



# Abolition of ASSPA Isolates Indigenous Parents and Communities from School Decision-Making

**AEU FEDERAL ELECTION FACT SHEET**

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The Howard Government changed the way it funds Indigenous Education for the 2005 – 2008 quadrennium.

Since the changes, schools have indicated that the most severe impact of the changes was the loss of Indigenous parent engagement especially in school decision-making processes.

The replacement of the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Scheme (ASSPA) with the Parent School Partnership Initiative (PSPI) is the change that is reported to have had the most significant impact on Indigenous parent and community disengagement from school decision-making, which is one of the major goals of the National Aboriginal Education Policy, 1988.

ASSPA funding was based on a formula funding model whereas the PSPI is a submission-based funding model. This means that schools must compete against each other for funding.

Schools have reported that the application process is onerous and time-consuming, with many schools reporting that they are using significant resources to write applications.

Many schools have also indicated that they have received a reduced amount of funding compared to the amount asked for in the submission.

Many Indigenous parents feel disenfranchised with the new process and have little understanding of the changes, or the reasons for them. They are not as engaged in the policy and decision-making processes of the school as they were when schools had ASSPA committees.

Formal avenues for Indigenous participation in mainstream school structures, such as school councils, have also been diminished by these changes.

There is significant unmet demand in the program, as evidenced by the number of applications received, versus the number of applications funded. As of September 2006, the Round One funding process showed there were a total of 805 applications received with 547 being approved and 258 not approved<sup>1</sup>.

In the Northern Territory alone 95 of 197 applications were not approved. DEST's justifications for non-approval of applications demonstrate the onerous nature of the submission-based application process. DEST has reported that unfunded submissions:

- are incomplete and need more work before they can be resubmitted;
- do not fit within, or address, funding guidelines;
- do not demonstrate the involvement of parents of Indigenous students, or the Indigenous community.

The 2007 AEU Survey of Schools found that the changes continue to have negative impacts.

Findings include:

- the majority of schools do not have an Indigenous parent/community committee operating in 2007; and
- a very small percentage of respondent schools had received PSPI funding in 2007.

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[http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet\\_ctte/estimates/bud\\_0607/dest/e033\\_07.pdf](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet_ctte/estimates/bud_0607/dest/e033_07.pdf)

It is clear that changes to this program have had a severe and negative impact on Indigenous parent participation in school decision-making. Reports are that DEST has conducted a review in to the changes to the program.

The AEU understands that the completed review was provided to the Federal Minister for Education in May/June 2007.

We understand that one of the key findings in the report is the significant negative impact the changes have had on Indigenous parent participation in school decision-making, similar to AEU findings.

The AEU calls on the Howard Government to release these results immediately.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS.**

- That funding is allocated to train Indigenous parents and their school communities in the development of funding submissions, particularly in relation to the PSPI program.
- That the Federal Government reviews the impact of the submission based funding model on schools.