

Australian Education Union



Report on a Survey of Schools

on the

**Changes in Commonwealth
Indigenous Education Funding**

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Acronyms and Program Details

Acronym	Meaning	Program Details
ASSPA	Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Scheme	Per capita based funding which was distributed to schools with ASSPA committee structures. Abolished in 2004.
ATAS	Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme	Tutorial Assistance funding which was available to all Indigenous students. Abolished in 2004.
DEST	Commonwealth Department of Science, Education and Training	N/A
IEDA	Indigenous Education Direct Assistance Funding	Overarching program banner under which funding is distributed to schools (prior to 2005, ASSPA, ATAS and VEGAS were IEDA programs, from 2005, ITAS and PSPI are two of the programs that are distributed under IEDA).
IESIP	Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program	Overarching program banner under which funding is distributed to school systems through the Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (SRA) program on a per-capita basis and under the Strategic Initiatives (SI) program.
PSPI	Parent School Partnership Initiative	Two-stage submission based funding that has replaced ASSPA.
SI	Strategic Initiatives	Funding under the IESIP banner used to support Strategic Initiative projects.
SRA	Supplementary Recurrent Assistance	Funding distributed under the IESIP banner to school systems or schools on a per-capita basis.
VEGAS	Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme	Funding to support projects in relation to future study or careers, abolished in 2004.
WSIS	Whole of School Intervention Strategy	Sub-program banner under the IEDA program. The PSPI and homework centres are programs funded under the WSIS.

Key Findings

- 1. Changes to the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Scheme (ASSPA) have had a significantly negative impact on schools and communities, especially on Indigenous parent participation in schools, including in educational decision-making.**

78% of the schools who responded to the survey had an ASSPA committee in 2004. Only 9% of respondent schools indicated that they had received approvals to run the replacement program, the Parent School Partnership Initiative (PSPI) in 2005.

227 comments from schools made reference to the fact that the changes have had a major impact on schools, the most severe being a loss of Indigenous parent engagement especially in school decision-making processes.

Indigenous parents are ‘voting with their feet’ and staying away from schools because they feel disenfranchised with the new process. Parents have little understanding of the changes, or the reasons for them. Formal avenues for Indigenous participation in mainstream school structures, such as school councils, have also been diminished by these changes.

- 2. Changes to Commonwealth Indigenous education funding have resulted in a loss of funding to schools; a reduction of programs designed to meet the needs of Indigenous students; a loss of support for Indigenous students in mainstream school activities; and reduced employment (including Indigenous employment) in schools.**

Almost \$2 million dollars (\$1,974,894) in direct funding has been lost to the 561 schools that responded to the survey. This funding supported a range of activities in schools, including the development of curriculum, programs to encourage and support attendance, literacy and numeracy development, employment of support staff, including Indigenous education workers. 123 school comments made reference to the fact that the diminution of funding has had a negative impact within their schools.

Cultural programs which are a valuable way of establishing and supporting positive self-identity have diminished; along with the participation of Indigenous students in mainstream school activities, such as camps, excursions and sporting activities. Assistance with social and welfare support for students has also diminished. Altogether, there were 148 negative comments specifically in relation to the diminution of these programs.

Schools have identified that there are 447 people who are no longer employed as tutors. 265 of these people were Indigenous employees. 41 negative comments were made in relation to the reduction in employment.

3. Application processes for accessing Parent School Partnership Initiative (PSPI) funding are difficult and onerous; it has made the funding inaccessible for many schools and has further contributed to the deterioration of positive relationships between Indigenous parents and schools.

Schools have commented that the 2 stage application process for the Parent School Partnership Initiative program has been burdensome both on parents and schools.

116 school comments indicate that the submission writing process is too difficult. A number made reference to the fact that it has shifted the focus in schools from parent and community based activities and decision-making processes to one which focuses more on the school and the writing of submissions.

Schools believe that the amount of time spent writing submissions is onerous and not commensurate with the small amounts of funding received. Schools are also concerned that there is not the capacity both within many schools and across most Indigenous parent groups to engage in time-consuming and detailed submission-writing processes. This has led to a deterioration of the relationship that schools have had with their Indigenous parent groups.

Many schools have determined that the small amount of funding is not worth the effort and have not applied.

4. Changes to the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) have had a negative impact on both the number of Indigenous students who can access tutorial support for literacy and numeracy and the amount of tutoring they can access.

2745 Indigenous students no longer have access to tutorial assistance. Schools have indicated that this reduction in support is impacting on the achievement of literacy and numeracy outcomes and attendance at school. Schools in capital cities with less than 20 Indigenous enrolments are no longer able to access tutorial assistance.

Schools believe that targeting funding to students who have completed and failed benchmark testing is an inappropriate strategy which discounts the positive educational impacts of early intervention.

Cumulatively, 97 school comments were made in relation to the reduction in literacy and numeracy, the inappropriate targeting of funding and the reduction in funding and programs due to having less than 20 Indigenous enrolments.

5. Timelines for approvals of funding, receipt of funding and inconsistent advice received from the Commonwealth Department of Science, Education and Training have created confusion in schools.

56 school comments referred to the length of time taken to process applications and receive funding. Many have indicated that they were yet to receive funding even though they are well into term 3 of the school year, even though they had programs for 2005 planned and ready to go.

This has further exacerbated the problem of the diminution of programs and support for Indigenous students and further impacted upon the positive relationships that many schools had with Indigenous parents.

Advice (and in many cases lack of advice) received from the Department of Science, Education and Training was mentioned by a number of schools as contributing to the confusion that schools have faced. In the meantime, schools are extremely concerned that Indigenous students are missing out on valuable programs and support.

Summary of data and comments

Summary of school information

- The total number of surveys received from across Australia and counted was 561.
- 384 schools were primary, 129 were secondary and 47 were 'other' schools.
- These 561 schools had a total number of Indigenous enrolments of 17451. Enrolments ranged from a minimum of one Indigenous student to a maximum of 402 Indigenous students.

Summary of program information

ASSPA to PSPI

- 430 of the 561 (77%) schools had an ASSPA committee operating in 2004.
- The total amount of ASSPA funding received by these schools was \$2,529,325.
- 53 of the 561 schools (9%) stated that they had received funding for the Parent School Partnership Initiative (PSPI).
- The total amount of PSPI funding was \$600,431.
- The total amount of ASSPA funding that has been lost is \$1,928,894 (or 76% of 2004 funding)

ATAS to ITAS

- *In 2004*, 258 of the 561 (46%) schools ran an ATAS program.
- There were 651 people employed under the ATAS scheme. 363 of these were Indigenous people.
- 4440 Indigenous students accessed the ATAS program (25% of total number of students).
- *In 2005*, 98 of the 561 (17%) schools ran an ITAS program.
- There were 204 people employed under the ITAS scheme (a reduction of 447 people, or 31%). 98 of these were Indigenous people (a reduction of 265 people or 73%).
- 1695 Indigenous students accessed the ITAS program (a reduction of 2745 students or 62%).

IESIP

- Schools indicated a total loss of \$45,498.50 in IESIP funding.

