



**Government
of South Australia**

**Ministerial Advisory Committee:
Students with Disabilities**

Annual Report 2005

June 2006

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 2005 the Committee met nine times.

Membership

Ms Margaret Wallace	Chairperson
Ms Mary Bambacas	Deputy Chairperson
Ms Ingrid Alderton	Department of Education and Children's Services, Schooling sector
Ms Vicki Brown	Manager of Aboriginal Services, Disability Services Office Department for Families and Communities
Ms Libby Burns	Association of Independent Schools of SA (AISSA)
Ms Georgina Cattley	Minister's Nominee
Ms Claire Cotton	Non Government Special Education Committee
Ms Christine Flynn	Parent
Ms Stephanie Grant	Catholic Education SA (CESA)
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	Independent Education Union (SA)
Ms Joanna Seymour	Australian Association of Special Education (AASE) SA Chapter
Mr Paul Willey	Disability Services Office, Department for Families and Communities
Ms Leah York	Australian Education Union (SA Branch)

Funding Approval Group

The Funding Approval Group, a subgroup of the Ministerial Advisory Committee, oversees the annual funding process. Final decisions about funding recommendations are made by the Standing Committee.

Funding Approval Group members for 2005 were:

- 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 2005 were:

- MAC:SWD Executive Officer
- MAC:SWD Project Officer (Funding)
- DECS Director Financial Management Services.

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 2005 the Funding Approval Group met nine times.

Secretariat Staff

Ms Christel Butcher	Executive Officer
Ms Lyn Kohl	Executive Secretary
Ms Luisa Pirone	Project Officer
Ms Jo Shearer	Project Officer
Ms Fiona Snodgrass	Project Officer

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 Non-Government Centres Support element of the Australian Government *Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs* program (*Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004*).

The Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities administers the allocation of Australian Government 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 identified 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, and to assist children with disabilities in residential care.

State Recurrent Grants

During 2005, the responsibility for recurrent funding to the three non-government special schools (St Ann’s, St Patrick’s and Suneden) was transferred from MAC:SWD to the Minister’s Non-Government Schools Secretariat. The responsibility for recurrent funding to the DECS Preschool Support Program was transferred from MAC:SWD to the Department of Education and Children’s Services. Payment to these programs was still made in January 2005.

Two programs remain eligible for State Government Special Education funding in 2006, namely the Children, Youth and Women’s Health Service — Child and Youth Health Access Assistant Program and Joint Sector Intensive and Crisis Support program.

The Access Assistant Program supports children with severe physical disability and/or complex health care needs in preschools and schools across the three education sectors in South Australia. Without this program many children would not be able to attend their neighbourhood school, but would need to stay in hospital. The South Australian government now wholly funds the program with approximately \$2,000,000 per annum.

MAC:SWD administers the Joint Sector Intensive and Crisis Support funding on behalf of the three education sectors in South Australia. This funding provides 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 \$40,000 was allocated to support this program in 2005.

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 Non-Government Centres Support funding to be allocated along with State Special Education funding. The Australian Government’s allocation for South Australia in 2005 was \$4,374,441. The Australian/State Government total amount allocated in 2005 was \$8,575,200. This included:

	\$
State Recurrent Grants	4,164,759
Australian Government	
Recurrent Grants	4,374,441
Capital Grants	36,000

The following table lists those organisations/programs that received recurrent grants in 2005:

- 11 non-government organisations offering preschool support and/or early intervention and/or school support programs
- the 3 non-government special schools
- the DECS Preschool Support Program
- the Child and Youth Health Access Assistant Program
- Department for Families and Communities’ Children, Youth and Family Services’ *Tutoring Program for Children in Residential Care* (CIRC)
- the Joint Sector Intensive and Crisis Support program.

Australian/State Government Special Education Recurrent Grants 2005

Organisation	Total \$	State \$	Commonwealth \$
Autism SA Early Intervention	239,608	0	239,608
Autism SA School Support	1,327,113	0	1,327,113
Novita Children's Services Early Intervention	228,134	0	228,134
Novita Children's Services School Support	727,435	0	727,435
Down Syndrome Early Intervention	135,814	0	135,814
Down Syndrome School Support	325,461	0	325,461
Cora Barclay Early Intervention	64,570	0	64,570
Cora Barclay School Support	165,611	0	165,611
Townsend House Early Intervention	111,227	0	111,227
Townsend House School Support	150,602	0	150,602
Guide Dogs Association	34,965	0	34,965
Miriam High Special Needs Centre Port Augusta	101,654	0	101,654
Inclusion SA Early Intervention	409,318	0	409,318
Early Links Early Intervention Mount Gambier	66,737	0	66,737
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	303,210	303,210	0
St Patrick's Special School	258,290	258,290	0
Suneden Special School	224,600	224,600	0
Child and Youth Health Access Assistant Program	2,150,000	2,150,000	0
DECS Preschool Support Program	1,188,659	1,188,659	0
Children, Youth and Family Services Children in Residential Care	36,192	0	36,192
Joint Sector Intensive and Crisis Support	40,000	40,000	0
Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities	215,000	0	215,000
Total Amount	8,539,200	4,164,759	4,374,441

Australian Government Capital Grant Allocations

Five per cent of the total Australian Government Non-Government Centres Support 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 2005.

