



## Australian Education Union - Federal Office

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23 June 2005

### Senate Inquiry Condemns Changes to Indigenous Education Funding

Senate Workplace Relations, Employment and Education Committee yesterday unanimously condemned the Federal Government's changes to Indigenous education funding.

The Senate Committee made the following recommendations:

- The Parent School Partnerships initiative should revert back to per capita funding (as opposed to competitive submission based funding).
- If this cannot be achieved then there should be application rounds twice a year (as opposed to the current five times).
- That the administration of the program by DEST be referred to the Auditor General.
- That the report of the committee is sent to the Social Justice Commissioner.
- That the Parent School Partnerships Initiative encourage participation for parents.

Australian Education Union Federal Aboriginal Education Officer, Ms. Darcel Moyle, welcomed the Committee's report and said that these findings should force the Howard Government to conduct a review into its changes to Indigenous education funding to determine the impacts that these changes have had on programs in schools.

"Under the Howard Government the funding of the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Program (ASSPA) has been abolished, having a profound impact on schools across Australia.

"ASSPA was designed to assist Australian schools to run effective and integrated programs with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and local communities," said Ms. Moyle.

The change to the current funding model has seen the removal of funding for Indigenous students who have previously received tutorial assistance under the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme, renamed the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme, impacting on the employment of Indigenous people in schools. "The employment of Indigenous people aimed at keeping Indigenous students engaged in the classroom, under Howard's changes has been abandoned," Ms. Moyle said.

"Australian schools are beginning to report a loss of Indigenous students as there is no longer sufficient funding and support programs in place to assist in school retention.

"Hundreds of Indigenous people who were trained and employed as tutors in schools have not been re-employed due to the funding cuts and schools with less than 20 Indigenous students are no longer able to access Tutorial Assistance funding at all," Ms. Moyle said.

The Federal Government's changes to the funding of Indigenous programs are having a huge impact, with some schools reporting a loss of up to \$100,000.

Ms. Moyle explained that closing down programs and the reduction of funding in some schools is having a huge impact in the Indigenous community.

"These programs have been successful – they have engaged Indigenous parents in the school community and included them in the decision making processes of the schools, but the Federal Government's changes to funding has forcibly removed this opportunity.

"In the ACT alone, under the new funding scheme of the Howard Government only four of a possible 90 schools are eligible for funding under one of the programs. This is an absolute disgrace and highlights this Government's lack of commitment to improving the plight of Indigenous people.

"The AEU is demanding that Brendan Nelson review these changes to Indigenous funding in order to evaluate just how they have impacted on school retention rates, employment in schools and parental engagement," said Ms. Moyle.

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