



Minister for Education, ~~Tourism~~

28-23056-D10/0743937

Dr J M Woollard MLA
Chairman
Education and Health Standing Committee
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Dr Woollard

Janet
Thank you for your letter regarding the Education and Health Standing Committee's report, *Healthy Child-Healthy State: Improving Western Australia's Child Health Screening Programs*.

The report outlined 37 recommendations. Please find attached a written response against the 11 recommendations for which the Department of Education has made an undertaking to progress. These recommendations are 1, 8, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 32, 35, 36 and 37.

The Director General and I will be meeting with the Education and Health Standing Committee on Wednesday, 16 March 2011, to further discuss the Department's responses to the Committee's report.

Thank you for your commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of Western Australian children.

Yours sincerely

Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Att.

17 FEB 2011

**THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S
PROGRESS REPORT AGAINST
RECOMMENDATIONS EMERGING FROM THE
EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING
COMMITTEE REPORT**

***Healthy Child-Healthy State: Improving Western
Australia's Child Health Screening Programs***

**APPENDIX 1:
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESPONSE TO THE EDUCATION AND
HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE**

Recommendation	Owner	Department of Education Response	Department of Education Actions or Comment
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>That the Department of Health and the Department of Education improve the usefulness of their websites, in particular the ease of use for parents seeking information on child health screening issues and programs.</p>	<p>DOH / DOE</p>	<p>Supported</p>	<p>A website and hard copy resources to support parents of young children in improving literacy and numeracy skills has been developed. The Department of Education has also completed a Parent Campaign that raised awareness of the resources. The strategy also supported schools to form partnerships with parents in their children's learning, especially in reading, writing and understanding mathematics.</p> <p>The Department also coordinated a range of initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Premier's Summer Reading Challenge 2009/10; • Kindergarten and Pre-primary campaign in 2009, that included a booklet for parents (<i>"Learning begins at home"</i>); • Kindergarten and Pre-primary/attendance campaign 2010, which included an information booklet for parents (<i>"Say hello to learning"</i>) and a reading booklet for parents of Indigenous children; and • A campaign coinciding with National Literacy and Numeracy Week that included fact sheets; an online blog for parents; statewide radio; advertising; and links to feature stories in School Matters.
			<p>All booklets have been put online, with hard copy booklets being widely distributed to schools.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>That the Department of Health review and compare Western Australia's current child health programs to the outcomes gained from overseas initiatives such as <i>Sure Start, Bright Futures and Healthy Child Manitoba</i> with a view to adapting and adopting those programs that bring together government, family and community stakeholders in well-integrated health and education processes</p>	<p>DOH</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>There has been significant activity in early childhood development with extensive work and coordination being undertaken by agencies.</p> <p>The Department of Education understands the importance of integrating educational services with other children's services and is actively working to achieve this wherever possible.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department is currently facilitating integrated children services collaborative work around extended service school models at Challis Early Childhood Education Centre and Challis Primary School. Links with relevant local community and support agencies have been established. • A range of multi-disciplinary models of integrated service delivery is being progressed through the establishment of five Children and Family Centres as part of the <i>National Partnership Agreement on</i>

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commencing at birth.			<p><i>Indigenous Early Childhood Development.</i> Four centres will be established in rural areas with high Aboriginal populations with one centre located in the metropolitan area. The five centres will be located in Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Kununurra, Roebourne, and the Swan region (location yet to be determined).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four Early Learning and Care Centres are being established on school sites in Karratha, Hedland, Darch and Mirrabooka. Two of the centres are being established in Pilbara mining towns where there is a high percentage of young families who have no family networks and limited social networks.
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>That the Government provide additional funds for the Department of Health to fully meet its planned introduction of child developmental screening tools at the key developmental ages of 3-4 months, 8 months, 18 months, 3 years and school entry.</p>	DOH	Noted	
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>That the Government provide additional funds to support the introduction of the foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) 4-Digit Diagnostic Code to Western Australia's child health screening program.</p>	DOH	Noted	<p><i>Schools Plus</i> funding administered by the Department of Education provides additional resources for children with an intellectual disability and a diagnosis of FASD. The 4-Digit Diagnostic Code will assist in determining the severity of FASD.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>The Department of Health should prepare a business case that would fund a six-monthly hearing test for all Aboriginal children in Western Australia.</p>	DOH	Noted	<p>The Department of Education is engaging in further discussions with the Department of Health to determine roles and responsibilities in the provision of six-monthly hearing tests for all Aboriginal children in public schools.</p> <p>Multi-disciplinary Ear Health Programs operate in all schools with high numbers of Aboriginal children. Reported benefits from these programs include improved identification and follow up of children at risk, improved access to specialist staff, increased collaboration between health workers and educators, and increased knowledge</p>