Australian Government Non-Government Centres Support Capital Grants

2001	Autism Association of South Australia Inc	(project completed)	\$29,000
	Novita Children's Services Inc	(project completed)	\$72,000
	Down Syndrome Society of South Australia Inc	(project ongoing)	\$21,000
	Playgroup Association of South Australia Incorporated	(project completed)	\$17,988
	Total		\$139,988
2002	Townsend House Incorporated	(project ongoing)	\$165,000
	Total		\$165,000
2003	Autism Association of South Australia Inc	(project completed)	\$44,861
	Novita Children's Services Inc	(project completed)	\$112,350
	Total		\$157,211
2004	Novita Children's Services Inc	(project completed)	\$28,110
	Total		\$28,110
2005	Down Syndrome Society of South Australia Incorporated	(project ongoing)	\$36,000
	Total		\$36,000

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 (*Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004*) or the clauses contained in the Funding Agreement. 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. The number of students with disabilities eligible for support has increased steadily in the past six years, with an unprecedented increase of 13.8 per cent in 2004, mostly due to two new applicants receiving funding.

In 2005, a total of 1,058 children were supported through Early Intervention programs and 2,110 students received support through the School Support programs. A further 135 students were supported through CIRC Tutoring Programs, and 29 via crisis support. The Child and Youth Health Access Assistant Program provided support to 304 children and students with disabilities. A total of 3,636 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 are relevant to the three education sectors, i.e. State, Catholic and Independent preschools and schools. Project groups are formed for each project and members are chosen for their experience and expertise in the particular topic. Three projects were conducted in 2005 and, once approved by the Minister, published reports will be available on the Committee's Website. A summary of the projects is provided below.

Aboriginal Students with Disabilities – Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss

The first stage of the study was to gather information from families and professionals to determine the focus of the project and to establish relationships that would be fundamental to its success. As a result of the information gathered, it was agreed by the Project Group that the project should focus on the impact of Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss on the education and learning outcomes of Aboriginal children and students with disabilities, and how services could work more effectively to address this issue. It was agreed by the Project Group that the project's aims could be achieved by the:

- Investigation and recording of health and education initiatives established in metropolitan and regional centres in South Australia for Aboriginal children and students with disabilities with, or at risk of, Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss.
- Identification of information and approaches that would be appropriate for families, educators and health workers, to raise awareness about the short and long term effects of Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss on learning.

The methods of investigation employed for this project comprised case studies in four sites: Port Augusta, Ceduna, Murray Bridge and the northern suburbs of Adelaide. Data have been collected through interviews or 'yarns' with families as well as health and education professionals. In addition, a questionnaire was designed for Department of Education and Children's Services' District Hearing Impairment Coordinators, and their equivalents in the Catholic and Independent education sectors. The data collection phase was completed by mid December 2005.

Themes to emerge from the data include the following:

- a) Co-location of educational facilities appears to work well for Aboriginal families.
- b) Ear health programs are often reactive, fluid and ad hoc. However, there is evidence of collaboration between health and education.
- c) Otitis Media is often only associated with runny ears by families and education staff. There is little awareness of the hidden nature of the disease and hearing loss.
- d) There is little awareness of the effects of poor ear health amongst teachers, but more awareness amongst preschool teachers.
- e) Ear health programs are often strongest during the preschool years and taper off during primary and secondary schooling.
- f) There is little realisation initially by education staff that the problem may exist at their own sites.
- g) Raising awareness of ear health and its impact amongst families and teachers is necessary.
- h) Poor ear health needs to be addressed not in isolation, but in conjunction with other health and life issues.

A report on the findings of the research project is currently being written for the Minister for Education and Children's Services. The findings of the report will seek to inform the education sectors and the broader community of current practices, how to improve practices to improve learning outcomes and the schooling experience for Aboriginal children and students with disabilities.

Project Group Membership

Co-Chairpersons

Kerry Presser	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities
David Rathman	Executive Director, Aboriginal Education and Employment Strategies Unit

Members

Vicki Brown	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities
Mary Buckskin	Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia
Libby Burns	Association of Independent Schools of South Australia
Claire Cotton	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities
Sharon Duong	Catholic Education SA
Cheryl Grady	Department of Education and Children's Services
Susan Hine	Department of Education and Children's Services Anangu Education Service
Tanya Mills	Aboriginal Education and Employment Strategies Unit (Policy)
Kim Morey	Department of Health, Aboriginal Health Division
Linnett Sanchez	Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology Flinders University

Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities

Christel Butcher	Executive Officer
Fiona Snodgrass	Project Officer

Services for Children and Students with Asperger Syndrome – Quality Educational Practices Documented

The Ministerial Advisory Committee has been investigating quality educational practices for children and students with Asperger syndrome in South Australian schools.

