



**Government
of South Australia**

**Ministerial Advisory Committee:
Students with Disabilities**

Annual Report 2004

April 2005

Further information about the Ministerial Advisory Committee:
Students with Disabilities is available on the Website at:
<http://www.macswd.sa.gov.au>

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1. Introduction

Role and Purpose

The Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities (MAC:SWD) was established by the South Australian Minister for Education and Children's Services in 1989. The role and purpose of the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities is to:

- Ensure the equitable, transparent and accountable distribution of Australian Government Non-Government Centres Support grants (Capital and Recurrent) for supplementary funding to eligible organisations, which support the education and care of children and students with disabilities in early intervention programs, preschools and schools across the three education sectors in South Australia.
- Ensure the equitable, transparent and accountable distribution of State Government supplementary funding to support the education and care of children and students with disabilities across the three education sectors in South Australia.
- Support the capacity of non-government organisations to provide services to children and students with disabilities in early intervention programs, preschools and schools across the three education sectors in South Australia.
- Undertake projects and provide support on matters concerning the education and care of children and students with disabilities as requested by the Minister for Education and Children's Services.

Context Statement

Our Vision

Children and students with disabilities achieve in their learning communities; acquiring skills and attitudes for life-long learning and citizenship.

Our Mission

To ensure equitable and efficient allocation of Australian and State Government grants for supplementary funding to eligible organisations providing education and education related therapy services to children and students with disabilities across the three education sectors, and to support our stakeholders on matters concerning the education and care of children and students with disabilities.

Our Values

Respect	Our behaviour recognises the values, diversity and contribution of individuals.
Diligence	We are careful and persistent in our application and effort and strive for continuous improvement.
Integrity	We act honestly and ethically.
Fairness	We are unbiased and impartial in all our undertakings.
Transparency	Our systems and decision making processes are understandable and open to scrutiny.
Connectedness	Our work is relevant to and supportive of our stakeholders.
Accountability	We are accountable for our decisions and actions.

Committee Membership

Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities

Standing Committee

Members of the Committee are appointed by the Minister for Education and Children's Services to serve a twelve-month term, although in some instances this term is extended. They are chosen for their knowledge and experience in relation to children and students with disabilities. Committee members consist of educators representing the three education sectors, parents, health and disability professionals, a student and nominees of education unions, professional associations and the Minister for Education and Children's Services.

As a rule the Standing Committee meets once a month, with the exception of January and April. In 2004 the Committee met ten times.

Membership

Ms Margaret Wallace	Chairperson
Mr Richard Dalefield	Deputy Chairperson
Ms Ingrid Alderton	Department of Education and Children's Services Schooling sector
Ms Mary Bambacas	Parent
Ms Libby Burns	Association of Independent Schools of SA
Ms Georgina Cattley	Minister's Nominee
Ms Claire Cotton	Non government Special Education Committee
Ms Marguerite Dissinger	Disability Services Office, Department for Families and Communities
Ms Christine Flynn	Parent
Ms Stephanie Grant	Catholic Education SA
Ms Jen Mathwin-Raymond	Department of Education and Children's Services Children's Services
Mr Tommy Philavong	Student
Ms Kerry Presser	Early Childhood Australia (SA Branch)
Ms Sheena Ruedas	Association of Non-Government Education Employees
Ms Joanna Seymour	Australian Association of Special Education (AASE) SA Chapter
Ms Leah York	Australian Education Union (SA Branch)

Funding Approval Group

A Funding Approval Group, a subcommittee of the Ministerial Advisory Committee, oversees the annual funding process. Final decisions about funding recommendations are made by the entire Committee.

Funding Approval Group members for 2004 included:

- MAC:SWD Chairperson
- MAC:SWD Deputy Chairperson
- Representative for the Association of Independent Schools of SA (AISSA)
- Representative for Catholic Education SA (CESA)
- Representative for the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS)
- State Minister for Education and Children's Services Nominee.

Funding Approval Group non-members for 2004 included:

- MAC:SWD Executive Officer
- MAC:SWD Project Officer (Funding).

Additional members of the Standing Committee may be asked to attend Funding Approval Group meetings when necessary. Funding Approval Group meetings usually precede the Standing Committee meetings. In 2004 the Funding Approval Group met eight times.

