senator Ryan: I can only take it on notice. I was not in this portfolio prior to the election; I was in another one, so I am not as aware of anything the minister may or may not have said prior to the election.

Answer

On 23 August 2013, the Hon Christopher Pyne MP, as the then Shadow Minister for Education, issued a media release titled *Bi-partisan support for nationally consistent data collection – students with disability and learning difficulty*. The Coalition media release was issued in response to a media release titled *Making It Count for Students with Dyslexia and Learning Difficulties* made earlier that same day by the Hon Bill Shorten MP, the then Minister for Education.

In this 23 August 2013 media release, the Labor Government committed to including students with dyslexia and other learning difficulties in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD). The release went on to state that:

All education ministers agreed to the phased implementation of the data collection from this year, with schools across Australia to be involved from 2015. This data collection will be used to deliver more funding for people with disability through the 'disability loading' in 2015 and there will be an interim disability loading next year.

In the responding media release later that day, the Coalition welcomed Labor's commitment to include students with dyslexia and other learning difficulties in the NCCD and stated the Coalition's intention to continue the data collection work already underway:

We have long argued that the current funding arrangements for students with disability and learning difficulty are unfair and inequitable. If elected to Government the Coalition will continue the data collection work that has commenced, which will be used to deliver more funding for people with disability through the 'disability loading' in 2015. We note the Government has again advised today that there will be an interim disability loading next year, as part of the new school funding model.

The 23 August 2013 announcement by Labor was made prior to Education Council consideration of when the NCCD data quality would be adequate for this purpose. In April 2014, Education Council agreed in principle to the continuation of existing funding arrangements for students with disability for one to two years, subject to further advice of the suitability of the NCCD as a basis for a loading for students with disability.

At the 31 October 2014 Education Council meeting, education ministers agreed that existing data based on state and territory eligibility criteria for the distribution of funding for students with disability will continue in 2015 until there is confidence that the NCCD is of the necessary quality to accurately inform funding for students with disability, with the aim of utilising NCCD data from 2016.

The first year in which all schools across Australia will participate in the NCCD is 2015. From 2016, Commonwealth funding for students with disability will be informed by the NCCD.