

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2012-2013**

Outcome 2 - Schools and Youth

DEEWR Question No. EW0987_13

Senator Nash asked on 14 February 2013 , Hansard page 54

Question

ICPA submission to National Plan for School Improvement forum

Senator NASH: All right. I understand there were a number of questions submitted to that particular one from the ICPA...What specific funding provisions will be made for distance education students who are not physically located at the administrative hub of the distance education school? What will the definition of a 'small' school be? Will the loads for rural and remote students and students from small schools be based on the ASGC classifications? If so, are only schools from the remote and very remote areas in the ASGC classifications going to be funded as rural and remote and, if so, what provisions will be made for small schools in outer regional and inner regional areas? If you could take those on notice for me. Mr Cook: Can you tell me the date of that particular forum? Senator NASH: Yes, I can. That particular forum was 1 November. Those questions were not answered at the forum and I can understand that you cannot do everything through the forums—that would be impossible. The ICPA has apparently emailed them to the department—and you may well not be aware of this—in early December to seek a response to those, which I think is a fair and appropriate thing to do. That is two months ago and they still have not received a response. I completely understand that it could not be done through the forum, but I think two months for a simple set of questions...I just think it would have been more appropriate if they could have had a more timely response. Mr Cook: We will certainly look into that. I am actually not aware of the questions. They have not come to the joint task force, but certainly we will look into those questions and get back to the association as soon as we can. Senator NASH: If you could have a hunt around. Ms Paul: If we cannot find it then we might just get on to your office and perhaps they can email Mr Cook or me again, just to make sure. Senator NASH: We can do that, absolutely. I suspect Hansard will pick it up, but we can get it to you more quickly than Hansard will. Perhaps without waiting for the process of questions on notice to come back, if in the meantime as well you could respond to ICPA directly as well as responding to the committee.

Answer

The department has responded directly to the Isolated Children's Parents' Association on the issues raised. A copy of the letter is attached for your information.

Attachment: Text of Reply to the President of the Isolated Children's Parents Association

Ms Judy Newton
ICPA (Aust) Federal President
"Malabar"
WALGETT NSW 2832
Email: Fedpresident@icpa.com.au

Dear Ms Newton

Thank you for your email on behalf of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (Australia) received by the department on 23 November 2012 via our Better Schools website. I sincerely apologise for the delay in responding.

In your email you raised a number of specific questions about how the school funding model will provide for students in rural and remote regions. At this stage the precise model is currently under discussion with state and territory governments and non-government education authorities, so the department is not able to directly answer all of your questions at this time.

The Australian Government acknowledges that current school funding arrangements require improvements and they do not support quality outcomes for all students in all schools.

The new school funding model will see additional resources allocated to reflect student need. Students who need more support – such as students with limited English skills, those from lower income families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with disabilities – will get extra funding. This could help pay for things like teachers' aides, specialist literacy and numeracy coaches, and special equipment. There would also be extra funding for smaller schools and schools in regional, rural and remote areas that face higher costs in delivering education. Importantly this additional money would be a permanent feature of the new funding system so schools would no longer need to rely on grants or short-term programs.

In your email you ask what specific funding provisions will be made for the unique learning situations facing Distance Education students, who are not physically located at the administrative hub of the Distance Education school. This is dependent on the final make-up of the schools funding model and is the subject of current discussions with state and territory governments and non-government education authorities.

In your email you also ask if the additional loading for rural and remote students and for students from small schools is going to be based on the ASGC (Australian Standard Geographical Classification). The nature of the loadings attached to zones in the classification is under discussion with state and territory governments and non-government education authorities.

Under the proposed needs-based school funding model, school geo-locations will be determined using the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs Geographical Location Classifications. This is consistent with the index used by the Gonski Panel. Further information on this is attached.

The final question you posed is what the definition of a small school will be in terms of loadings recommended by the Gonski Review. Under the model proposed by the

Gonski Review, very small and small schools are relevant to the determination of the size and location loading. The Review proposed a sliding scale from 10 per cent for medium-sized schools in remote locations to 100 per cent for very small schools in very remote locations (page 169 of the Final Report refers). Exact loadings attributed to small schools under the National Plan for School Improvement are the subject of discussions with states and territories and non-government education authorities.

The Government is committed to implementing a national approach to school reform which will give every Australian school student access to a high-quality, high-equity education, no matter where they live, where they go to school or their personal circumstances.

The Australian Education Bill, introduced into Parliament in November 2012, establishes a national vision for schooling reform, along with a National Plan for School Improvement and a shift towards needs-based Commonwealth funding for education. It enshrines a commitment in law that all Australian children should be able to access the excellent education to which they are entitled.

I invite you to view the latest information on the National Plan for School Improvement on the Better Schools website at www.betterschools.gov.au.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yvonne Uren
Acting Branch Manager
Strategic Transitions Branch