



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

**Indigenous Education (Targeted
Assistance) Amendment Bill 2013**

Second Reading

SPEECH

Wednesday, 29 May 2013

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Questioner
Speaker Pyne, Christopher, MP

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Mr PYNE (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (18:48): I rise to speak on the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2013. Increasing the legislative appropriations for the period 1 January to 30 June 2014 allows for an adjustment to the education components of the Stronger Futures Northern Territory national partnership. Specifically: the school nutrition program which enables nutritious breakfasts, lunches and snacks to be provided to some 5,000 students in over 65 target schools across remote Northern Territory communities; the additional teachers initiative, as the government has committed to providing funding for 200 additional teachers in the Northern Territory; and new funding for the Achieving Results Through Indigenous Education, or ARTIE, project which will be administered through the Sporting Chance Program funded under this bill.

The ARTIE Academy uses sporting programs and cultural activities to help encourage Indigenous students to stay in school through participation, and is expected to involve 21 schools and over 1,600 students. This will provide the opportunity for students to achieve a level of academic achievement and assist them in striving for desired career goals.

While the extended appropriation for a further year for these three initiatives is welcomed, this will now be the third time that Labor has provided a short-term extension to selected IETA funded programs. The coalition is fully committed to closing the gap to ensure the lives of Indigenous Australians are improved, and most importantly to provide better opportunities for Indigenous children. We as a nation have committed to ending the disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians across six measures. The cornerstone of any improvement in all of these fields is education. We need to both lift the achievement of our best and brightest students and improve outcomes for the most disadvantaged students if we are to reverse this gap.

Under the Labor government the education gap is widening. In last year's budget Labor cut some \$22 million of the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program, a program that was succeeding in closing the gap, sending the best and brightest Indigenous youth to the nation's best boarding schools. Individual non-government schools have recently made representations confirming that no further funding was going to be provided beyond the end of this year for the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program. Under this program the not-for-profit sector administers scholarships to Indigenous students, particularly those from remote areas, to attend high-performing secondary schools or universities and promote leadership development opportunities. The Indigenous Youth Mobility Program provided residential facilities in major centres to accommodate young people from remote areas while they undertook a trade or traineeship. Yet, in a shameless ploy this week, after a year of hard work and intense pressure from my colleague in the other place Senator Scullion, the Minister for School Education has had the audacity to trumpet a \$22 million investment in the same programs he cut a year before.

This bill provides a temporary cover—it will keep a handful of programs going for a short period. This generates uncertainty and puts pressure on service providers and, unfortunately, does not close the gap. What Indigenous people of this country need is not a temporary quick fix but a genuine commitment to closing the gap in education. Longer term funding and therefore future planning for successful programs is now being held hostage to Labor short-term budget fixes.

A recent government report shows that closing the gap indicators for Indigenous education are going backwards and the results in remote and very remote areas are nothing short of a disgrace. In 14 of the 20 National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy—NAPLAN—indicators the gap has widened in 2012 compared to 2011. The previous Labor NT government was in power for over a decade and, along with the Prime Minister and the Minister for Families and Community Services at a federal level, presided over these terrible results.

These results are yet another wake-up call. The cost of continuing to do nothing is simply too high. A legacy of future generations of poorly educated First Australians is unacceptable and the consequences of such a failure would be profound. Education will be at the centre of our approach to Indigenous affairs if we win government.

Improving the standard of education provided to Indigenous students and making sure children attend school will be absolute priorities for us. I commend this bill to the House.