

## EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

### SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE – QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2005-2006 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

**Outcome:** 1  
**Output Group:** 1.2 – Funding for Schools.

#### **DEST Question No. E022\_06**

Senator Carr provided in writing.

#### **Question:**

#### **Indigenous School Attendance** (reference *National report to Parliament*, pp.30-32)

The National Report says that attendance rates for Indigenous students are not improving significantly, and in some cases have fallen. It identifies the need for “strong connections and relationships between schools and Indigenous communities” as essential for progress to be made in attendance rates.

- (a) What role has ASSPA played in this process? Would you say it played an important role? How do you think these links can now be built and maintained, especially given the evidence we heard at the hearings of the Committee’s inquiry into Indigenous education recently?
- (b) What can replace ASSPA? Do you have signs that the Government’s new approach is more effective in building these relationships? Can you provide examples?
- (c) Doesn’t the Report (pp.34-35) outline a case study – Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School, WA – where an ASSPA committee is identified as crucial in enhancing attendance rates and generally building a sense of community?
- (d) In the face of these kinds of cases, what was the rationale for moving to a different model? Where is the evidence that this one wasn’t working?
- (e) In his Foreword, the Minister says, “*we intend to build on a foundation of programs and approaches that we know work.*”
- (f) How is the new approach “building on” the old ASSPA? Hasn’t ASSPA been swept away?

#### **Answer:**

#### *Indigenous school attendance*

- (a) Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) committees have contributed to Indigenous presence in schools, improved participation and involvement of parents in cultural activities. Overall, however, there is little evidence about the broader impact the ASSPA programme has had on improving Indigenous students’ learning outcomes.

Building and maintaining the links between schools and Indigenous communities is central to the Parent School Partnerships Initiative. This initiative places emphasis on

bringing schools and Indigenous communities together to work at improving school attendance and educational outcomes.

- (b) The Parent School Partnerships Initiative has replaced the formula funding of ASSPA Committees. Given the progressive implementation of the Parent School Partnerships Initiative during 2005, it is too early to assess its effectiveness.
- (c) The Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School is an example of an independent community school which has effective school/community relationships and which has achieved high attendance rates.
- (d) The decision to replace the formula funding of ASSPA Committees with the Parent School Partnerships Initiative was informed by the conclusions of the Review of the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) Programme. The review concluded that the performance of ASSPA committees was mixed and that the IEDA programme (including the ASSPA element) should be refocused on accelerating the learning outcomes of Indigenous students.

The Report of the IEDA Review, at pages 58 and 59, summarises 'what has worked', and 'what hasn't worked' of the IEDA programme, including the ASSPA element.

- (e) (f) The Parent School Partnerships Initiative encourages parents of Indigenous students to be involved in school education, with a focus on overcoming local barriers to Indigenous education. Successful ASSPA activities that contributed to improved attendance, literacy and numeracy skills and successful completion of Year 12 are being funded under the Parent School Partnerships initiative.