Summary of Comments

- 20 schools commented that the changes to Indigenous Education Funding were positive (4%).
- 38 schools commented that the changes were both positive and negative (7%).
- 378 schools commented that the changes were negative (67%).
- 32 schools commented that the changes had no or minimal impact (6%).
- 92 schools did not make any comments on the changes (16%).

Background

In a flurry of activity at the end of the last parliamentary sitting days of 2004, the *Indigenous Education Targeted Assistance Amendment Bill, 2004* was referred to a Senate Inquiry, but also assented to by both the Senate and the House of Representatives. A timeline of the passage of the then Bill is as follows:

- 17th November, 2004 – Bill introduced into parliament;
- 6th December, 2004 – Senate refers an Inquiry into the Implications of the changes for schools to the Senate Workplace Relations, Employment and Education Committee;
- 7th December, 2004 – Senate passes the Bill;
- 14th December, 2004 – Bill is assented to in the House of Representatives (SWREEC, 2005, p. 1).

The Senate Workplace Relations, Employment and Education Committee (the Senate Committee), which was charged with conducting the *Indigenous Education Funding Inquiry* reported that:

referral to the committee was the only way to give the legislation more careful scrutiny than Parliament was able to do in the limited time the Bill was before it. There was an urgent need to have funds appropriated for 2005 (ibid).

Referral of the inquiry to the Senate Committee was brought about by concerns expressed by schools and other stakeholders in late 2004 about the potential impacts that the proposed changes to Commonwealth Indigenous education funding would have on existing programs within schools, in particular the changes to the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) program, which contained the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) program and Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) (ibid).

Prior to 2005, the IEDA program was administered through three elements – the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) scheme, the Vocational Education Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS) and the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS), which included access to individual tuition, bulk tuition conducted under agreement through school systems and funding for homework centres. ATAS was available to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, either through in-school tuition or administered by the Commonwealth Department of Science, Education and Training (DEST).

With the passing of the legislation in 2004, the 2005 funding regime has changed substantially. The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) has replaced ATAS with the In-class tuition scheme, targeting those students not meeting the Year 3, 5 and 7 literacy and numeracy benchmarks, a tuition scheme targeting Year 10, 11 and 12 students, and bulk funding arrangements to tertiary institutions. Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions, including Institutes of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) are excluded from accessing this funding. Additionally, the former ASSPA and VEGAS funding programs were combined and replaced with the Whole of School Intervention Strategy (WSIS), with funding being allocated through 2 programs – the Parent School Partnerships Initiative (PSPI) and Homework Centres.

Prior to the changes, ASSPA committees were allocated funding following the submission of an activity plan to DEST. Funding was allocated on a per head capita rate, with remote area allocations being higher than urban allocations. Both the PSPI and homework centre funding are now allocated to schools through a submission-based process, with the process requiring schools to develop and submit a concept plan in the first instance, and then, if this plan is deemed to be appropriate, further develop a full submission for DEST's consideration.

In relation to Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) funding, many of the program areas have been redefined, with a significant focus on remote areas. IESIP funding is comprised of Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (SRA) money paid to providers per capita and Strategic Initiatives (SI) funding. In this new funding quadrennium, remoteness boundaries have been redefined according to the 2000 census and all 'new' SRA funds will be targeted to remote areas. Funding for those providers who have been reclassified from remote to non-remote and funding for students engaged in schooling and VET in State capital cities and Canberra be maintained at 2004 levels. These areas will receive no growth funding.

Feedback from AEU members across Australia indicated that the changes to funding were having devastating impacts upon schools and their communities. The AEU National Principal's committee discussed the issue at length at a meeting in May 2005, deciding to write a memo to schools asking them to take action in the form of accompanying a delegation of Indigenous parents and students to their local Federal Parliamentarian to explain in detail the impacts that the funding changes had made on schools and the school community.

The Principals' decision was followed up with a subsequent discussion at the AEU Federal Executive, held in Canberra in June, 2005 where a decision was taken to revise the Principals' memo to include a survey of schools in order to gather concrete information in relation to the impacts that these changes in funding have had on schools. At this meeting, AEU Executive resolved:

That Branches and Associated Bodies distribute as a matter of urgency the revised memo from the Principals' Committee to all schools (AEU, 2005).

A survey titled *Changes in Commonwealth Indigenous Education Funding* was developed and distributed to schools by AEU Branches and Associated Bodies in early July 2005. This report details the findings from this survey.

Methodology

The survey (see attachment A) was sent to all public schools in Australia by the Branches and Associated Bodies of the AEU. 640 schools responded to the survey. Of these schools, 79 had no Indigenous enrolments and thus were not counted in the final sample. The total number of schools counted in the sample was 561. There was a total number of Indigenous students enrolled at these schools of 17, 451. Table A provides an overview of the characteristics of the schools that replied to the survey.

Table A – Characteristics of schools

Total Surveys Received	640
Schools with no Indigenous Enrolments	79
Total sample National	561
Total Indigenous Enrolments	17451
Schools with <20 enrolments	313
Schools with >20 enrolments	243
Enrolment not stated	5
Primary Schools	385
Secondary Schools	129
Other Schools (infants, distance education, specific purpose, P-12)	47
Schools with no ASSPA committee prior to 2004	124
Schools that previously had ASSPA committees	437

Data was taken from the surveys and summarised into state and territory responses. Impacts were drawn from the comments of schools, and were initially counted once under the following categories:

- positive;
- both positive and negative;
- negative;
- no or minimal impact; and
- no comment.

Comments were then further distributed into sub-categories (again, determined from the comments the schools had made) under the headings of three of the main categories listed above: *positive*; *both positive and negative*; and *negative*. The categories of *no or minimal impact* and *no comment* were not further sub-categorised as there were no additional comments made by schools in the returns that enabled further sub-categorisation.

The sub-categories identified from schools' *positive* comments in the survey returns were:

- funding targeted more appropriately;
- funding increased;
- increase in employment;
- increased parent involvement;
- improved ability to cater for Indigenous students and parents.

The sub-categories identified from schools' *negative* comments in the survey returns were:

- funding reduced;
- parental involvement reduced;
- programs reduced (programs are defined as those planned by the school specific to Indigenous students);
- employment reduced;
- social and welfare support for students reduced;
- student participation in school activities reduced (school activities are defined as mainstream activities of the school, such as camps, excursions, swimming and sports programs);
- reduced funding due to small number of Indigenous enrolments;
- Indigenous cultural activities and cultural profile reduced (cultural activities are defined as those Indigenous cultural activities planned by the school that cater for all students, such as arts and dance programs and NAIDOC week celebrations);

- funding targeted inappropriately (for example, at an inappropriate year level, or to the detriment of some students, such as Indigenous students with intellectual and physical disabilities);
- application process too difficult;
- schools not aware of entitlements;
- length of time for approval and receipt of funding;
- reduced Literacy and Numeracy support;
- reduced ability to purchase Indigenous-specific resources.

The comments under the category *both positive and negative* were sub-categorised using both the positive and negative sub-categories as listed above.

