



AUSTRALIAN SENATE

CLERK OF THE SENATE

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22 May 2006

Mr Alistair Sands  
Secretary  
Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Sands

**ESTIMATES HEARING, 22 MAY 2006**

At this morning's hearing of the committee I undertook to search for any further correspondence between the Presiding Officers and the Minister for Education, Science and Training or the Prime Minister relating to the Citizenship Visits Program.

A search of the file in the possession of the Parliamentary Education Office has revealed the attached further letter. With this letter, the committee now has all copies of signed correspondence between the Presiding Officers and the Minister or the Prime Minister from the files of the Department of the Senate and the Parliamentary Education Office.

I understand that the President's office is undertaking a separate search of material in the possession of that office, and will advise the committee separately of any such correspondence located as a result of that search.

Yours sincerely

(Harry Evans)



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COPE

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING  
THE HON DR BRENDAN NELSON MP

Received  
Serjeant-at-Arms  
14/11/05

10 NOV 2005

Senator the Hon Paul Calvert  
President of the Senate  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

The Hon David Hawker MP  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Paul David

Dear Mr ~~President~~ and Mr ~~Speaker~~

Thank you for your letter of 13 October 2005 concerning the funding and structure of the Citizenship Visits Program and the Education Travel Rebate.

I acknowledge the views in your letter about this matter. As you know, both programmes have been successful in subsidising visits by school students to Parliament House and the national capital as part of civics and citizenship education. The Australian Government has provided funding of \$1.72 million since 2001 for the Education Travel Rebate. I have approved funding for the Education Travel Rebate until 30 June 2006.

Civics and citizenship is now a national priority for Australian schooling. Work is currently being undertaken to develop National Statements of Learning in civics and citizenship education for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. The Statements of Learning will identify common elements in all curriculum policies for civics and citizenship across Australia which will provide a basis for education systems to develop greater consistency. The National Statements of Learning for civics and citizenship education will become available in 2006.

In 2004, the first national assessment of civics and citizenship education for a representative sample of Year 6 primary and Year 10 secondary school students was conducted as the basis for national reporting. Results are expected to be published shortly. Future assessments are planned for 2007 and 2010.

I am seeking to increase students' exposure to the national institutions that underpin Australia's democratic and cultural heritage and traditions. The Education Travel Rebate encourages students' on-site learning about the functions of these institutions. The Education Travel Rebate is not a tourism project but a civics and citizenship education activity. Schools must use the *Discovering Democracy* resources (the Australian Government's civics and citizenship education programme from

1997-2004) in the classroom to be eligible for the rebate. This programme through my Department already operates to support visits to the Parliament.

Any improvements to the current travel subsidies need to encourage more year four to year ten students across Australia to visit Parliament House and other national institutions as part of their civics and citizenship education.

In line with the Prime Minister's letter of 13 April, I agree that we need to discuss the future beyond June 2006 of the Citizenship Visits Program and the Education Travel Rebate. I think there is worth in a combined rebate for civics and citizenship education and seek your cooperation and support to achieve this. Adopting this course of action will reduce confusion for schools and provide further support for civics and citizenship education as a national priority.

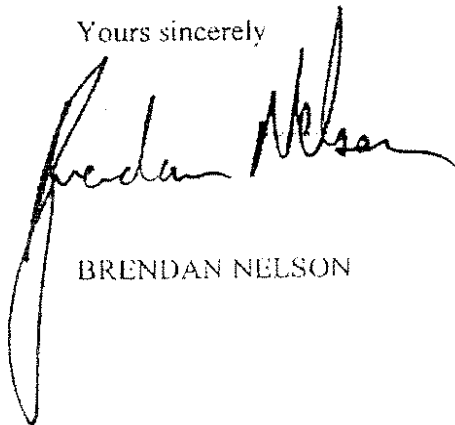
The benefit of combining and expanding the rebates is that Members of Parliament and Senators would have more opportunities to meet Australian students and more Australian students would be able to visit the national Parliament as part of their civics and citizenship education activities.

A combined rebate, administered through my Department, could operate as effectively as two single rebates. I estimate that more than 50,000 students would be able to receive the travel rebate each year under a combined rebate that targeted their civics and citizenship education.

A combined rebate proposal would require students to make a mandatory visit to Parliament House (including, where possible, take a guided tour, visit the Parliamentary Education Office and meet their local Member/Senator when Parliament is sitting) and to select six institutions from a list of twelve other national institutions. These are the Electoral Education Centre; Old Parliament House; Australian War Memorial; National Archives; High Court; National Capital Exhibition; Screen Sound Australia; National Museum of Australia; National Gallery; Anzac Parade and Memorials; and National Library; and National Portrait Gallery. None of these institutions operate "commercially."

On the other hand, it could be possible to continue the two programmes separately. I am keen to meet with you as soon as practicable to discuss this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brendan Nelson', with a large, sweeping flourish extending downwards and to the left.

BRENDAN NELSON