

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
References Committee

Inquiry into indigenous education funding arrangements

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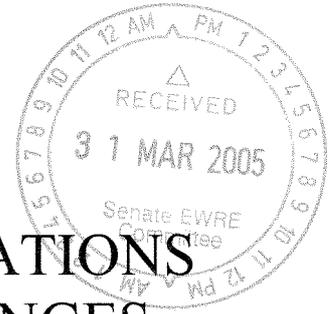
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INQUIRY INTO THE IMPLICATIONS
OF FUNDING POLICY CHANGES
CONTAINED IN 2004 AMENDMENTS TO THE
*INDIGENOUS EDUCATION (TARGETED
ASSISTANCE) ACT 2000*

SUBMISSION TO THE
SENATE
EMPLOYMENT, WORKPLACE RELATIONS
AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Department of Education Science & Training

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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) welcomes the opportunity to present a submission to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee Reference on Indigenous education funding arrangements.

This submission describes the new programme arrangements for the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) programme and the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives (IESIP) programme and the processes for the implementation of these arrangements. DEST is providing the Committee with background information relevant to the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry.

The submission consists of:

- An overview of the Indigenous Education reform package for 2005 – 2008
- Section 1: provides information on the changes to IEDA and IESIP
- Section 2: comments on the likely educational outcomes of the Australian Government's new Indigenous-specific funding measures
- Section 3: comments on the accountability requirements applying to funding agreements made under IEDA and IESIP programmes
- Section 4: comments on the effects of funding measures on current state and other systemic Indigenous programmes, and the operation of Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) committees
- Section 5: outlines the consultation between the Commonwealth and States and Territories and schools and parents about the changes.

Responsibility for education is shared between State, Territory Governments and the Australian Government with the states and territories generally having primary responsibility for the funding and delivery of school education. Indigenous education funding from the Australian Government is supplementary to the state, territory government funding or other systemic or independent own source revenue and other Australian Government education programmes.

OVERVIEW OF THE INDIGENOUS EDUCATION REFORM PACKAGE 2005 – 2008

Closing the education divide between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians remains one of the Australian Government's highest education priorities.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) (see **Appendix 1**, Part A, Page 81) reflected in the objects of the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000*, guides programme initiatives in continuing efforts to achieve equity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

The Australian Government's approach for 2005 - 2008 is to:

- make mainstream programmes work better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- direct resources to programmes that have demonstrably improved outcomes; and
- provide greater weighting of resources towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students of greatest disadvantage – those in remote areas.

Important features of the 2005-2008 package include:

- the IEDA programme being brought under the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) legislation;
- discontinuing the formula funding of ASSPA committees and the Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS) and the introduction of a Whole of School Intervention Strategy (WOSIS);
- targeted tutorial assistance focused on Indigenous students:
 - who do not meet the Year 3, 5 and 7 minimum literacy and numeracy national benchmarks;
 - in Years 10, 11 and 12 to improve learning outcomes and to increase retention to and completion of Year 12;
- using the 2001 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data to update the remoteness boundaries for funding purposes;
- strengthening the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) legislation to include conditions of funding with respect to educational accountability;
- transparent reporting by providers of their expected and actual expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from their own sources; and
- strengthening the performance and reporting framework for IEDA and IESIP.

These measures represent a significant step to better focus Indigenous-specific and mainstream resources to the most disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, with the objective of closing the educational divide between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

Following its evaluation in 2003, the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS) will continue, but with a strengthened focus on the application of 'what works'. Funding will be continued for significant national initiatives and projects, with an emphasis on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote areas. Initiatives being directed towards promoting systemic change and developing flexible whole-of-government approaches to education delivery, particularly around:

- preparing young Indigenous children for formal schooling;
- improving attendance, and literacy and numeracy achievement, particularly in primary schools;
- helping to re-engage and retain more Indigenous students to year 12, or its vocational education equivalent; and
- lifting the effectiveness of teachers and their support staff;
- improving the quality of teaching and teacher practice; and
- strengthened monitoring and reporting of educational outcomes, particularly at regional levels.

New accountability conditions attached to Indigenous targeted funding require providers to:

- report against school attendance benchmarks for all students (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians);
- report expected and actual expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education from their own sources;
- participate in DEST initiated studies which will provide detailed information on specific outcomes that cannot be readily measured using performance indicators;
- participate in data quality assurance processes.