Schools that commented on more than one element had each element counted separately in the sub-category. Comments were then totalled and a percentage of the sub-category was determined as a percentage of the total comments in the category in order to determine the hierarchy of schools' concerns over each issue.

Information on IESIP funding was sorted in to the following categories:

- funding not received;
- funding received – no increase or reduction stated;
- funding increased;
- funding decreased;
- funding stayed the same.

Overview of program changes and their impacts on schools

This section of the report concentrates on the general impacts on schools, taken from the raw data provided by respondent schools. It deals with the changes to the three major programs outlined in the survey, namely the abolition of ASSPA and its replacement with PSPI; the abolition of ATAS and its replacement with ITAS; and the changes to IESIP in relation to the 'capping' of funding to urban schools and the changes to remoteness boundaries.

ASSPA to PSPI

78% of the schools that responded to the survey indicated that they had ASSPA committees in 2004. The total budget for the operation of these committees was \$2,529,325.

In relation to ASSPA's replacement program, the PSPI, 53 schools, or 9% of all respondent schools, indicated that they had received an approval for their PSPI submission, with total funding of \$600,431.

This has resulted in a total loss to schools of \$1,928,894, or 76% of the total amount of ASSPA funding that schools accessed in 2004.

Table B summarises the impacts of the changes from ASSPA to PSPI.

Table B - Changes from ASSPA to PSPI.

Program Detail	Totals
ASSPA Committees	437
ASSPA Funding	\$2,529,325
PSPI Approvals	53
PSPI Funding	\$600,431
Funding Loss	\$1,928,894

ATAS to ITAS

The ATAS program was offered in a variety of ways in 2004, including through the in-school tuition program and through the provision of tuition at home. The survey question in relation to ATAS asked schools to specify how many people were employed in the school using ATAS funding. The data below reflects schools' responses to this question. In addition to this however, many schools were aware of, and commented on, students accessing the program outside of school hours. It is therefore likely that the numbers of Indigenous students accessing the program, along with the number of people who are no longer employed through the program are understated in the data below.

Survey returns indicated that 258 or 46% of all responding schools ran a tutorial program funded by ATAS in 2004. These programs employed 651 people, 363 or 56% of whom were Indigenous people. The program in 2004 catered for 4440 students, or 26% of the total of the survey cohort.

By August 2005, 98 schools or 18% of all responding schools ran tutorial programs funded by ITAS. These programs employed 204 people, 98 or 48% of whom were Indigenous people. The program in 2005 caters for 1695 students, or 10% of the total of the survey cohort.

The changes in the program have reduced access to tutorial assistance by Indigenous students. 160 schools that accessed the program in 2004 indicated that they were ineligible in 2005.

Table C – Changes from ATAS to ITAS

Program Detail	Totals
ATAS programs 2004	258
ATAS employees 2004	651
ATAS Indigenous employees 2004	363
Indigenous students accessing ATAS 2004	4440
ITAS programs 2005	98
ITAS employees 2005	204
ITAS Indigenous employees 2005	98
Indigenous students accessing ITAS 2005	1695
Gains or Losses ATAS to ITAS	Totals
Gain or loss – employees	-447
Gain or loss Indigenous employees	-265
Gain or loss - Students	-2745

In 2005, there are 2745 or 62% fewer Indigenous students accessing the program than there were in 2004. There are 447 or 31% fewer people employed in the program, including 265 or 27% fewer Indigenous people than there were in 2004. Table C summarises the changes as outlined above.

IESIP

Schools indicated that they had an unclear picture of how IESIP funding was distributed to them. As such, it is difficult to determine the impacts of the changes to IESIP funding on schools. This is possibly a reflection on different state and territory policies on the distribution of IESIP funding. For example, some state and territory systems disburse the funding at a central or regional/district office level in order to support the payment of salaries and/or strategic projects.

Many schools in one state indicated that they had received a one-off payment in their global school budgets at the beginning of 2005 under the banner of IESIP and that this money was supplementing losses from ASSPA. Schools from another state indicated that they had received a one-off increase in funding to employ an Indigenous Education Worker (IEW). This money had been received in the global school budget and schools were unsure of the source of this funding.

Fluctuations in enrolments impact on IESIP funding, as it is paid to systems on a per-capita basis. Schools indicated that some of the variations in their receipt of IESIP funding were due to enrolment loss or growth.

With these data uncertainties in mind schools' responses to IESIP were as follows:

- 51% of schools did not state whether or not they received IESIP funding;
- 23% of schools indicated that they did not receive any IESIP funding;
- 2% of schools indicated that they had received funding, but did not state whether their funding had been increased or reduced;
- 6% of schools indicated that their IESIP funding had been increased;
- 13% of schools indicated that their IESIP funding had decreased;
- 5% of schools indicated that their funding had stayed the same.

School comments in relation to the impacts of the changes

Schools were asked to make comments both about the impacts that the changes to ASSPA funding had on Indigenous parent participation in the school and the impacts that the changes to the ATAS/ITAS program comprised.

General Comments

67% of schools commented that the changes to both ASSPA and ATAS had a negative impact within their school. As one Regional District High School in Western Australia commented:

(There is) no parent ASSPA involvement. Much promised before application- little achieved/available. No assistance for camps, uniforms, lunches. No homework program, no school materials funding. No NAIDOC, elders, role models, food,

celebrations. ITAS only caters for yrs 4, 6, 8 therefore more than 20 students miss out. (It) has resulted in planned programs specific to our Indigenous students being shelved.

4% of schools commented that the impacts of the changes had been positive, for example, one primary school in the ACT stated:

(There has been) no impact on parent participation - school has used other funds to support student participation in camps and excursions and to supplement resources for student use in the library; ITAS - 1:1 support provided through tutorials has begun to address some of the areas of concern identified in literacy and numeracy. Student progress has been good.

7% of schools made both positive and negative comments. Many of these schools had commented positively on the targeted nature of ITAS, and negatively on the impacts on the changes to the parent participation program, for example, a primary school in a Queensland regional city commented:

Due to changes in process parent input has been difficult to co-ordinate. Meetings have (been) held however parents are not as willing to assist in organisation/writing of submission. Having a set amount of money arrive under ITAS allows for more effective targeting of children requiring assistance.

Similarly, a Regional High School in New South Wales stated:

(Changes to) ASSPA (have created) hardships for low socio-economic families especially school excursions on off pay week. (But the changes to) ITAS (are) good especially when senior years are eligible.

Table D summarises the overall comments made by schools, and provides a breakdown by State and Territory.

Table D – Summary of School Comments National and by State and Territory (%)

Comments	Qld	NSW	ACT	NT	Tas	WA	Vic	SA	Aust
Positive	2%	6%	29%	6%	2%	0%	0%	3%	4%
Pos. and Neg	25%	5%	0%	6%	0%	23%	2%	0%	7%
Negative	61%	63%	71%	81%	93%	64%	66%	71%	67%
No/Min. Impact	7%	5%	0%	0%	2%	2%	13%	3%	6%
No comment	5%	20%	0%	6%	2%	11%	19%	23%	16%
Total %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

6% of schools indicated that the changes had no or minimal impact and 16% of schools made no comment in relation to the changes.