Secretariat Staff

Ms Christel Butcher	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities Executive Officer (from August 2004)
Ms Luisa Pirone	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities Acting Executive Officer (from December 2003 to July 2004) Project Officer (from August 2004)
Ms Jo Shearer	Project Officer
Ms Fiona Snodgrass	Project Officer (from May 2004)
Ms Lyn Kohl	Executive Secretary

2. Funding

Overview of Funding Process

Australian/State Government Grants

The Minister for Education and Children's Services is responsible for the allocation of Australian/State Government Special Education grants to eligible organisations providing education and therapy related services for children and students with disabilities in South Australia. Eligible non-government organisations can apply for both Capital Grants and Recurrent Grants under the Australian Government *Special Education – Non-Government Centre Support* programme (legislation current in 2004).

The Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities administers the allocation of Australian Government Special Education Capital and Recurrent Grants to non-government organisations on behalf of the agent for the Australian Government; in South Australia this is the Minister for Education and Children's Services. In addition to allocating these Australian Government funds on behalf of the Minister, the Committee administers State Recurrent Grants available to support children and students with disabilities.

Allocative Mechanism

Australian Government Recurrent Grants

For non-government organisations receiving Australian Government *Non-Government Centres Support* Recurrent Grants, allocations are calculated using MAC:SWD's funding formula, which was developed in 1999 following a review of the funding process, and has been applied since 2000.

An exception is made in the case of the Department for Families and Communities' Children, Youth and Family Services' *Tutoring Program for Children in Residential Care*. This allocation is calculated using a flat per capita rate determined by MAC:SWD, on the basis of cost for tutoring services for one student over one school term.

For those organisations funded under the formula, the allocation process is based on MAC:SWD's three Categories for Funding, which identify the level of student need, irrespective of the nature of disability. Each of these categories for funding has weightings assigned to Early Intervention and School Support programs. Funds are allocated according to Categories 1 to 3 in descending order of priority. Within these categories, MAC:SWD has isolated certain services as indicators of curriculum based support provided by organisations. The number of hours attached to an individual's service provision determines the category in which each child/student is placed for funding purposes.

Each year, organisations applying for Australian Government *Non-Government Centres Support* Recurrent Grants submit a written application to MAC:SWD, outlining child/student numbers and the levels of need and types of service negotiated with the relevant education sectors. The data provided represent services provided in the preceding year, and are verified by education sector representatives who are members of MAC:SWD, before being applied to the funding formula.

Per capita amounts for all organisations are equal across MAC:SWD's three categories of funding, i.e. the same per capita amount applies to all grant recipients for children in Early Intervention categories 1, 2 and 3 and students in School Support categories 1, 2 and 3. The recipient's total grant will comprise subtotal funding for children and students across Early Intervention and/or School Support categories 1, 2 and 3, with students in priority categories 1 attracting the highest per capita amounts. Stakeholders continue to support this transparent and equitable distribution of supplementary recurrent funding.

Grant allocations fluctuate on an annual basis, according to the total Australian Government allocation and the level of service provided to individual children and students in each of the organisations funded. The funding provided is targeted to provide learning and development opportunities for children with disabilities who are below school age to prepare them for entry into regular preschools or schools, to assist school-aged children with severe disabilities by improving their access to educational programs, or to assist children with disabilities in residential care.

State Recurrent Grants

For those organisations receiving State Recurrent Grants, allocations are calculated using a flat per capita rate determined by the Committee. These organisations include the Child and Youth Health Access Assistant Program, the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) Preschool Support Program, and the three Non-Government Special Schools, i.e. St Ann's Special School, St Patrick's Special School, and Suneden Special School.

In addition, MAC:SWD administers Joint Sector Intensive & Crisis Support funding on behalf of the three education sectors in South Australia. This funding is intended to provide school based support for children and students during a period of unexpected need, often due to complex health support on return to school after hospitalisation. An amount of approximately \$40,000 has been allocated to support this program.

Recurrent Grant Allocations

Recurrent Grants must contribute to the provision of education and therapy related services by non-government organisations to improve the access and participation of children and students with disabilities in early intervention programs, preschools and schools. These grants are supplementary to organisations' total program costs and are intended to support education based services.

