

Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Supplementary Budget Estimates 2012-2013

Outcome 2 - Schools and Youth

DEEWR Question No. EW0529_13

Senator McKenzie provided in writing.

Question

Parliament and Civics Education Rebate

A) The number of students receiving the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate is forecast in the budget to drop after this year. Why? B) Does this reflect a decreasing emphasis on the importance of civics education in our schools? C) How have the PACER payments to schools changed in recent years to reflect growing costs?

Answer

A) The Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) program is a successful program which supports schools to bring students in Years 4–12 to visit our national capital on a civics and citizenship education excursion.

PACER is important to the Australian Government as evidenced in the provision of funding of over \$24 million over five years (2008-09 to 2012-13).

PACER is a capped program and applications are processed in order of receipt until funds are exhausted. Budget projections for the number of schools accessing the rebate in future years are linked to current Forward Estimates funding allocations. These allocations were established at the commencement of the program in 2006.

Additional funding of \$3.2 million was provided in the 2012 Budget to meet expected growth in demand for the rebate to June 2013, the end of the current service provision contract period, and to help more students visit Canberra. To date, no school eligible for the rebate has missed out. The Government will continue to monitor expected demand for the program.

B) The Australian Government is committed to helping young Australians to become active and informed citizens, with an understanding of Australia's system of government, history and culture.

PACER is one of a number of civics initiatives supported by the Australian Government. Other initiatives include the annual National Schools Constitutional Convention for Year 11 and 12 students, two history competitions for school students (the National History Challenge and the Simpson Prize) and the Constitution Education Fund Australia *Yaba* project, which is developing online video and social media civics and citizenship education resources.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is leading the development of an Australian Curriculum for civics and citizenship. In October 2012, ACARA released *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship* to guide the development of the curriculum.

C) Additional funding was provided in the 2012 Budget to meet expected growth in demand for the rebate to June 2013 and to help more students visit Canberra. The rebate rates (which range from \$20 per student to \$260 per student depending on their distance from Canberra) remained unchanged.

The PACER subsidy was always intended as a contribution to assist with travel costs, not to cover them in full and it is not CPI-adjusted. Although it was never intended to cover all costs associated with a school visit to Canberra, PACER is a popular program.