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27 JUN 2012

Mr Philip R. Davis MP
Chairman
Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE 3002


Dear Mr Davis

Thank you for your letter regarding the Committee's Budget Estimates hearing for the Education Portfolio.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has prepared a response to the questions taken on notice at the hearing. Please find the response for the Education Portfolio enclosed (Attachment 1).

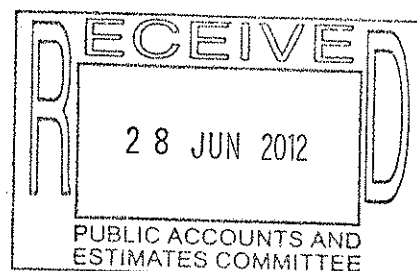
If you require further information, please contact Mr Colin Twisse, Executive Director, Executive and Ministerial Services Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, on 9637 3535, or by email: twisse.colin.c@edumail.vic.gov.au.

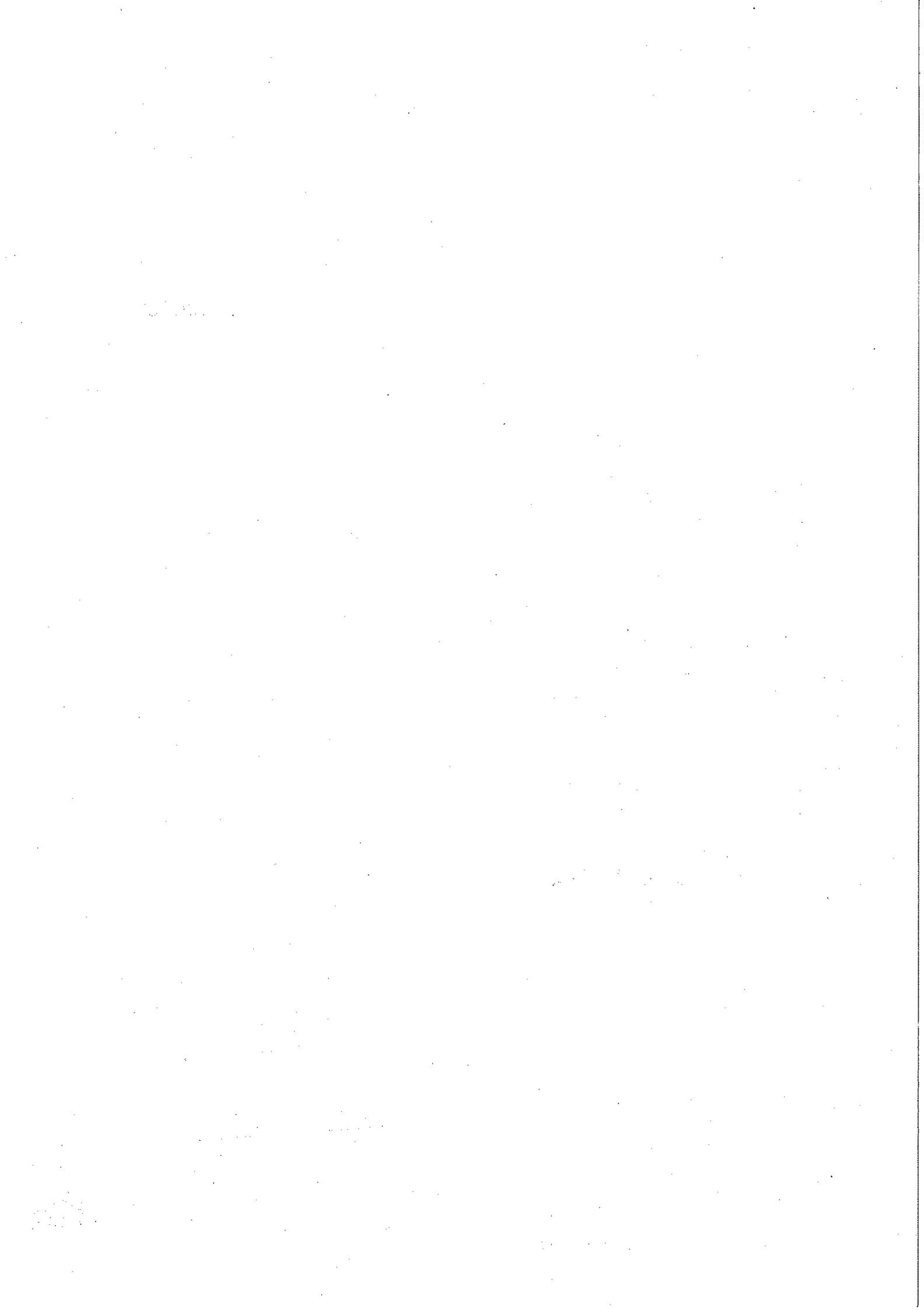
Yours sincerely



The Hon. Martin Dixon, MP
Minister for Education

Encl.





**ATTACHMENT: QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE AND
FURTHER INFORMATION AGREED TO BE
SUPPLIED AT THE HEARINGS**

EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

1. Please provide details of:
 - a. how the cluster-based model of student support services will operate; and
 - b. how much funding is provided to student support services in 2012-13 and the forward estimates.

(Page 12 of the portfolio transcript)

RESPONSE

The purpose of Student Support Services (SSS) is to assist children and young people facing a range of learning barriers to achieve their educational and developmental potential through the provision of a range of specialised support strategies at individual, group, school and network levels.

Student Support Services comprise a broad range of professionals including psychologists, guidance officers, speech pathologists, social workers and visiting teachers. Student Support Services officers work as part of an integrated health and wellbeing team within networks of schools, focusing on providing group based and individual support, workforce capacity building, and the provision of specialised services.

a. Governance Model

The governance model for SSS places responsibility for the management of SSS resources in networks of schools, providing direct governance and resource control to principals, whilst enabling schools to make economies of scale by pooling their SSS resources.

Key features of the model are:

- network principals, led by an Executive Chair and Executive Group, manage the SSS budget and workforce and set the policies and priorities for service delivery
- each network receives funding to support the Executive Chair with the coordination and administration of the service across schools
- Student Support Services officers provide service to the network of schools, with professional leadership and support provided by Stream Leaders at a regional level