The Minister receives the Australian Government Special Education funding to be allocated along with State funding. The Australian Government allocation for South Australia in 2004 was \$3,953,000. The Australian/State Government total amount allocated in 2004 was \$7,220,000. This included:

	\$
State Recurrent Grants	3,267,000
Australian Government	
Recurrent Grants	3,924,890
Capital Grants	28,110

NB The allocation for State Recurrent Grants of \$3,267,000 included a one-off increase of \$100,000 achieved through Secretariat salary savings.

The following table lists those organisations that received recurrent grants in 2004. In descending order, these included:

- 11 non-government organisations offering preschool support and/or early intervention and/or school support programs
- the 3 Non-Government Special Schools
- the Child and Youth Health Access Assistant and DECS Preschool Support programs
- Department for Families and Communities' Children, Youth and Family Services' *Tutoring Program for Children in Residential Care* (CIRC).

Australian/State Government Special Education Recurrent Grants 2004

Organisation	Total \$	State \$	Commonwealth \$
Autism SA Early Intervention	226,517	0	226,517
Autism SA School Support	788,940	0	788,940
Novita Children's Services (formerly Crippled Children's Early Intervention)	219,865	0	219,865
Novita Children's Services (formerly Crippled Children's School Support)	663,738	0	663,738
Down Syndrome Early Intervention	123,019	0	123,019
Down Syndrome School Support	291,844	0	291,844
Cora Barclay Early Intervention	59,547	0	59,547
Cora Barclay School Support	148,321	0	148,321
Townsend House Early Intervention	82,885	0	82,885
Townsend House School Support	74,924	0	74,924
Guide Dogs Association	29,773	0	29,773
Miriam High Special Needs Centre Port Augusta	76,451	0	76,451
Inclusion SA Early Intervention	199,798	0	199,798
Early Links Early Intervention Mount Gambier	40,134	0	40,134
Port Lincoln Community Health Services Early Intervention and Support Program	10,000	0	10,000
Early Development Program for children with multiple disabilities Goodwood	25,000	0	25,000
St Ann's Special School	320,055	320,055	0
St Patrick's Special School	263,905	263,905	0
Suneden Special School	252,675	252,675	0
Child and Youth Health Access Assistant Program	2,000,000	1,192,406	807,594
DECS Preschool Support Program	1,102,959	1,102,959	0
Children, Youth and Family Services (CIRC)	70,650	0	70,650
Joint Sector Intensive & Crisis Support	40,000	40,000	0
Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities	210,000	0	210,000
Total Amount	\$7,321,000	\$3,172,000	\$4,149,000

Capital Grant Allocations

Five per cent of the total Australian Government Special Education allocation to South Australia is intended for Capital Grants to eligible organisations supporting children and students with disabilities. These grants are allocated to non-government organisations for the construction or refurbishment of facilities that provide education and therapy related services to improve the access and participation of children and students with disabilities. Organisations applying for a capital grant must submit a written application, to be assessed by the Funding Approval Group and the Ministerial Advisory Committee.

The following table lists the non-government organisations allocated capital grants in 2001 to 2004.

Australian Government Special Education Capital Grants

2001	Autism Association of South Australia Inc	\$29,000
	Novita Children's Services Inc (formerly Crippled Children's Association of South Australia Incorporated)	\$72,000
	Down Syndrome Society of South Australia Inc	\$21,000
	Playgroup Association of South Australia Incorporated	\$17,988
	Total	\$139,988
2002	Townsend House Incorporated	\$165,000
	Total	\$165,000
2003	Autism Association of South Australia Inc	\$44,861
	Novita Children's Services Inc (formerly Crippled Children's Association of South Australia Incorporated)	\$112,350
	Total	\$157,211
2004	Novita Children's Services Inc (formerly Crippled Children's Association of South Australia Incorporated)	\$28,110
	Total	\$28,110

Conditions of Funding

If a Capital and/or Recurrent Grant is approved, the organisation must enter into a legally binding Funding Agreement with the Minister for Education and Children's Services to ensure the grant is properly applied. The organisation is required to provide a number of reports, accountability statements and whatever other information the Minister might require, under the terms and conditions of the *States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act 2000* or the clauses contained in the Funding Agreement (legislation current in 2004). At the end of the funding period, the organisation needs to meet specific financial accountability requirements contained in the Funding Agreement.