Sub-category Comments

From the initial categories above, the comments were further sub-categorised and totalled. The number of comments under each sub-category were then determined as a percentage of the total number of comments in order to rank schools' comments in order of concern.

As stated previously, sub-categories were determined from the answers provided by schools themselves. Many schools made more than one comment per sub-category.

Positive Comments

Tables E and F summarise the numbers of positive sub-category comments.

Table E –Positive comments by sub-category

	Qld	NSW	ACT	NT	Tas	WA	Vic	SA	Aust
Funding targeted	0	6	2	1	1	0	0	0	10
Increase in funding	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Increase in employment	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	6
Increased Indigenous parent involvement	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Improved outcomes	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total comments	1	17	2	1	1	0	0	3	25

Schools commented 25 times about the positive impacts of the changes. Of these comments:

- 40% related to funding being targeted more appropriately;
- 20% related to an increase in funding;
- 24% related to an increase in employment;
- 8% related to increased Indigenous parent involvement; and
- 8% related to improved outcomes.

Funding Targeted More Appropriately

The comments schools made in reference to better targeting of funding overwhelmingly related to the in-school tuition component of ITAS. For example, a New South Wales secondary school commented that they had 'more funds to support targeted students' under the ITAS program.

Increase in Funding

The largest number of comments made in reference to funding increases came from New South Wales, where schools appear to have received a one-off IESIP payment in their global school budgets at the beginning of 2005. Four schools in New South Wales responded in a similar manner to this New South Wales secondary school in relation to funding increases:

With funding (increase) for 1 year- state of school's future funding very uncertain in 2006.

The other school that commented about funding increases under the positive category was a secondary school in Queensland, which stated:

Increase approx \$100 2004-2005 (IESIP).

Increase in employment

Four comments relating to increased employment were received from schools in New South Wales and two from South Australia. Comments were similar to this one from a South Australian primary school:

We had an AEW appointed 5hrs/wk. This has been a major change agent for our Indigenous families accessing the school and being involved.

Table F - Positive comments by sub-category (%)

	Qld %	NSW %	ACT %	NT %	Tas %	WA %	Vic %	SA %	Aust %
Funding targeted	0	50	100	100	100	0	0	0	40
Increase in funding	100	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
Increase in employment	0	33	0	0	0	0	0	67	24
Increased Indigenous parent involvement	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	33	8
Improved outcomes	0	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Total comments %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Increased Indigenous parent involvement

Two comments were received under the positive category in relation to the increase in Indigenous parent involvement, one from South Australia and one from New South Wales. The South Australian primary school commented that:

We have more participation now, the school's Indigenous community is more aware of the programmes that are now in place.

The New South Wales primary school stated:

Our current parents are very involved with school and would have been regardless of funding.

Improved outcomes

Two schools from New South Wales indicated under the positive category that their ability to cater for the needs of students and/or parents was improved. As one of the primary schools in New South Wales stated:

Attendance - parents more aware of the importance of students coming to school.

Negative Comments

Tables G and H summarise the numbers of negative sub-category comments. Schools commented 925 times on the negative impacts of the changes. Of these comments:

- 23% related to reduced Indigenous parental involvement;
- 13% commented on a reduction in funding;
- 13% concerned a reduction in programs;
- 12% related to the difficulty of the application process (for PSPI);
- 6% commented on the length of time in processing applications and receiving funding;
- 6% concerned a reduction of Indigenous student participation in school activities;
- 5% commented on the reduction in an Indigenous cultural profile and cultural activities in the school;
- 5% of the comments related to reduced literacy and numeracy support;
- 4% of schools commented that employment had been reduced in their schools;
- 4% commented on the reduction in social welfare support;
- 3% commented on the inappropriate targeting of funding;
- 3% commented that they were either not aware of entitlements available for Indigenous students, or how to access them;
- 2% of comments concerned a reduced ability to purchase Indigenous specific resources.

Many of these issues are not mutually exclusive in schools; they are inter-woven and overlapping. Schools' comments reflect that the changes are causing a 'domino effect' which is impacting upon Indigenous student and parent participation, which in turn effects funding, which in turn impacts upon the school's ability to offer programs and support. It may take a number of years for the total impact of these changes to be fully realised. Comments from a senior secondary school in Western Australia outline some of the overlapping complexities related to the impacts of the funding changes:

Under PSPI there are no guarantees that each school receives funding...Under ASSPA, each school would receive funding on a per student basis. As we did not receive funding under PSPI, we are struggling to keep our Indigenous students attending and engaging in school. We are also struggling to encourage Indigenous parent participation in our school due to no funding for 2005. We have seen a decline in student's homework/assignments being handed in and their overall grades drop off as a result of not having a Homework Centre. We have not been able to employ part-time Indigenous staff or develop strategies to improve Indigenous education.

Table G – Negative comments by sub-category (%)

	Qld %	NSW %	ACT %	NT %	Tas %	WA %	Vic %	SA %	Aust %
Funding reduced	11%	13%	29%	18%	8%	13%	18%	11%	13%
Parental involvement reduced	22%	22%	29%	23%	25%	29%	18%	26%	23%
Programs reduced	16%	12%	14%	10%	25%	11%	7%	13%	13%
Employment reduced	10%	3%	0%	10%	2%	4%	1%	4%	4%
Social and welfare support for students reduced	3%	6%	0%	5%	1%	6%	1%	5%	4%
Student participation in school activities reduced	5%	5%	0%	5%	0%	8%	17%	5%	6%
Reduced funding due to small number of Indigenous enrolments	3%	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	2%	3%	2%
Indigenous cultural activities and cultural profile reduced	5%	7%	14%	3%	6%	4%	2%	3%	5%
Funding targeted inappropriately	3%	2%	0%	3%	5%	0%	0%	4%	3%
Application Process too difficult	9%	12%	14%	8%	8%	13%	13%	14%	12%
Schools not aware of entitlements or how to access	2%	4%	0%	0%	1%	0%	5%	2%	3%
Length of time for approval and receipt of funding	6%	6%	0%	8%	5%	7%	4%	4%	6%
Reduced Literacy and Numeracy support	6%	3%	0%	8%	10%	3%	9%	4%	5%
Reduced ability to purchase Indigenous-specific resources	0%	3%	0%	0%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%
Total comments %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The vast majority of survey comments indicate that schools are working hard to repair the damage that has been done to their relationships with Indigenous parents, provide support for Indigenous students within limited budgetary means and find money to ‘fill the gaps’. As one primary school in Western Australia stated:

We had to rebuild the trust with the parents- as they believed the school was getting all the funds- and they had no say in how money was spent.