The methods for investigation included focus group and individual interviews with parents of students with Asperger syndrome, the students with Asperger syndrome themselves, their peers and selected staff from schools where quality educational practices for this group of students is being demonstrated.

In addition, a group of young adults with Asperger syndrome who had already completed their secondary education were interviewed about their experiences at school. Representatives from the health and education sectors were also consulted regarding the interface between health and education to provide additional support for students with Asperger syndrome, particularly those who have mental health problems.

Nine schools from across the three education sectors were selected to participate in the interview process. A range of factors including the numbers of students with Asperger syndrome enrolled at the school, country or metropolitan location, age of student population and anecdotal evidence of quality educational practices were considered in the selection process. The schools that participated in this study were:

- Aberfoyle Park High School
- Kensington Centre
- Open Access College
- Paralowie R – 6 Junior School
- Quorn Area School
- St John's Grammar School
- St Paul's College
- Tatachilla Lutheran College
- Tenison Woods College (Mt Gambier)

Data collection was completed by mid November 2005. Approximately 190 people were consulted. A detailed report on the findings of this study is being prepared for the Minister's consideration. However, preliminary findings of the data collected indicate that quality educational practices for this cohort of students requires:

- A consistent and predictable approach without rigidity.
- Flexibility to accommodate the individual and fluctuating needs of students with Asperger syndrome.
- Recognition that friendships, social relationships, bullying and harassment represent some of the most difficult aspects of school life for students with Asperger syndrome.
- Recognition that social and relational learning for students with Asperger syndrome is equally as important as academic attainment.
- Specific strategies to enhance learning opportunities, which are specifically designed for individual student needs, for example visual prompts, tutorial support and designing the curriculum around students' specific interests.

A seminar on quality educational practices for students with Asperger syndrome was held in May 2006 in collaboration with Autism SA during Autism Awareness Week. Representatives from each of the participating schools presented aspects of their school's quality educational practices at this seminar. The Minister opened the seminar, which was attended by 142 participants.

Project Group Membership

Co-Chairpersons

Georgina Cattley	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities
Jon Martin	Chief Executive Officer, Autism SA

Members

Vanessa Alexander	Autism SA (subsequently TAFE SA)
Katharine Annear	Young Adult
Deborah Down	Catholic Education SA
Marie Hedley	Parent
Margaret Lynch	Department of Education and Children's Services
Nicole McDowell	Association of Independent Schools of South Australia
Tommy Philavong	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities
Jo Zeitz	Department of Disability Studies Flinders University

Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities

Christel Butcher	Executive Officer
Jo Shearer	Project Officer

Support for Children and Students with Disabilities – Information for Families, Educators and Care Providers

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 sought and has been updated by the Committee Secretariat in collaboration with the three education sectors, health and disability services providers, including:

- information specific to the three education sectors (State, Catholic and Independent schools)
- descriptions of relevant support services and associated organisations for children and students with disabilities.

The resource is aimed at families, educators and care providers and also includes information about support available for children with a disability in childcare services.

The resource has been presented to the Minister for her consideration.

4. Activities in 2005

Committee Leadership and Secretariat Staffing

After a year of change in 2004, the Committee consolidated its leadership and staffing during 2005. Ms Margaret Wallace continued as Chairperson, with Ms Mary Bambacas as Deputy Chairperson. The Secretariat's staffing remained stable, with Ms Jo Shearer and Ms Fiona Snodgrass now sharing the 1.0 FTE Project Officer position equally at 0.5 FTE.

Activities Identified as Part of the Review of the Committee

Strategic Plan

A *Strategic Plan 2004-2008* was developed during 2004 and identified two broad strategic directions. The first relates to funding allocations and the second to connections between MAC:SWD and other agencies and committees.

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.

The following points were suggested for consideration by Committee members:

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

1. Representation of Aboriginal Interests on the Committee

Ms Vicki Brown was appointed to the Committee at the beginning of 2005 to represent the interests of Aboriginal children and students with a disability. Ms Brown is an Aboriginal woman who works as Manager of Aboriginal Services (Disability Services Office, Department for Families and Communities).

2. Tenure of Standing Committee Members

The Committee continues to consist of 16 members from relevant interest groups. Three new members were appointed in 2005. It is anticipated that more current members will leave at the end of 2006 to be replaced by new representatives from their relevant interest groups. It is suggested that members will be replaced on a rolling basis every two to three years.