Number of Students Supported

Funding to non-government organisations is allocated retrospectively, based on service provision to children and students in the preceding year. While the number of students with disabilities eligible for support has increased steadily in the past six years, an unprecedented increase of 548 eligible children and students has occurred for Special Education funding in 2004 (13.8%). This includes the 275 children receiving services from new applicants, Inclusion SA and Early Links.

In 2004, a total of 1,332 children were supported through Early Intervention programs, and 1,838 students received support through School Support programs. A further 157 students were supported through CIRC Tutoring Programs, and 34 via crisis support. The Child and Youth Health Access Assistant Program provided support to 318 children and students with disabilities. A total of 3,679 children and students were supported through Australian/State Special Education Recurrent Grants.

3. Projects

Each year, the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities undertakes a number of statewide projects that have been approved by the Minister for Education and Children's Services. The projects may be initiated by the Minister or suggested by the Committee.

All projects focus on children and students with disabilities and must be relevant to the three education sectors, i.e. State, Catholic and Independent preschools and schools. Task Groups are formed for each project and members are chosen for their experience and expertise in the particular topic. Two projects were conducted in 2004 and, once approved by the Minister, published reports will be available on the Committee's Website. A summary of the projects is provided below.

Whole School Behaviour Management Project 2004

In February 2004, the then Minister for Education and Children's Services approved the trial implementation of positively focused behaviour management programs using a whole school approach in schools and preschools in South Australia, with particular consideration given to the benefits of this approach for students with disabilities.

While much of the literature on the topic of whole school behaviour management for students with disabilities has been written with a focus on emotional and behavioural disorders for students with or without a disability, it is acknowledged that students with disabilities are two to three times more likely to have challenging behaviours than their typically developing peers.

Review of the literature related to this topic indicates two significant developments in behaviour management practice for students with disabilities and challenging behaviours, which have been promoted in recent years. The first relates to a shift in the prevailing paradigm for managing challenging behaviours in schools, and the second to whole school implementation. A positive approach to behaviour support using a partnership approach is advocated by the literature and supported by the education sectors in South Australia. The whole school approach, which is inclusive, means that all staff, students, parents and external service providers will work together within the parameters of one behaviour management program, which has been developed and agreed upon in consultation with all members of the school community.

In this study, participating school communities were required to implement developmental aspects of their behaviour program using the whole school approach, over a ten week trial period. The benefits for all students, including students with disabilities, staff and parents were noted. Data were collected through interviews, as well as a written account of school-based activities in journal format.

Six schools were selected for the study. They were Christie Downs Schools, Horizon Christian School, Kadina Memorial High School, Morphett Vale West Primary School, Port Augusta Secondary School and Woodville Special School. These schools were located in both country and metropolitan regions, and included mainstream and special education settings with students of varying ages and types of disabilities. State and Independent education sectors were represented in the sample group.

The most important benefit of the whole school approach identified by staff, students and parents was, that all members of the school community were familiar with the school rules, and that the expectations of behavioural conduct were explicit, consistent and clearly recorded:

- Students with disabilities were supported to develop skills to self regulate their behaviour, communicate and make better choices. They benefited from clear structure, where staff responses were predictable and the focus was on behavioural learning to acquire the social skills required for active participation in school life.

- Staff reported an increase in shared responsibility for behaviour management. They shared effective strategies, perceived an increase in the support they received and reported feeling less stressed. They had new confidence in knowing what would happen with their student when supportive intervention for challenging behaviour was required and had increased confidence in managing the behaviour of students with disabilities.
- Parents of students with disabilities reported that they had a clearer understanding of the school's practices and that the team focus encouraged parental partnership.

The Ministerial Advisory Committee will contact the principals of each of the schools that participated in this study at the end of 2005 to discuss the progress of the whole school approach to behaviour management at their site.

Task Group Membership

Mr Richard Dalefield Chairperson	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities Deputy Chairperson/Parent
Ms Mary Bambacas	Parent
Ms Cynthia Betterman	Parent Advocacy
Ms Anne Carolin	Catholic Education SA Behaviour Education Team
Ms Chris Drynan	Special Schools Principals' Association
Ms Di Garwood	Principal, Paralowie R-12 school
Ms Judy Gray	Autism SA
Ms Janine Harvey	Department of Education and Children's Services Assistant Director, Child and Student Wellbeing
Ms Pam Oyarzun	Association of Independent Schools of SA
Ms Kerry Presser	Early Childhood Australia (SA Branch)
Ms Sheena Ruedas	Association of Non-Government Education Employees
Ms Leah York	Australian Education Union (SA Branch)
Ms Christel Butcher	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities Executive Officer
Ms Jo Shearer	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities Project Officer