Table H - Negative comments by sub-category

	Qld	NSW	ACT	NT	Tas	WA	Vic	SA	Aust
Funding reduced	13	42	2	7	7	9	21	17	118
Parental involvement reduced	25	72	2	9	23	21	21	41	214
Programs reduced	18	39	1	4	23	8	8	20	121
Employment reduced	12	9	0	4	2	3	1	7	38
Social and welfare support for students reduced	3	19	0	2	1	4	1	8	38
Student participation in school activities reduced	6	15	0	2	0	6	20	8	57
Reduced funding due to small number of Indigenous enrolments	3	4	0	0	2	1	2	4	16
Indigenous cultural activities and cultural profile reduced	6	21	1	1	6	3	2	5	45
Funding targeted inappropriately	4	8	0	1	5	0	0	7	25
Application Process too difficult	10	40	1	3	7	9	15	23	108
Schools not aware of entitlements or how to access	2	12	0	0	1	0	6	3	24
Length of time for approval and receipt of funding	7	20	0	3	5	5	5	7	52
Reduced Literacy and Numeracy support	7	11	0	3	9	2	10	7	49
Reduced ability to purchase Indigenous-specific resources	0	10	0	0	2	1	4	3	20
Total comments	116	322	7	39	93	72	116	160	925

Reduced Indigenous parent involvement in school activities and educational decision-making

Overwhelmingly, schools primary concern was the reduction in Indigenous parent participation in school life and in school decision-making processes. Schools are dismayed that Indigenous parents are ‘voting with their feet’ and staying away from the school because they felt ‘disenfranchised’ by the new PSPI processes. As a New South Wales primary school stated:

The difficulties in applying for funding in the new system mean our parents have virtually lost interest. It has reduced our access to funding by placing additional hurdles in front of school/community. Our school has worked hard over 2 years to establish ASSPA. Interest is now minimal. This is a major disappointment to our school community. An enthusiastic ASSPA group who devised many positive outings and strategies for our students (all of which had a big impact on our Aboriginal students) is currently not operating. While ASSPA was operating in our school, parents frequently came into the school to support students. It's been a real struggle trying to maintain parent enthusiasm since.

Schools also indicated that parents had very little understanding of the changes:

Parents do not understand the changes or the reasons for them. All they know is that their children are not receiving the financial assistance available prior (primary school, Western Australia).

Negative survey comments under this sub-category revealed that there was an ownership of ASSPA within the mainstream culture of many schools, with the ASSPA committee responsible for building 'traditions and events' over a number of years. As a primary school in South Australia stated:

Parents have felt that their role in school decision making has been diminished and (have) lost all the tradition/events associated with ASSPA.

As a component of this school culture, many ASSPA committees provided a formal avenue for Indigenous parent participation in the school and with school decision-making structures, as one secondary school in Tasmania noted:

(There is) no formal link with Indigenous community, no formal representation on School Council.

And another primary school in the Northern Territory:

(It has resulted in the) loss of 20 active parents, no one to date wants to be part of the School Council.

Schools commented that ASSPA processes engaged parents in planning school activities, for example:

There used to be an ASSPA committee with parents attending planning and participating. Last year they fundraised and also attended a weekend camp with the students. None of this has happened this year (primary school, South Australia).

Schools felt that the new PSPI process had diminished Indigenous parent engagement and replaced it with a process that is owned and driven by the school. As one primary school in Queensland stated:

(The new process has) disenfranchised our parents. (They) rarely meet anymore. (The) PSPI application is teacher driven - not parent friendly at all.

Reduction in Funding

118 or 13% of total negative comments related to the reduction in funding that schools previously received. This has had a broader impact on parent participation and the ability of schools to offer programs and support for Indigenous students and parents. As one primary school in Western Australia stated:

(Parent participation) decreased dramatically - only 2 meetings to date this year with minimal parent representation. We have no money so therefore there is nothing to discuss. We have no funding for tutoring despite having students significantly below benchmark. We are unable to offer cultural and educational programs and support for Aboriginal students.

A remote school in the Northern Territory commented:

If we add to lost ASSPA money funding lost by the abolition of VEGAS, this school is almost \$60 000 worse off.

Similarly, a primary school in New South Wales stated that:

Parents do not have access funding to support students that school previously did. Parents confused. School information session stated parents would have greater benefits from new scheme but this has not happened. The political implications between state/federal (governments) changing the criteria is not responding (to or) supporting (the) school. (This) has led the parents/students being deserted. Funding sources were knocked back. Amount reduced leading to school being short in funding program. Promises/deadlines were made. The powers that be changed criteria - Aboriginal education has been set back 20 years. Money cannot be relied on. Parents more confused than ever.

Reduction in Programs (specific to Indigenous students)

13% of all negative comments noted that the reduction in funding has diminished the ability to cater for the specific requirements of Indigenous students through the design and delivery of specific programs. Many of these programs relate to attendance, enhancing or customising the curriculum, early childhood education programs and other early intervention programs.

A remote secondary school in Western Australia stated:

The rules say we are entitled to the funding as a 'remote' school. We have got none - why? No programs running. (We) can't pay curriculum support.

A primary school in South Australia noted the impact on an early literacy program by stating that they now had:

Reduced ability to produce home kits for early literacy - this program had been started but cannot continue to the same extent.

Changes to funding have also impacted upon programs that were being run to encourage attendance at school. A remote community school in Western Australia was running a family reward system that has now been ceased. The school stated that:

We are unable to run out family reward system for attendance, reduced Indigenous staffing, no parents on camp. We are too small to qualify for any assistance. We have received no money this year despite assurances we would.

The changes have had similar impacts across the country, with a primary school in Victoria commenting that:

(There is a) loss of faith in real family support for educational outcomes. (There has been) reduced attendance of children due largely to disengagement of families with school. Parents feel they have been victims of a cost cutting measure and feel they have been left with the 'burden'.

A reduction in the number of hours of support offered to Indigenous students through the changes in the tutorial scheme has had similar negative impacts. A primary school in Queensland commented that:

We now support students 8 weeks of the year when before we supported 24 weeks. Children are getting 16 hrs each now before it was more like 50 hours. Parent support for government programs has dropped accordingly.

A secondary school in Western Australia indicated that:

Students receive less tuition time in years ten to twelve – down from four hours to a max of three hours per week in a small group or two hours individually.

Application process too difficult

12% of schools' negative comments related to the difficulty of the application process and the impacts that this has had on positive relationships with parents in the school. There were many comments that related to the excessive bureaucratic nature of the PSPI program, particularly the length of time taken to write and submit a concept plan, parental submission writing skills and the changing nature of advice on applications from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training. A secondary school in Western Australia exemplified parents' disillusionment with 'broken promises' by stating that:

Parents have been far more reluctant to engage in a system that has constantly made promises and not delivered. Our school was lead to believe the PSPI process was simple and would not adversely affect us.

A small Queensland primary school was equally frustrated by the changing rules and the time it took to work on the submission for the minimal return to the school:

PSPI rules keep on changing. Did plan twice then gave up because would have got a maximum of about \$400 for >20 hours work. What a joke! Small show - no go.

A primary school in Tasmania stated that:

(The) hoops you have to jump through are too hard for the small amount of money at stake.

A primary school in South Australia re-iterated the issue of time through its comments:

Have to write yet another submission to access funds and prove how this will improve attendance retention etc. It has a new name of course. The major impact is time.

A primary school in Western Australia commented on the impact of removing what was once a parent and community based decision making process (i.e. the allocation of ASSPA funding) to groups or individuals external to the school. It stated:

(The funding is) much more difficult to access, disillusionment of Indigenous parents who don't have the skills to write submissions and to tolerate decisions made by people outside of the local community.

