

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2007-08 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome 2

DEEWR Question No. EW94_08

Senator Allison asked on 20 February 2008, EEWR Proof Hansard page 70.

Question

National Testing Program

Senator ALLISON—I will continue on the subject of students with learning difficulties. I would have thought this would have come to the attention of MCEETYA because of the national assessment program. I understand that Learning Difficulties Australia has written to political parties and I am sure they have written to you in the department on this subject of the results. Can you update the committee on the national assessment program and how students with learning difficulties fit in the student assessment indicators?

Mr Burmester—During the process of working with the states to develop the instrument and arrangements for the national testing program, there has been discussion about the accommodations that could be made for students that you are talking about, so they have been considered by the relevant officials committee from all states and territories. I am not sure of the final position on that or whether the accommodations that have been provided have yet been promulgated to all jurisdictions, but we could take that on notice.

Answer

Under the National Protocols for Test Administration, standards have been established which set out a process whereby education providers can meet their obligations to facilitate participation for students with disabilities and learning difficulties. This includes an obligation to make reasonable adjustments (accommodations) where necessary to ensure the maximum participation of students with disabilities. The process includes:

- consultation with the student (or an associate of the student);
- consideration of whether an adjustment is necessary;
- if an adjustment is necessary, identification of a reasonable adjustment;
- making the reasonable adjustment.

It has been common practice in all jurisdictions to make accommodations to testing procedures that optimise access to tests for all students with special educational needs. This functional approach will provide special provisions which reflect the kind of support and assistance usually provided in the classroom in order for that student to demonstrate what they know and can do. A student may have access to more than one special provision in any one test.

Reasonable adjustments or accommodations are provided to students with disabilities or special needs through a range of special provisions. Special provisions may be accessed by a student for all or part of the tests. These can include:

- access to large print,
- Braille,
- white copy for use with coloured overlays
- assistive technology,

- oral sign support,
- separate supervision,
- extra time including rest breaks,
- scribe,
- reader.

All Test Administration Authorities and principals are obliged to comply with the obligations and standards for students with disabilities and learning difficulties as set under the national protocols for test administration.