Professional Development for School Services Officers in South Australia

School Services Officers increasingly contribute to the important role of supporting the delivery of education to children and students with disabilities in preschools, mainstream schools and special educational settings. This was acknowledged in the Report of the Senate Inquiry into the education of students with disabilities (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002). School Services Officers have long provided support for students with disabilities in special educational settings and, as a result of substantial growth in inclusive practice, they are increasingly employed to provide similar support in mainstream settings. The increase in inclusion has also led to an expansion of the School Services Officer role. Simultaneously, opportunities for vocational training for these staff have evolved, and continue to be developed to meet the current and changing training needs of School Services Officers.

In 2004, the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities undertook a project related to the current role of School Services Officers supporting students with disabilities in South Australian preschools and schools. Ninety-four School Services Officers from seventy-two educational sites participated in discussions regarding their role in supporting students with disabilities, their professional development requirements, the core competencies for the position, and available training opportunities. Focus group participants were selected from the three education sectors (State, Catholic, Independent), and grouped by school type (mainstream, special school/unit/class) and schooling level (preschool, primary, secondary).

During focus group discussions, the majority of participants stated that their primary role was to support individual students or small groups of students to achieve tasks set by the teacher. Their responses were grouped under five broad categories: learning and curriculum support, personal care and physical support, program support and implementation, teacher support, attendance at meetings and reporting duties. The data suggested the need for clearer definitions of roles and responsibilities, both at the systemic level and the site level, while maintaining site-based flexibility.

The majority of focus group participants stated that the core knowledge required for their work was personal information about the individual students they supported. The need for knowledge tied to individual students was closely followed by the need for general disability awareness and information on specific disabilities. In addition, many focus group participants considered it important to have knowledge of their legal rights and responsibilities for the position, as well as site related information, such as school policies, practices and curriculum, all of which was important to receive prior to commencing employment.

Many focus group participants considered strong communication and interpersonal skills to be essential for their role. The ability to communicate with students, teachers, parents and specialists, as well as follow directions from teachers and other professionals was highlighted. There was strong consensus by participants that School Services Officers needed skills in behaviour management, with protective behaviour skills being considered beneficial for both staff and students. In addition, the majority of participants described personal abilities such as patience, flexibility, consistency, calmness, and a sense of humour as important when working with students with disabilities.

Many of the study's participants found it difficult to recount the number of courses they had undertaken, suggesting that in South Australia professional development is readily available and had been pursued. Focus group participants reported that the majority of courses they had undertaken were in-service. There was little evidence to suggest that pre-service training had been undertaken with a view to securing a position as a School Services Officer. At present, a qualification is not a prerequisite for employment as a School Services Officer in any state or territory of Australia.

Most focus group participants preferred to access both accredited and non-accredited training opportunities, and all indicated the importance of professional development. The most commonly accessed workshops related to training on disability awareness, speech and language, and health support.

Participants stated that they were generally supported to access training at both site and sector levels. Information about training opportunities was received in various print formats and disseminated broadly. The predominant barriers to training appeared to be the availability of relief staff, course costs, time constraints, and location for country participants.

Coaching by peers, peer support and work shadowing were considered integral to enhancing work practices. Providing opportunities for educational support staff to visit other schools or preschools to observe best practice or alternative strategies was valued in all education sectors. Induction is considered an important initiative and occurs at the site level across all three South Australian education sectors. Ongoing professional development is made available at both sector and site levels, with schools being flexible to arrange training opportunities according to local needs.