The performance monitoring and reporting framework will continue to measure achievement of the goals of the AEP, such as:

- literacy and numeracy readiness, national literacy and numeracy benchmark results and achievement levels;
- other educational outcomes including attendance, apparent retention rates, grade progression ratios and secondary school achievement
- enrolments
- the employment of Indigenous people in education
- the involvement of Indigenous people in education decision making
- professional development for staff
- culturally inclusive curricula.

1. IEDA / IESIP

Terms of Reference 1 - Proposed changes to the IEDA and IESIP programmes, with reference to:

(a) the new tutorial assistance arrangements and Whole of School Intervention Strategy under IEDA.

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION DIRECT ASSISTANCE

The IEDA programme has been significantly reshaped following a review of the programme in 2003 which included a wide process of consultation. The reshaped programme consists of two elements: targeted tuition assistance for Indigenous students through the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme and the introduction of a Whole of School Intervention Strategy. The changes to IEDA:

- enable Indigenous students to access tutorial assistance at key stages of their education;
- focus resources on initiatives that have demonstrably improved outcomes;
- more heavily weight resources towards the most disadvantaged students – those in remote areas;
- encourage education providers and Indigenous communities to work together to accelerate outcomes for Indigenous students; and,
- further streamline programme management.

Indigenous specific funding is supplementary to other mainstream education funding. It is intended for strategic interventions to accelerate Indigenous students' learning outcomes.

The Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC) *Report on Indigenous Funding 2001* recognised, in its findings, a failure of mainstream services to meet the needs of Indigenous people which in turn placed undue pressure and expectations on the limited funds available for Indigenous-specific services. There was recognition of the necessity for better needs-based planning for both mainstream and Indigenous-specific services informed by improved data availability, quality and comparability at a regional level.

In its response to the CGC findings, the Australian Government committed to improving access to mainstream programmes and services (including mainstream schooling) thereby enabling Indigenous-specific resources to be directed to areas of greatest need, particularly remote locations.

Some \$281 million for IEDA will be directed at Indigenous education programmes over 2005 – 2008 to provide supplementary targeted funds to Indigenous students, school-based Indigenous parent partnerships and educational institutions to improve education outcomes for Indigenous students.

Changes made to elements of the IEDA programme, include:

- more strategic targeting of tuition assistance for Indigenous students under the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS);
- introduction of the Whole of School Intervention Strategy, changing the way support is provided for parental and community involvement through the implementation of the Parents School Partnerships Initiative (PSPI) and Homework Centres; and

- discontinuing the VEGAS element of the IEDA programme (funding being pooled with the PSPI funds).

Tutorial assistance is being more strategically targeted. Funding of some \$179 million has been provided for the introduction of the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS), which replaces the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS). It has been enhanced to provide three elements:

- *In-class tuition* with a focus on:
 - Indigenous students not meeting the Year 3, 5 and 7 literacy and numeracy national benchmarks. Those students will be eligible for tutorial assistance in the following year – that is in Years 4, 6 and 8;
 - Indigenous students in remote schools being able to access targeted individual, in-class tuition for up to 2.5 hours per week for a maximum of 32 weeks per school year;
 - students in State capital cities and Canberra schools with Indigenous student enrolments of 20 or more, being able to access in-class tuition for up to 2.5 hours per week for a maximum of 32 weeks per school year; and
 - the priority will be to address the tuition needs of students not meeting the national benchmarks, and as met, flexibility exists to meet the needs of other Indigenous students at risk of not meeting the benchmarks and outcome standards for their age level.
- *Tuition for Years 10,11 and 12 students* with a focus on:
 - Indigenous students accessing supplementary tuition in subjects they are studying to obtain their Year 10 or Year 12 certificates with capacity for around 50 per cent of remote and 10 per cent of non-remote Indigenous students (approximately 11,600 students) to receive tuition; and
 - students having access to a combination of individual and small group tuition for up to 4 hours tuition per week over a maximum of 35 weeks per school year.
- *Tuition for Indigenous Tertiary Students* with a focus on:
 - tuition continuing to be provided through bulk funding arrangements with tertiary institutions and aiming to target some 4,000 students in 2005 – 2008; and
 - students studying from remote locations benefiting from improved access to ITAS at critical stages in their academic year.