There were many comments similar to the one above that related to the capacity of parents to be engaged effectively in the submission-writing process. These included:

The new method of applying for ASSPA funding is too difficult to do for the parents. They are feeling overwhelmed by the application form (primary school, New South Wales).

Parents can't really develop writing of concept plan, hard enough for Principal to get head around (primary school, Tasmania).

Similarly, schools made comment on the capacity within the school itself to write submissions, the time this takes; the impacts of rejection; and finally the question about whether it is the 'core business' of schools to source funding for what they believe are programs and practices that are fundamental to the education process. A small school with 100% Indigenous enrolments in country New South Wales summed up this issue by stating:

We knew the changes to funding were going to be disastrous. We knew all our time would be spent thinking of creating, being rejected – submissions for all sorts of things. We didn't have the experience so decided not to get involved concentrating (instead) on educating students...

Unfortunately, this has led some schools to come to the decision that the funding is not worth applying for, as stated by this New South Wales primary school:

PSPI – did not apply due to excessive paperwork.

Timelines in processing applications and receiving money

Related to the frustrations with the difficulty of the application process for PSPI (much of which was indicated to have been approved in principle), 6% or 52 of all comments from schools indicated that there was a range of impacts and frustrations in waiting for the receipt of funding. Many schools had programs planned and ready to begin at the beginning of 2005, only to experience frustrations similar to this primary school in South Australia:

We haven't received any money yet even though we have been accepted. Our parent meetings have discussed what we want to do but we have been unable to do anything until the money comes through. (In relation to) ITAS - we have not heard what is happening. It is now week three, term three, and we have not received one cent. Our homework centre is all ready to go but we have not received any money. We cannot start parent training due to no funding as yet. All of our Indigenous students are missing out! It is a disgrace! We haven't received a cent yet. All of our applications and concept plans were completed in term 1 and our students still have not received a cent.

A number of schools have had to deal with parental queries and complaints in relation to the delays:

ITAS - access to funding - no not yet but we want to! We are still waiting for funding! Our Indigenous students aren't receiving any extra assistance! Parents keep complaining to me (Principal) (primary school, Tasmania).

The fact that it was over three quarters of the way through the year was another often mentioned comment, for example:

At beginning of term 3 we still have not heard about our application, no funding for parent involvement, community involvement, support for camps, excursions, literacy/numeracy resources. (We) have not received PSPI yet – waiting for it to arrive. Waiting on funding. The biggest concern is that we are still waiting to find out about funding (primary school, South Australia).

Schools also made reference to the fact that they had submitted applications but had received no formal response or reply from DEST. For example:

We have made two applications. The first was unsuccessful and we have (not) been contact(ed) about the second. We have had no information about our second submission. To date no student receives extra support (tuition) (primary school, Victoria).

And:

DEST needs to trust the professionalism and expertise of schools more. (ITAS is not running) because DEST hasn't got it off the ground yet! Literacy and numeracy outcomes for Indigenous students are not being maximised due to a lack of support and action by DEST with ITAS and PSPI (primary school, Tasmania).

The utter confusion that schools have faced is exemplified by comments from this primary school in a regional Queensland city, even after it had received funding:

(Parents) are frustrated by the poor implementation. Some parents are involved in tuition which meant involvement in the school during first semester was less. (There was) no tutoring for semester then a panic to start. To date we don't know funds will be allocated for term four but apparently it will change from term three and will go to district office, not individual schools. (There has been) no support for a whole semester (PSPI went in 28 Feb, which was a date given us by DEST). (We have received) zero for terms one and two. We have now been given \$37,500 and told it must be acquitted by the end of term three.

Reduced Indigenous participation in school activities

6% of total negative comments related to the impact that the changes had on the ability of Indigenous students to participate in mainstream school activities, such as camps, excursions and sporting programs.

The comments below provide an overview of a range of similar comments from schools across Australia:

(There is) less support for students to participate in swimming and educational excursions (primary school, Queensland).

We are no longer offering support to our few Indigenous students - particularly for their involvement in extra curricular (activities) (eg school production rock eisteddfod activities) (secondary school, Victoria).

ASSPA enabled identity to be supported via uniform, access to excursions etc. We still do this but with 25% plus Indigenous it devastates budget (primary school, South Australia).

Children haven't got the money for excursions or uniforms (primary school, Northern Territory).

Reduction in Indigenous cultural profile and cultural activities in school

5% of schools' comments related to the reduction in the Indigenous cultural profile in the school and the reduction in Indigenous activities, which schools consider to be vital for the recognition of Indigenous culture in schools. As the two primary schools from New South Wales have commented below:

Disappointment that funds cannot be accessed for cultural activities and excursions. ASSPA brought parents and students in to the school. It established communication channels and offered support where need existed. It united the Koori students and offered cultural knowledge to the youth (primary school, New South Wales).

Small personal projects (murals, Aboriginal garden) by ASSPA committee are no longer viable. Aboriginal children no longer have the responsibility of helping organise special projects. Less involvement from parents – small special projects were part of the school profile- no longer available (primary school, New South Wales).

Schools felt that this was impacting on non-Indigenous students, as well as Indigenous students, through shared cultural experiences, as stated by this secondary school in Victoria:

Disadvantaged students and parents are losing links with education and community. multi-cultural issues starting to surface due to lack of ASSPA dollars to create Reconciliation/planning activities and cross curricular activities.

Reduction in Literacy and/or Numeracy support

5% of schools' negative comments or 49 comments in total related to the reduction in support for literacy and/or numeracy programs. The majority of schools' comments related to a reduction in funding and thus a reduction in the provision of literacy and numeracy programs. The comments below provide an example of the overall comments received by schools:

(We are) unable to provide the additional literacy/numeracy support to assist children to develop and meet benchmark (primary school, Northern Territory).

Approval declined for R-6 literacy project (primary school, South Australia).

The only difference is that with ATAS there was more money and therefore more students were able to be supported in numeracy and literacy (regional primary school, Queensland).

(There is) reduced funding for literacy and numeracy programs for Aboriginal students (primary school, Western Australia).

Reduction in Employment

4% of schools' comments related to a reduction of employment, which schools stated impacted upon support networks for Indigenous students. The primary reason given for reduction in employment was the delay in the receipt of funding.

Schools were also asked to indicate in the survey the number of people who were no longer employed under the new ITAS program. This data revealed that there has been a total loss of 447 people employed in schools due to changes in the ITAS program alone, and that 265 of these employees were Indigenous. A primary school Principal in Queensland commented:

I had to let go two brilliant Indigenous Aides. (I) am now getting one Indigenous Aide for 12 hours per week for 15 weeks. ITAS = 5 hours per week for 15 weeks. (I) can't employ people to get real improvement in outcomes. 4 of 7 students are in care of state and need more 1 on 1.

Other schools made similar comments, such as:

Parents who were employed as Indigenous Aides are no longer part of support networks for Indigenous students (primary school, Queensland).

ITAS, we lost one of our tutors due to funding delay (primary school, Northern Territory).