Task Group Membership

Ms Claire Cotton Chairperson	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities Non government Special Education Committee representative
Ms Ingrid Alderton	Department of Education and Children's Services Schooling Sector
Ms Libby Burns	Association of Independent Schools of SA
Ms Georgina Cattley	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities Minister's Nominee
Ms Marguerite Dissinger	Disability Services Office, Department for Families and Communities
Ms Christine Flynn	Parent
Ms Stephanie Grant	Catholic Education SA
Ms Genevieve Harris	Australian Education Union
Ms Kathryn Jones (proxy Ms Lolita Higgins)	Department of Education and Children's Services Organisation and Professional Development Services (RTO)
Mr Tommy Philavong	Student
Ms Joanna Seymour	Australian Association of Special Education (AASE) SA Chapter
Ms Kathryn Stevens	Association of Non-Government Education Employees
Ms Roslyn Usher	Preschool Directors' Association
Ms Christel Butcher	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities Executive Officer
Ms Fiona Snodgrass	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities Project Officer

4. Activities in 2004

Committee leadership and Secretariat staffing

After many years of relative stability in its leadership and secretariat staffing, the Committee was faced with a number of changes at the beginning of the year. In March 2004, Ms Diana Hill retired as the chairperson of the Committee after five years of service. Ms Margaret Wallace was appointed as the new chairperson in April 2004. Ms Margaret McColl had been in the position of Executive Officer from September 1997 and retired in December 2003. Ms Luisa Pirone, Project Officer (Funding), acted in the position until the appointment of Ms Christel Butcher as Executive Officer in July 2004. Ms Rosanne DeBats, Project Officer, retired in September 2003 and was succeeded by Ms Fiona Snodgrass in May 2004.

These changes, combined with the appointment of a new Minister, led to a review of the Committee's role and purpose.

Consultation about the Review of the Committee

In May 2004, the Minister for Education and Children's Services requested that an internal review of the Committee be undertaken and a strategic plan be developed. Members of the Committee were consulted about the role, function and membership of MAC:SWD, including future projects and connections with other committees. In summary, Committee members suggested the following points for consideration:

- Standing Committee representation from Aboriginal interest groups.
- Medium term tenure for fewer Standing Committee members, with staggered turnover.
- Historical funding anomalies to be addressed.
- Promotion and dissemination of information on best practice.
- Closer collaboration with and support for grant recipient organisations.

A summary of data collected from the consultation was tabled at the August Standing Committee meeting for members' comments. A draft statement of *Role and Purpose* for the Committee was presented to the Minister at a meeting held in August 2004. This was approved in principle. In 2005 the Committee will continue to discuss and implement suggestions gathered from the consultation.

Strategic Plan

Following the consultation process, a *Strategic Plan 2004-2008* was developed proposing two broad strategic directions. The first relates to funding allocations and the second to connections between MAC:SWD and other agencies and committees. A detailed work plan for internal use by the secretariat will support the *Strategic Plan*.

Strategic Direction 1

Further develop the transparency, efficiency and accountability of decision making and funding processes related to organisations, which receive supplementary funding through the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities.

Strategic Direction 2

Support the connectedness and further development of education and therapy services for children and students.

Initiatives Undertaken in 2004

As the primary role of the Standing Committee is related to the allocation of Australian/State Government funding, a stronger emphasis was given to evolving the funding process. With Ministerial approval, the Secretariat has started to review the Committee's allocative mechanism. Commencing with the 2005 funding round, for example, the Australian Government Special Education allocation will be proportionally divided into Early Intervention and School Support subtotals.

The Ministerial Advisory Committee is committed to support the work of grant recipient organisations. In 2004, timing of new Australian Government legislation would have led to delay in grant payments due in January 2005, as the total amount due to South Australia would remain unknown until mid 2005. The Committee sought and gained Ministerial approval to provide funding for 2005 initially based on 2004 figures, to avoid cash flow problems for grant recipients. Grant allocations will be adjusted in July 2005.

From August onwards the Chairperson of the Committee and the Executive Officer visited grant recipient organisations to introduce themselves and to canvass representatives of the organisations on their needs, and how these could be best supported by MAC:SWD. In general, organisations expressed a desire to consult with MAC:SWD on a regular basis to keep each other informed about emerging issues. They were also seeking opportunities to meet with other grant recipients to share knowledge on data collection and data management procedures, to be better informed on numbers of children and students supported and services provided.

From August onwards, the Executive Officer and Project Officer (Funding), visited most grant recipient organisations to consult with them on matters related to the allocation of Australian Government grants. The allocation process was discussed for both Recurrent and Capital grants and, in particular, organisations were encouraged to submit applications for capital funding. In recent years, the number of these applications had decreased, in part, due to a lack of awareness that applications can be lodged on an annual basis. Further to that, organisations received updated information related to requirements for accountability for both capital and recurrent funding. These consultations provided organisations with another opportunity to raise any issues of concern and advise MAC:SWD of recent initiatives. Consultations will be continued in 2005.