A significant change to the IEDA programme is the introduction of the Whole of School Intervention Strategy (WOSIS). It has two main elements:

- *the Parent School Partnerships Initiative (PSPI)* which focuses on:
 - Indigenous parents and communities, in partnership with schools, encouraged to implement creative approaches to address local barriers to achieving the best possible learning outcomes for Indigenous students;
 - projects to improve attendance rates literacy and numeracy outcomes, Year 12 (or VET equivalent) completion rates, or transitions at critical points in school education or movements from school to work; and
 - those students facing the greatest need so that at least 50 per cent of funding will be targeted at remote schools.

- Homework Centres with a revised focus on:
 - heightened efforts to ensure qualified personnel supervise homework activity and the targeting of students over eight years old;
 - increasing the emphasis on local partnerships between homework centres, schools and local business or community groups; and
 - improved learning outcomes.

The Indigenous Education Programmes Provider Guidelines Parts A and B provide further detail (**Appendix 1**).

(b) The new strategic initiatives for Indigenous students in remote areas and the new flagship project for teaching literacy under IESIP

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION STRATEGIC INITIATIVES PROGRAMME (IESIP)

There have been modest changes only to IESIP for the 2005 – 2008 quadrennium. IESIP funding continues to be provided for Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (SRA) and for on-going and new strategic projects to further accelerate the educational outcomes of Indigenous Australians.

Supplementary Recurrent Assistance

SRA funding, based on per capita rates, is provided to government and non-government education providers in the preschool, school and VET sectors. Details of the 2005 – 2008 SRA rates and how they apply across different locations are at **Appendix 1** – funding categories are at page 8, other details are at pages 21 – 34.

Funding conditions that applied in 2001 – 2004 will continue, subject to the following key changes:

- per capita rates for Indigenous students attending schools or VET in state capital cities and Canberra have been ‘frozen’ at 2004 levels:
 - this arrangement is consistent with the Australian Government’s commitment to improving mainstream service provision for Indigenous Australians in metropolitan areas
 - the approach enables Indigenous-specific funding to be better targeted to those at greatest disadvantage;
- the remoteness boundaries are based on the 2001, not 1996, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data; and
- for those education and training providers losing their remote status in 2005 according to 2001 ABS Census data, SRA funding entitlement will be guaranteed at 2004 rates.

Strategic Initiatives

Scaffolding

Funding will continue during 2005 – 2008 for the Scaffolding structured approach to teaching literacy. Some \$15 million has been identified for this flagship initiative – around \$9 million in partnership with the Northern Territory Government, and \$6 million to continue to support current and new Scaffolding partnerships with other education providers. The Scaffolding

approach to teaching literacy has proven to be especially effective with Indigenous students. The approach has demonstrated impressive improvements in learning outcomes for Indigenous students.

An evaluation by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in 2002 concluded that the methodology was particularly suited to Indigenous students' academic and personal development and had the full participation and support of Indigenous communities. The evaluation by ACER (see **Appendix 2**) found that:

- it is an effective means of improving the literacy skills of Indigenous students;
- the students involved achieve at a much higher level than if they had not participated; and
- professional development provided to teachers is detailed, supportive and has brought about positive changes to their practices.

The ACER evaluation showed that on entry to the programme, only 4 per cent of Years 1-3 students could read independently or above Year 1 level and that 96 per cent of students had insufficient literacy skills to take part in classroom lessons. Testing at the end of the programme showed that 60 per cent were able to read independently and students in Years 4-6 and Year 7 and above also showed significant improvement.

In the 2005-2008 quadrennium over \$8 million has been committed, in partnership with the NT Government and Charles Darwin University, for the National Accelerated Literacy Programme (NALP) which will target 10,000 Indigenous students (90 per cent of whom are in remote areas) in 100 NT schools. 700 teachers to be trained to implement the approach.

Accelerated Education and Work Readiness Project (Yachad)

The broad aim of this project is to reduce the educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. A commitment of \$3.7 million as a funding contribution has been made by the Australian Government for the Accelerated Learning and Work Management Project (Yachad).

The Yachad project draws on an Israeli Tafnit programme which has used an accelerated learning approach to assist in immigrant Ethiopian Jews being absorbed into Israeli society. The potential of the Tafnit programme approach for accelerating the educational outcomes for Indigenous people in Australia is being assessed through this pilot initiative.

The project is based on work undertaken over many years in Israel, where educators have used principles normally associated with gifted and talented education to bring the lowest performers in literacy and numeracy up to (and often beyond) benchmark levels.