3. Funding Anomalies

During 2005 the Committee rectified historical funding anomalies.

After 2005, the DECS Preschool Support Program will no longer receive funding via the Committee, but State Government funding will be made directly available to DECS to continue support for children with disabilities in preschools.

The three non-government special schools received their last funding through MAC:SWD in 2005. From then onwards State Government funding will be allocated to them via the Non-Government Schools Secretariat.

4. Promotion and Dissemination of Information on Best Educational Practice

The Committee and project working parties have endeavoured to add an additional element to the reports written for the Minister at the completion of a project. As suggested by the Committee, practical aspects on best educational practice are included in the reports, so that practitioners in the field and the general community have access to this information.

As part of the project *Services for Children and Students with Asperger Syndrome — Quality Educational Practices Documented*, a seminar was organised in collaboration with Autism SA to promote quality educational practices to educators and families. At the seminar 79 per cent of participants were educators, and 21 per cent were made up of families of children and students with Asperger syndrome and staff of Autism SA. Feedback from participants indicated high satisfaction with the seminar, in particular highlighting the practical aspects, which can inform practices at their own school or at home.

5. Closer Collaboration with and Support for Grant Recipient Organisations

The Secretariat held a meeting with all Early Intervention grant recipients in March 2005 to provide them with information on the Committee's funding and new accountability processes required for Early Intervention programs. These processes for Early Intervention programs would bring them in line with those required for School Support programs. Further to written notification, it was reiterated that starting with the 2006 funding round, data collection and verification was now a requirement for both Early Intervention and School Support service provision. Participants were given the opportunity to voice any concerns they might have so that support could be provided by the Secretariat where necessary. As a result participants requested separate *Categories for Funding* forms for Early Intervention and School Support services.

The feasibility of collecting data for service provision over two terms rather than one was discussed and agreed to in principle. School Support services will also provide a view about data collection timing and timeframes. It was agreed that this would lead to more detailed information about actual service provision.

6. Further Initiatives Undertaken in 2005

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 Non-Government Centres Support allocation was proportionally divided into Early Intervention and School Support subtotals.

During visits by the Chairperson of the Committee and the Executive Officer, grant recipient organisations expressed a desire to consult with MAC:SWD on a regular basis to keep each other informed about emerging issues. Organisations 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. Regular meetings, such as the one mentioned above, will be arranged for grant recipient organisations.

Further to that, organisations were encouraged to submit applications for capital funding as the number of these applications had decreased, in part, due to a lack of awareness that applications may be lodged on an annual basis.

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 continue to be the priority for 2006. This will reflect the new Australian Government legislation for funding in the 2005 to 2008 quadrennium.

MAC:SWD continues to focus on accountability for services provided to children and students with disabilities. In 2005, for the first time, data about actual service provision in Early Intervention were recorded and verified by members of the Secretariat. This process had already been applied to services provided through School Support programs and will be further evolved in 2006.

Projects for 2006

Two projects for 2006 are outlined below as approved by the Minister:

Children and Students with Disabilities and Mental Health Problems

Members of the Committee expressed concern that many children and students with a disability present with mental health issues in increasing numbers and at an earlier age. Students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) fall into this category and very often have a dual diagnosis of ASD and mental health problems. In particular, research data suggest that at least 30 per cent of people with ASD have associated mental health problems. Currently 2,300 clients are registered with Autism SA, which would indicate that about 765 clients from Autism SA alone could be affected.

Most children and students with a disability and with mental health problems can be jointly supported through support services in schools and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). However, these students still seem to be amongst the most difficult to support, particularly in neighbourhood schools.

It is proposed to investigate what services are available to students across the three education sectors and what measures need to be taken to encourage early intervention programs to be developed and utilised at the primary school level.

The South Australian Government has acknowledged the importance of mental health by appointing a Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse. A joint initiative between the Minister for Education and Children's Services and the Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse will be considered to develop an early intervention strategy at primary school level.

Aboriginal Students with Disabilities – Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss: Information Strategy

Findings from the project *Aboriginal Students with Disabilities – Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss* undertaken in 2005 suggest that teachers and parents have insufficient awareness of the effects of Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss on the learning of students.

An information resource targeting parents and educators on the impact of Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss on students' educational outcomes will be developed. Poor ear health needs to be addressed not in isolation, but in conjunction with other health and life issues. Information materials should be developed in collaboration with members of the Aboriginal community and health professionals. In particular, parents should be provided with more information on the impact hearing loss has on language and literacy development, and thus on education in general.

During the 2005 project it became apparent that parents wanted more information presented to them face-to-face, rather than through literature alone. Regional information sessions, jointly presented by education and health workers in a culturally sensitive way, will be considered as part of the project.

Translating the proposed information pack for parents into Pitjantjatjara to support education workers on the APY Lands to raise awareness on this topic will also be considered.