No longer employ AIEO and liaison officer (primary school, Western Australia).

ATAS tutor sick of waiting (primary school, Tasmania).

Reduction in social welfare support for students

4% of all comments, or 38 comments in total, referred to the reduction in schools' abilities to provide social and welfare support to students in need, including nutrition programs, the purchase of school materials and the provision of uniforms. It was felt that the flexibility that was allowed under the ASSPA program allowed schools to assist parents who were struggling financially to meet the needs of their children. This in turn enabled Indigenous students to participate in a broader range of activities, for example, a sports program because they had a sports uniform. Schools access to this funding also facilitated 'readiness' to engage in learning through the provision of nutrition programs. A secondary school in Western Australia stated that there was:

No assistance for...uniforms, lunches...no school materials funding.

A number of schools also noted that the funding was previously used to 'combat isolation - subsidising transport costs' (rural primary school, New South Wales), which can no longer occur.

Comments from this secondary school in Victoria link these issues to senior secondary school retention:

No support for kids who through no fault of their own have nothing. Kids are suffering when in previous years we have built a strong and successful number of enrolments from 10 to 100 and all year 10's did move across to Senior College. We

are losing kids at year 9/10 now, because of no support. Our PSPI plan indicated success. Term one and two nothing then last week of term two told by DEST that we could begin the process for year 10 only assistance. Biggest problem is the utter lack of delivery and professional assistance from DEST.

Inappropriate targeting of funding

3% of all negative comments (or 24 comments in total) referred to the inappropriate targeting of funding. Schools in state capital cities with less than 20 Indigenous enrolments are no longer eligible to run the ITAS program, regardless of whether Indigenous students are struggling academically.

Many comments concentrated on the numbers of students in schools with less than 20 Indigenous enrolments that were disadvantaged by this new funding regime and the impacts that this has had on these students. As stated by one primary school in Tasmania:

We have two eligible students under the new criteria but no money has been given to school so no additional funding to students. It is absolutely disgusting how these children have been disadvantaged by the ITAS funding not being available.

And this primary school in Victoria:

(The impacts of the changes have been) devastating - children who made real progress through ATAS have been really disadvantaged. There is no financial support for Indigenous students currently attending this school.

A primary school in New South Wales was advised not to apply for funding:

We were told it would be useless to apply for any funding due to our low numbers. Therefore our Aboriginal children receive nothing.

Other comments concentrated on the inappropriate allocation of funding to those students who were not meeting the benchmark tests in years three, five and seven. A comment by this Queensland primary school highlights the illogical nature of the 'targeting' of this funding:

As a small school the odds were against us in that we had no Indigenous students in yrs 3, 5 or 7 in 2004 - they were in yrs 2, 4, 6, so no funding & yet our students definitely would've met the (funding) criteria & have done so in previous years. We are not impressed.

A comment from a secondary school in Western Australia provides a snapshot of the number of students who are missing out due to the 'targeting' of funding.

ITAS only caters for yrs 4, 6, 8 therefore more than 20 students miss out.

Other secondary schools across the country commented on the potential impacts of targeting ITAS funding at the senior years of secondary school, rather than at the junior years. For example, this secondary school in Victoria commented that:

Only senior students are able to access tutoring. Junior and middle school students in need of help are no longer eligible. Longer term this will mean they won't get to senior level.

And a secondary school in South Australia stated:

The need is obviously to help students at year eight and nine level – before they drop their bundle.

Finally, one of the most concerning findings from this survey has come from principals of special schools, who have indicated that their students are no longer entitled to one-on-one tutorial support, due to the fact that all of these students do not sit benchmark tests. As indicated by this special school in New South Wales:

As we are a special school and have not had to sit for basic skills tests or formally had to apply for exemptions many can not access ITAS due to change of rules.

Not aware of entitlements or how to access entitlements

In 3% of the comments in the negative category (24 comments in total), schools indicated that there was either a lack of awareness of their entitlements for Indigenous students, or a lack of awareness of how to access these entitlements. A number of schools commented on the inconsistency of programs that were being funded, for example this primary school in New South Wales stated:

(There is) complete confusion over who can access funds or how. (We have) an inability to understand the funding. Lack of communication with DEST (means that we) cannot get answers to our questions.

Similar issues were reflected by comments from these two primary schools in New South Wales:

It's all very confusing- we have some funding but some programs haven't been funded.

Complete confusion as there is no consistency and nobody seems to know what's available for Indigenous students.

Along with the confusion, comments indicated that there was little knowledge of the process that schools needed to undertake in order to access funding. For example, this primary school principal in South Australia commented:

I have to say I'm not sure how to access the funding- it has made things more complicated and no support to understand the new process.

There were comments received about the lack of information that has gone to schools in relation to funding. As one Victorian primary school indicated:

(We) have received very little information on this program. (We) have spoken to various people in the education department but little help/information available.

Comments from a primary school in the Australian Capital Territory indicate that further confusion had arisen even in the process of seeking advice and clarification about entitlements:

Our ASSPA committee has met twice with one meeting attended by DEST staff. The Commonwealth staff were not well informed about the new arrangements in March 2005 and we as a school have not applied for any funding yet. This is a major blow to the opportunities we can offer all students - Indigenous and non-Indigenous. (We have) no plans for this year until the confusion related to these changes is resolved.

A secondary school in Queensland re-iterated the issue of lack of understanding and how their lack of understanding had impacted upon their decision to not re-apply for funds:

We have no parent participation as the guidelines of concept plan are hard to understand. We have not reapplied for ITAS due to lack of understanding.

Reduction in ability to purchase Indigenous-specific resources

2% of schools' negative comments related to the reduced capacity to purchase Indigenous-specific resources. Comments were similar to this one received from a New South Wales primary school:

Teachers are unable to request and purchase resources pertinent to these Indigenous students' exact needs. Our Australian resource collection based on ASSPA funding promoting understanding of Indigenous culture is now halted.

Both Positive and Negative Comments

82 comments from schools addressed the fact that there were both positive and negative impacts in relation to the changes to Commonwealth funding. Table I provides an overview of the comments for this sub-category. Table J provides an overview by sub-category as a percentage of the total positive and negative comments.

Many of the comments in the positive and negative comment sub-category reflect that a small number of schools believed that the changes were having both positive and negative impacts on their schools' abilities to cater for the needs of Indigenous students and their parents. Comments that were both positive and negative will not be considered at the level of detail as the positive and negative category comments in this report, as they provide an amalgam of schools' comments that reflect an exploration of similar comments as those detailed in the report above.

Queensland, Western Australia and New South Wales were the states with the highest number of responses in this sub-category, with 26, 30 and 19 comments respectively. Four comments in this sub-category were made by schools in Victoria, two comments each were made by schools in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory and no schools in South Australia or Tasmania commented on both the positive and negative effects of the changes.

Nationally, the greatest number of comments received in this category reflected both the fact that schools believed that funding was targeted more appropriately (16%), especially through the ITAS program, but were negative about the impacts of the changes to ASSPA on parent participation (16%).