The approach utilises existing curriculum and seeks to improve performance to enable students to reach established literacy and numeracy benchmarks. Its success is based on principles, or methods, that teachers are trained in and utilise, beginning with the lowest achieving 25 per cent of their students. Having reached this level, students are reintegrated with the class, where the approach may be used to improve all students' learning outcomes (principally in the key areas of literacy and numeracy).

The project is being piloted within three trial sites under the COAG Whole of Government Indigenous trial in Western Australia, Victoria and Queensland.

2. NEW INDIGENOUS FUNDING MEASURES

Terms of Reference 2 - The likely educational outcomes of the Commonwealth's new Indigenous-specific funding measures, with reference to:

(a) *the Indigenous Youth Leadership and Indigenous Youth Mobility Programmes.*

The **Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme (IYMP)** is part of the Australian Government's *Indigenous Australians Opportunity and Responsibility* election commitment. It provides some \$19 million over four years to assist 600 young Indigenous people from remote areas of Australia to access training and employment opportunities in major provincial centres or capital cities. Participants will have access to a support team. The programme emphasises continued contact with home communities. Safe and supported accommodation will be provided through Aboriginal Hostels Limited.

The IYMP will:

- assist up to 600 young people who, with the support of their communities, elect to relocate to major provincial centres or capital cities to take up training and employment opportunities;
- provide safe and supported accommodation to ensure the social, emotional and physical wellbeing of participants;
- provide pre-vocational, vocational and employment opportunities relevant to individual and community needs and aspirations;
- support access to New Apprenticeships, as well as other occupations such as nursing, accountancy, business management and teaching;
- enable contact between participants and their home communities to be maintained;
- contribute to the capacity building of remote communities; and
- support for the development of local economic opportunities for young Indigenous Australians living in remote areas.

The **Indigenous Youth Leadership Programme (IYLP)** is part of the Australian Government's *Indigenous Australians Opportunity and Responsibility* election commitment. The IYLP provides \$10 million over a four year period for 250 school and university based scholarships and structured study tours, to be administered by a non-metropolitan higher education institution. The IYLP is to focus mainly on remote communities and be supported by an Indigenous Elders' Advisory Group. The school-based scholarships will be offered at the 'best Australian schools'.

The IYLP will:

- facilitate access to educational opportunities and choices for young, talented Indigenous students from remote areas at 'best Australian schools';
- provide support for students to qualify for higher education and attend university;
- provide leadership opportunities to develop leadership skills and knowledge required to contribute to their communities;
- support young people to take on future roles as Indigenous leaders in their communities; and

- provide opportunities to undertake cadetships and work experience through targeted study tours.

(b) *The government's objective of accelerating educational outcomes for Indigenous students, as stated in the 10-point national agenda for schooling announced in November 2003.*

The second *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training* noted that while significant progress had been made, unacceptable disadvantage remained, particularly in remote regions of Australia. Furthermore, the report noted that, on many measures, the results and the specific outcomes for Indigenous students were the best to date. For example, the latest Year 3 and 5 literacy and numeracy results were the best ever in five out of six national benchmark areas. There was a 12.3 per cent increase in Year 12 enrolments to a record 2,941 students. This contributed to a record Year 12 retention rate of 38 per cent. This is up from 29 per cent in 1996.

While these improvements are welcomed, unacceptable disadvantage remains. Year 12 retention rates may have risen to record levels, but they are still only half that of non-Indigenous Australians. Numeracy and literacy results show improvement, yet one in four Indigenous Year 3 students cannot pass a basic reading test. The disadvantage is particularly pronounced in remote regions of Australia. In remote parts of the Northern Territory, only 1 in 8 can pass a basic Year 3 reading test. Only 1 in 10 Indigenous Australians in remote regions complete Year 12.

In his November 2003 statement *Taking Schools to the next level: The National Educational Framework for Schools*, the Minister for Education, Science and Training signalled significant reforms to the Australian Government's Indigenous education efforts. The Minister indicated that the Australian Government invests over \$467 million a year for Indigenous specific education purposes, and while good results had been achieved, progress needs to be accelerated and efforts more targeted. Reforms need to be guided by three broad principles:

- focusing effort on areas of greatest disadvantage;
- directing resources to programmes that demonstrably achieve improvements in educational outcomes; and
- leveraging mainstream resources.

A strong focus of the 2005 – 2008 funding package is directed at Indigenous students of greatest disadvantage – those in remote areas. At least 50 per cent of the PSPI funding is targeted at remote schools. Furthermore, at least 50 per cent of remote students in Years 10, 11 and 12 will be eligible to access tutorial assistance. Intensive tutorial assistance of 4 hours per week for 35 weeks per year will be provided. Under the Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (SRA) element of the IESIP programme, funding is provided on a per-capita basis. Students in remote locations are funded at twice the rate of students in non-remote locations.