- each region has a Regional Advice and Liaison Officer to support principals and Regional Directors with advice about Student Support Services.

Built into this governance model is a series of support mechanisms as follows:

- Each network has funding for SSS coordination and administration support for the Executive Chair to manage the personnel, budgets, operational issues and allocation of service to individual schools. Each network has the flexibility to employ officers for these roles or to use this funding for additional Student Support Services in schools and manage Student Support Services through the Executive Chair. The Executive Chair is ultimately responsible for the SSS management, administration and coordination arrangements for the network and will provide direction regarding the network priorities.
- Each region has funding for one regional SSS advisory and liaison position to support schools. This position will manage the Visiting Teacher Service, may oversee regional emergency recovery, liaise between the Early Childhood Intervention Services and SSS in schools, provide advice and support to Executive Chairs and SSS Coordinators as required, including deployment of the SSS Stream Leaders.
- Each region has funding (1.2 fulltime equivalent) to provide stream leadership for SSS – specifically in the areas of psychology, social work and speech pathology. This funding and any positions created through this funding, will support SSS officers with the provision of professional learning and mentoring to maintain a high quality and professional service to schools. Stream leadership for Visiting Teachers will continue to be arranged and supported through the region.

Through the governance model, principals will have greater flexibility to respond to local issues through autonomous decision making. The model offers schools increased transparency and accountability to meet the local needs of students within each network. Guiding principles for the governance of Student Support Services have been detailed in the SSS policy guidelines.

Each network is allocated a SSS budget which must be used to provide psychology, speech pathology, social work and related allied health professional services to support students with additional needs. The Visiting Teacher Service and its budget will be managed by regions.

Principals will be held accountable by the Executive Group and all other principals in the network for the management of Student Support Services and its budget and expenditure. Additionally, principals remain accountable to the Regional Director for their overall performance.

b. Student Support Services Funding

The Government provided a one-off transitional investment of \$4m for Student Support Services in 2012-13.

Funding allocations in 2012-13 and the forward estimates are as follows:

2012-13	2012-13 – 2015-16
\$62.8m	\$248.2m

