



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**EDUCATION LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT BILL 2008**

**Second Reading**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 24 September 2008**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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# SPEECH

<b>Date</b>	Wednesday, 24 September 2008	<b>Source</b>	House
<b>Page</b>	8356	<b>Proof</b>	No
<b>Questioner</b>		<b>Responder</b>	
<b>Speaker</b>	Gillard, Julia, MP	<b>Question No.</b>	

**Ms GILLARD** (Lalor—Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion) (9.06 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 is complementary to the Schools Assistance Bill 2008, which I will also be introducing today.

This bill makes amendments to the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000, the Australian Technical Colleges (Flexibility in Achieving Australia's Skills Needs) Act 2005 and the Schools Assistance (Learning Together—Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004 consequential on the Schools Assistance Bill 2008.

The bill repeals the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act 2000, which appropriated funding for government and non-government schools for the 2001 to 2004 funding period. As this period has expired, this act is no longer required.

While many of the amendments in the bill are technical or consequential amendments, a particularly important component of the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 is contained at item 6 of schedule 1 which continues the operation of the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000.

In the first sitting week of this parliament, the Rudd government apologised to Indigenous Australians for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on our fellow Australians. At the time, the Prime Minister made the point that this is not the end of the government's commitment but the start. If Australia is to be truly reconciled there must first be an acknowledgement of past wrongs, but this must be followed up with actions to close the gaps between Indigenous and other Australians.

By putting in place appropriations for another four years under the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000 the Australian government can continue working with a range of stakeholders to develop and implement innovative measures to close the gaps.

The act provides a vehicle to support what works in Indigenous education.

The act maintains commitments to initiatives such as the Sporting Chance Program, as well as supporting the expansion of intensive literacy and numeracy programs for Indigenous students, professional development support to assist teachers to develop individual learning plans for their Indigenous students, an additional 200 teachers in the Northern Territory and the provision of three new boarding college facilities for Indigenous secondary school students in the Northern Territory.

The act will appropriate more than \$500 million between 2009 and 2012 for Commonwealth-led initiatives and partnerships aimed at achieving better educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians. In addition, a further \$109 million is estimated to be spent over the next four years augmenting Abstudy entitlements through the Away from Base for 'mixed-mode' delivery program assisting Indigenous students access tertiary education.

As a transitional provision until other elements of our intergovernmental financial relations reforms are introduced in 2009, the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 appropriates over \$160 million across 2009 to 2012 to assure preschool and training providers that the Australian government recognises that Indigenous students need extra assistance if the gaps are to be closed. These appropriations will eventually be phased into the new early childhood and training arrangements. New arrangements for non-government schools are captured through the Schools Assistance Bill whilst new arrangements for government schools will be provided for in the proposed State Finances Bill.

The Australian government is working with states and territories, through the Council of Australian Governments, to develop a shared set of aspirations and policy directions which will provide the basis for our school-funding arrangements and our reform initiatives over the coming years.

The new framework will connect educational investment in schools, teachers and families with a new commitment to transparency. This will involve strengthened reporting systems, against ambitious and clear performance targets including goals to halve the literacy and numeracy gaps within a decade and to halve the gaps in the year 12 or equivalent attainment rate by 2020.

In 2006 gaps between the achievement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students against literacy and numeracy benchmarks ranged from 13 per cent for year 3 reading to 32 per cent for year 7 numeracy. The \$779 million to be appropriated under the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000 through this bill is only one part of an education revolution being initiated by this government. Social inclusion and closing the gaps will be central to the billions of dollars collectively invested in schools and school communities by the Australian government in partnership with school systems, parents and other stakeholders.

Closing the gaps can be achieved by working together to reveal those approaches that are making a difference for Indigenous students and by effectively implementing those approaches through our partnerships. The Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 can make an important contribution to closing the gaps between the education outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Pyne**) adjourned.