Resources are being directed to initiatives that have demonstrably improved outcomes for Indigenous students. This includes the funding of strategic national projects, such as the Scaffolding Literacy Programme and the Yachad project to address literacy and numeracy and the *Dare to Lead* and *What Works Project* to improve the quality of teaching and teacher practice for Indigenous students.

An important feature of the funding package is the leverage of mainstream resources to ensure that the mainstream works better for Indigenous Australians. To this end, Government and non-government systems will be required to report to the Australian Government through annual Indigenous Education Statements on how Australian Government school funding is being spent on improving the education outcomes of Indigenous students. This will be assisted by a strengthened reporting framework which will include the introduction of school attendance benchmarks for all students, and reporting, for the first time, on outcomes at the remote, rural/provincial and metropolitan areas.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIREMENTS

Terms of Reference 3 - The accountability requirements applying to funding agreements made under IEDA and IESIP programmes, with reference to:

a) the new framework of performance monitoring and reporting on educational outcomes

The framework provides for continuity of data which allows progress to be reported over time in achieving the objects of the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000*. Progress will be measured through performance indicators and targets, and reported in annual national reports to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training.

Where appropriate, performance indicators are aligned with Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) key performance measures for the National Goals of Schooling and COAG measures of overcoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage.

The performance monitoring and reporting framework is based on the current suite of IESIP performance indicators. The framework acts as an overarching measure of the achievement of the goals of the AEP in key areas of Indigenous education, and reflected in the objects of the enabling legislation, such as:

- literacy and numeracy readiness, national literacy and numeracy benchmark results and achievement levels
- other educational outcomes including attendance, apparent retention rates, grade progression ratios and secondary school achievement
- enrolments
- the employment of Indigenous people in education
- the involvement of Indigenous people in education decision making
- professional development for staff
- culturally inclusive curricula.

Accountability requirements for Indigenous education and training are also linked with mainstream requirements through:

- school systems providing annual Indigenous Education Statements as a condition of receiving General Recurrent Grants (GRG) funding.

- strengthened educational accountability provisions in the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) legislation, including appropriate interventions for under-performance by providers against agreed measures and for failure to report.

General aspects of the accountability requirements for the Indigenous Education Programme (IEP) include:

- the effectiveness of different elements of the IEP will be assessed through an evaluation strategy based on sampling, case studies, research, focus groups and reviews. This will ensure that qualitative data on important educational outcomes which are difficult to measure quantitatively will be available, such as the impact of tuition on students' behaviour and attitudes to school and the value added to student performance by attendance at homework centres;
- specific performance information from providers; and
- performance data being reported annually in the National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training (NRP).

Other aspects of the framework are:

- targets;
- sanctions for non-compliance;
- requirements of providers;
- performance indicators; and
- action for underperformance.

(b) the new financial reporting arrangements.

The passage of the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Act 2004* saw the inclusion of specific conditions about financial accountability into the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000* (the Act).

Indigenous Education Agreements (IEAs) made under the Act, for each funding year covered by the Agreement, require that providers give to the Secretary of DEST a certificate specifying whether the funding has been spent or committed to be spent in the funding year for the purposes specified in the Agreement. Providers are also required to report how they have advanced or intend to advance the objects of the Act from funds coming from sources other than the Act and other Commonwealth funding for education, training and other purposes. These provisions can be found in Section 11 of the Indigenous Education Agreement (see **Appendix 3**).

Indigenous Education Statements

The Australian Government's Indigenous-specific funding is supplementary to mainstream funding and is provided to accelerate progress towards achieving equitable and appropriate outcomes for Indigenous students over and above what could be expected through mainstream funding.

All state and territory governments, as well as the Australian Government, have made a commitment to achieve the National Goals of Schooling which include:

3.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve and, over time, match those of other students

3.4 all students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians

To ensure that Indigenous education is accorded a mainstream education priority in order to achieve these goals, government education authorities and non-government school systems are required to complete an annual Indigenous Education Statement (IES) as a condition of receiving general recurrent grants under Schools Assistance legislation. Information in these statements will draw on and used in the annual National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training.

General Recurrent Grant funding provided under the *Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004* is available to meet the educational needs of all students, including Indigenous students.