5. Future

Evolving the Funding Process

As identified in MAC:SWD's Strategic Plan, evolving the funding process according to the principles of equity, efficiency and effectiveness, will be the priority for 2005. This will reflect the new Australian Government legislation for funding in the 2005 to 2008 quadrennium.

MAC:SWD has identified a greater need for accountability for services provided to children and students with disabilities. Data about actual service provision in Early Intervention services will, for the first time in 2005, be recorded and verified by education sector representatives. This process has already been applied to services provided through School Support programs. Consultations with Early Intervention service providers and education sector representatives will take place early in 2005 to determine accountability and verification processes.

Review of the Committee

As identified through consultation with the Minister and Standing Committee members in 2004, the tenure of MAC:SWD membership and meeting schedule will be further discussed and finalised in 2005. Particular emphasis will be given to appoint a member who can represent Aboriginal interest on the Committee.

Projects for 2005

Three projects for 2005 are outlined below:

Aboriginal Students with Disabilities – Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss

In 2002, the Committee undertook a project to survey a range of key organisations in the fields of disability and Aboriginal education to determine current issues of importance. One of the prevailing issues was the relevance of otitis media with conductive hearing loss (OM/CHL) for learning outcomes in Aboriginal children. This is documented in Recommendation 2 of MAC:SWD's report to the Minister, *Aboriginal Students with Disabilities* (September 2003):

Recommendation 2:

Urgent attention should be given to the high levels of recurrent otitis media with conductive hearing loss (OM/CHL) in Aboriginal children and the effect this has on their learning outcomes. The following actions are recommended:

- *Cooperative arrangements should be developed between the health and education sectors in relation to early diagnosis and treatment, sharing of information, and ongoing monitoring and intervention, as necessary.*
- *The diagnostic category OM/CHL should be developed and utilised by disability support services within the three education sectors.*
- *Teachers must be provided with information and training to assist them in recognising OM/CHL in Aboriginal students. Teachers need support to liaise with health staff in facilitating an appropriate medical response, and to modify their teaching practices.*
- *Classrooms should be modified to achieve maximum levels of light and acoustic efficiency. Sound field amplification systems should be installed in junior primary classrooms, in particular those with Aboriginal students.*

Furthermore, the impact of conductive hearing loss on the acquisition of phonemic awareness and the subsequent bearing on reading and spelling, has been well researched in Australia. Remedial and preventative measures, such as programs on ear hygiene, and early diagnosis of the condition would allow educational staff to better cater for the educational needs of Aboriginal students. Medical management and educational intervention should be provided jointly between local health professionals and educators.

In 2005 the Committee will investigate the development of protocols (as outlined above) for joined-up service provision across health and education sectors to Aboriginal children with OM/CHL attending childcare organisations, preschools and schools in urban and regional South Australia.

Services for Children and Students with Asperger Syndrome – Good Practice Documented

In 1999, the Ministerial Advisory Committee investigated the situation for secondary-aged students with Autism Spectrum Disorders in South Australian schools. The report to the Minister outlined initiatives in school management and teaching practices to support students with Autism Spectrum Disorders. The most successful practices adopted a situation-specific and flexible approach, which acknowledged that many students with Autism Spectrum Disorders have unique support needs. In particular, it was noted that students with Asperger syndrome increasingly present significant support and service challenges, as evidenced by a high number of suspensions and exclusions. There appear to continue to be a high number of suspensions and exclusions amongst this cohort of students.

In addition, consultations held with Committee members during the review of the Committee's role and purpose highlighted the need to investigate the support available to students with Asperger syndrome. In 2005, the Committee will investigate and document successful practices, which support, engage and retain students with Asperger syndrome in their learning communities. These practices could be presented during seminar sessions hosted by the Committee, in collaboration with relevant non-government organisations, for educators from the three sectors.

Support for Children and Students with Disabilities – Information Resource

In 2002, the Committee published a resource for preschool directors and school principals, which gave an overview of support services for children and students with disabilities across the education, health and disability sectors. This resource was widely distributed and an update has been sought from learning communities. The resource will be updated to include:

- information specific to the three education sectors (State, Catholic and Independent)
- descriptions of relevant support services and associated organisations.