Table I – Positive and Negative comments by sub-category

	Qld	NSW	ACT	NT	Tas	WA	Vic	SA	Aust
Positive Comments									
funding targeted more appropriately	2	1	1	1	0	8	0	0	13
funding increased	0	1	0	0		0	1	0	2
increase in employment	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	6
increased parent involvement	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	3
improved ability to cater for Indigenous students and parents	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Negative Comments									
Funding reduced	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	5
Parental involvement reduced	5	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	13
Programs reduced	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Employment reduced	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Social and welfare support for students reduced	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Student participation in school activities reduced	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Reduced funding due to small number of Indigenous enrolments	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Indigenous cultural activities and cultural profile reduced	2	0	0	0	0	0	0		2
Funding targeted inappropriately	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Application Process too difficult	2	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	8
Schools not aware of entitlements or how to access	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Length of time for approval and receipt of funding	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	4
Reduced Literacy and Numeracy support	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	4
Reduced ability to purchase Indigenous-specific resources	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total comments	26	19	2	2	0	30	4	0	82

A comment from this primary school in Western Australia is typical of similar comments provided by other schools:

Parents no longer have an ASSPA committee. More children get support (ITAS) - school controls this.

Some schools comments in the positive and negative sub-category were a consequence of increased funding due to increased enrolments and/or the minimal impact of one of the program element changes on the school.

Table J – Positive and Negative comments by sub-category (%)

	Qld	NSW	ACT	NT	Tas	WA	Vic	SA	Aust
Positive Comments									
Funding targeted more appropriately	8%	5%	50%	50%	0%	27%	0%	0%	16%
Funding increased	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	2%
Increase in employment	12%	5%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	7%
Increased parent involvement	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	4%
Improved ability to cater for Indigenous students and parents	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	1%
Negative Comments									
Funding reduced	8%	5%	50%	50%	0%	3%	0%	0%	6%
Parental involvement reduced	19%	0%	0%	0%	0%	27%	0%	0%	16%
Programs reduced	8%	5%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	5%
Employment reduced	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%
Social and welfare support for students reduced	4%	11%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	5%
Student participation in school activities reduced	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	2%
Reduced funding due to small number of Indigenous enrolments	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Indigenous cultural activities and cultural profile reduced	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Funding targeted inappropriately	0%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Application Process too difficult	8%	11%	0%	0%	0%	7%	50%	0%	10%
Schools not aware of entitlements or how to access	4%	16%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%
Length of time for approval and receipt of funding	4%	5%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	5%
Reduced Literacy and Numeracy support	0%	11%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	5%
Reduced ability to purchase Indigenous-specific resources	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Total comments									
	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	0%	100%

For example, this primary school in Queensland commented that:

The programs ASSPA funded allowed full participation of Indigenous students in school activities including camps and performances it allowed the school to celebrate Indigenous culture with all the students. ATAS/ITAS - this has not been particularly different. IESIP - I believe it has increased because we have more Indigenous enrolments this year.

Conclusion

It is clear from the information provided that the changes to Commonwealth Indigenous Education funding have had substantial impacts on Indigenous programs in schools across Australia. Although a very small number of schools identified some positive impacts of program changes, overwhelmingly, schools have indicated that the changes have been negative, particularly in relation to the participation of Indigenous parents in educational decision-making.

Schools have made it clear that the two stage submission process for the Parent School Partnership Initiative is exceedingly complex, school-driven, and has fostered a sense of distrust amongst Indigenous parents. ASSPA committees provided an opportunity for Indigenous parents to participate in decision-making and planning about educational programs for their children and in a number of schools, committees were linked to mainstream school decision-making structures. These avenues no longer exist.

Changes to the tutorial assistance scheme have impacted on both employment and the number of students who are able to access much-needed assistance. Schools have commented that using failure to meet standardised testing benchmarks as a measure of determining need is not appropriate, as a number of variables such as exemptions from testing processes, student mobility and absenteeism impact on the quantum number of students assessed, and therefore on the quantum amount of funding.

The assessment of need, based on the comparison of one group of Indigenous people against another and the presumption that availability of a service is commensurate to access have proven to be poor platforms on which to base policy and funding decisions. Schools with Indigenous enrolments, many in Australia's capital cities, have commented that these funding policies have caused further disadvantage to Indigenous students, and in fact have prevented participation in a range of activities that are essential to school life and the educative process. For example, Indigenous students are no longer participating in sports programs because the costs of uniforms and travel, which used to be partially subsidised by ASSPA funds are prohibitive for Indigenous parents.

Whilst it may seem logical from a policy perspective for the Commonwealth government to determine that 'mainstream' provision should pick up responsibility for the gaps in funding, it is symptomatic of a lack of leadership to impose this policy from a legislative basis, without any attempt to determine the potential consequences of such a significant policy change, and work with States and Territories in order to lessen the impacts of these changes on a group that still remains the most educationally disadvantaged in Australia.

Overwhelmingly, schools have characterised the Commonwealth Department of Science, Education and Training as responsible for both the poor policy and poor implementation of these programs. Yet it is clear from schools' responses that they, rather than DEST, are continuing to bear the brunt of disgruntled Indigenous parents.

An urgent and independent assessment of the impacts of these changes is required. In the interim, the Commonwealth must work with state and territory Governments to establish arrangements which will lessen the impacts of these changes on reduced Indigenous student and parent participation in school activities.

References

Australian Education Union (2005) *Substantive Decisions of the Federal Executive Meeting, Decision 6, June 2005*, Internal, Unpublished Document, Australian Education Union Federal Office, Southbank, Melbourne.

Senate Workplace Relations, Employment and Education Committee (2005) *Indigenous Education Funding Inquiry* from http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet_ctte/indigenoused/index.htm (accessed 26.08.05)

Attachment A – Survey of Schools

Survey on Impacts of Changes to Commonwealth Indigenous Education Funding

1. Name of Your School
2. State/Territory
3. Number of Indigenous enrolments
4. Did your school have an ASSPA committee? Yes No
5. What amount of funding did your school receive for ASSPA?
6. Has your school received funding under the Parent School Partnerships Initiative (PSPI)? Yes No
7. Is it more or less funding than received under ASSPA?
8. What is the difference in funding between ASSPA and PSPI?
9. Please state the impacts that the changes in funding have had on Indigenous parent participation in your school
10. Did your students access the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme? Yes No
11. How many people were employed in your school using funds from this scheme?
12. How many of the employees were Indigenous?
13. How many students accessed this scheme?
14. Does your school now access the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme? Yes No
15. How many people are now employed in your school using funds from this scheme?
16. How many of these people are Indigenous?
17. How many students access this scheme?
18. Please state the impacts that the changes to ATAS/ITAS have had in your school
19. Does your school access Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) funding? Yes No
20. Has your IESIP funding for this year increased or been reduced?
21. By how much?
22. Please state the impacts that the changes to IESIP funding have had in your school

Please feel free to comment on other elements or issues on an attached sheet of paper.

Please fax this survey to Darcel Moyle, Federal Aboriginal Education Officer, Australian Education Union, on 03 9693 1805 or email it to DMoyle@aeufederal.org.au by Monday, 1st August, 2005