Change from 2001 – 2004 quadrennium

The financial accountability arrangements in place for IESIP for 2001 – 2004 will continue with some additional requirements.

Over the 2001 – 2004 quadrennium, the 2004 Systemic Government Financial Acquittal form was supplied to providers to facilitate the submission of their financial acquittals (see **Appendix 4**). In addition providers will be required to lodge an additional statement this quadrennium detailing how they are advancing Indigenous education outcomes with own source revenue. The first reporting date for this is 31 May 2006.

Providers will be asked to report total ‘other source funding’ expended on Indigenous education as well as details of specific initiatives.

From 2005 funding for the IEDA programmes are appropriated under the Act and are subject to the financial accountability requirements of Sections 11C and 11D of any Indigenous Education Agreement.

4. EFFECT OF FUNDING MEASURES

Terms of Reference 4 - The effect of the proposed funding measures on current state and other systemic Indigenous programmes, and future implications for the operation of AASPA committees.

One element of the AEP is the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in educational decision-making. This aspect was included in the *Review of the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance Programme*. The review found that:

- there was limited evidence that IEDA had any major impact on school decision-making or policy;
- there was little or no connection between school-based plans and ASSPA plans. In most cases, there were often mismatches between school planning and ASSPA planning processes;
- arrangements for Indigenous parental involvement relied on the development of ASSPA activity plans;
- what was identified as working was not necessarily the main aims or objectives of IEDA; and
- IEDA was expected to do more than it was designed and funded to achieve.

These findings were drawn on to shape the new direction of the Indigenous education programme.

ASSPA Committee Operations

The ASSPA element provided funding on a per-capita basis to school-based parent committees for a variety of activities to enhance educational opportunities for Indigenous students in preschool, primary and secondary schools, and to involve Indigenous parents in educational decision making processes. The new Parent School Partnerships Initiative (PSPI) changes the way that the Australian Government will support ASSPA committees over the next four years.

Almost all ASSPA committees are unincorporated bodies. These committees were representative of a mixture, primarily of Indigenous parents, but also inclusive of school staff, Indigenous community members, and students (as appropriate). Indigenous parent involvement in education was the primary purpose of ASSPA.

With the introduction of the PSPI, funding is submission based and targeted. The element funds innovative projects that engage Indigenous parents and tackle entrenched localised problems. Initiatives which can demonstrate partnerships with schools and Indigenous communities, provide innovative approaches to engaging students, and improve student learning outcomes are encouraged. Parental input into this process can be either obtained formally, such as working with an incorporated body, or informally, such as seeking the guidance of an advisory body. The PSPI is intended to refocus Indigenous community involvement on achieving better school outcomes for Indigenous students, especially:

- improving attendance;
- improving literacy and numeracy skills;
- increased retention from years 10 to 12; and
- Year 12 completion, or its vocational equivalent.

The reforms to the IEP address the findings of the IEDA Review. Connections will be required between schools and Indigenous communities. A condition of funding is a requirement for the involvement of parents of Indigenous students and Indigenous communities in any proposed projects and decision making processes. Parents of Indigenous students who have been involved in ASSPA Committees can continue their participation in education decision-making in partnership with schools through a range of ways including their current committee structure or another committee with Indigenous community and school membership to advise on a whole of school strategy to improve the education of Indigenous students and to oversee the implementation of the funded PSPI projects.

5. CONSULTATION

Terms of Reference 5 - The extent of consultation between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, schools and parents, especially AASPA committees, about policies and details of change to the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000.

The *Review of the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance Programme* examined how IEDA was implemented and delivered, and recommended improvements to the structure so that it was more appropriate and effective within a variety of settings to accelerate improvements to the educational outcomes of Indigenous students. Further information can be found at **Appendix 5** on:

- background to the review;
- methodology, including the review process;
- discussion papers, including the consultative phases; and
- review outcomes and findings.

The findings of this review were drawn on in shaping the changes to programme settings announced by the Minister for Education, Science and Training on 5 April 2004.

Considerable effort has been made to inform stakeholders of those changes. This included:

- in excess of 42,000 letters to providers, parents, ASSPAs, tutors and school principals;
- face-to-face meetings with providers in all jurisdictions
- printed material in Fact Sheets, newspapers and magazines (see **Appendix 6**);
- information loaded onto the DEST internet site;
- the establishment of a national free-call 1800 number; and
- skills enhancement training for DEST staff to promote the programme to their client base.