

**Senate Committee: Education and Employment**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017**

**Outcome: Schools and Youth**

**Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ16-000911**

Senator Williams, John provide in writing.

***Safe Schools program***

**Question**

On 18 March 2016, Minister Birmingham recommended several changes to the Safe Schools program.

- a. Can the Minister clarify whether these changes are also required for the schools that signed up to Safe Schools Program before the Minister's announcement on 18 March?
- b. Section 5A mentions that parents need to be consulted on 'the extent of participation and any associated changes to school policies':
  - i. Have parents in Victorian primary schools where 'transitioning' classes have been conducted, been fully consulted?
  - ii. How can the 'extent of participation' even be gauged by parents when teachers have been told to introduce the Safe Schools approach to promoting gender and sexual diversity throughout the curriculum?
- c. Section 1C required that the amended resources and any further resources be peer reviewed and approved by a panel of qualified educators appointed by the Department of Education and Training. Have the qualified educators completed this review? What was the cost of this additional requirement? Have the outcomes been delivered?
- d. Do you think we should continue to fund the program when Federal recommendations are not being carried out?

**Answer**

- a. Changes announced on 18 March 2016 apply to all schools, including those that joined as a member school prior to 18 March 2016. These schools will need to obtain appropriate parental consent for any classroom based activities, such as the use of the All of Us resource, conducted as part of the national SSCA program. It should be noted that pre-existing member schools do not require parental body agreement to remain in the program.
- b.
  - i. Victoria is no longer part of the national SSCA program and is not funded by the Commonwealth under this program.
  - ii. Appropriate parent/guardian consent must be obtained for student participation in whole classroom lessons or activities for schools using SSCA classroom resources.
- c. Review of resources occurs as needed on an ongoing basis by the panel. The cost is approximately \$3600 per meeting.
- d. All recommendations have been completed other than the additional resource for parents of young people grappling with sexuality or gender issues (recommendation 5d of Minister Birmingham's statement), which will be completed by the end of 2016.