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			<p>of the importance of early hearing screening among educators and families. Reported physical health benefits to children include reduced ear infections, early detection of ear infections and improved hearing. Behavioural benefits have also been reported, such as an improved ability of children to remain focussed in the classroom.</p> <p>Aboriginal kindergartens operate in 28 schools around the State, providing early learning programs for three and four year old Aboriginal children. Hearing tests and health checks are routinely carried out on all children attending these kindergartens.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>Additional community migrant health nurses and greater access to child development and language services should be provided in those Western Australian communities with high concentrations of refugees and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) members.</p> <p>Children who are suspected of having language difficulties in Year 1 should be able to access Department of Health speech and language services. Government services should also be available to address the needs of CALD children with language difficulties detected beyond Year 1.</p>	DOH	Noted	<p>The Department of Education continues to provide direction and support for teachers of CaLD students through the provision of a range of programs and practical resources. In 2010 this includes the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Language Speaking Students (ALSS) program which supports schools to implement explicit English language and literacy teaching programs for Year 1 Aboriginal students; • provision of <i>the ESL/ESD Progress Map</i> for planning, monitoring and reporting students' English language and literacy progress; • provision of targeted professional learning opportunities, including <i>Teaching ESL students in K-Year 1</i> and <i>ESL and the Early Learner</i> courses; • development of explicit curriculum materials for students in their early stages of acquiring English as a second language; • trialling of pre-primary classes at two Intensive English Centres; and • development of the Tracks to Two-Way Learning (Tracks) train-the-trainer package, which has a focus on explicit language teaching using ESL/ESD pedagogies, delivered in a two-way fashion. <p>The Department provides professional learning that focuses on classroom strategies, resources and activities as well as issues related to misdiagnosis of second language/dialect learning progression as language difficulties.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>That the Government increase the funding for the torture and trauma counselling services for children and young people provided by the</p>	None listed	Noted	<p>The Department of Education continues to promote professional learning for awareness-raising for teachers in this area through ASeTTS and other non-government organisations.</p> <p>Department Officers are active members of the cross-agency Integrated Service Centre (ISC) working party which is seeking additional funding to enable the</p>

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Association for the Services of Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTs).			continuation and extension of ISC services.
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>That the Government review the operation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Health and Department of Education to address the shortcomings of Western Australia's child health screening programs identified by this Inquiry.</p>	DOH/DOE	Supported.	The MOU between the Department of Health and Department of Education for the delivery of school health services was reviewed in 2010. A new MOU was signed off by the respective Directors General in July 2010.
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>The evaluation of the School Entry Health Assessment Program undertaken by the Department of Health should focus on the effectiveness of identification, treatment and the evaluation of treatment programs, and compare these three components with similar programs undertaken in other jurisdictions.</p>	DOH	Noted	
<p>Recommendation 10</p> <p>As an urgent priority, the Government should increase the number of school nurses employed in the school health system and approve the proposed business case for additional school and child health nurses to be employed within the Department of Health's Child Development Services.</p>	DOH	Noted	

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<p>Recommendation 11</p> <p>That the Department of Health ensure the new Child Development Information System (CDIS) provides a management tool to assist in monitoring the numbers, employment status of, and future demand for, the allied health professionals it employs.</p>	DOH	Noted	
<p>Recommendation 12</p> <p>In light of WA's increasing birth rates and long-standing shortages of school and child health nurses, the Department of Health (DOH) should urgently find and adopt other options that might be used to carry out child health screening programs. In particular DOH should investigate moving some screening programs (such as speech and language) from pre-primary and primary school years to an earlier age and have simpler tests undertaken by appropriately trained childcare staff.</p>	DOH	Noted	<p>The Department of Education's Statewide Speech and Language Service does not provide diagnostic or therapy services in the area of speech and language for individual children. This remains the responsibility of the Department of Health. Teachers are provided with resources and linked to appropriate services to support children from Kindergarten to Year 12.</p>
<p>Recommendation 13</p> <p>That the Auditor General undertake a comprehensive review of the Department of Health, Child Development Service and School Health Services and table a report to Parliament. This report should detail figures and</p>	Auditor General's Office	Noted	

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<p>timeframes for all children awaiting services for early assessment and early intervention for health related issues and make recommendations on the numbers of additional personnel across the health professions that are required to tackle the current backlog and cater for the increased population in Western Australia.</p>			
<p>Recommendation 14</p> <p>That the Department of Health review experiences in other jurisdictions with a view to adopting strategies aimed at reducing waiting lists and times for children requiring services in respect of early assessment and early intervention for health-related issues.</p>	DOH	Noted	
<p>Recommendation 15</p> <p>Given the importance of improving data sharing within Western Australia's child health system, the Minister for Health should provide the Parliament with regular reports on the status of the roll-out of the Child Development Information System, advising of any major alteration to the completion date and need for additional funding.</p>	DOH	Noted	
<p>Recommendation 16</p> <p>The Department of</p>	DOH	Noted	

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<p>Health should publish the Child Development Information System (CDIS) data on waiting lists in a way that assists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) parents making decisions about their child's health; and ii) the professional allied health staff providing child health services in Western Australia. 			
<p>Recommendation 17</p> <p>That the Government ensure that WA's future health and privacy legislation allows for the sharing between government agencies of data gathered by the Child Development Information System (CDIS), when it has been fully implemented.</p>	DOH	Noted	<p>Current Commonwealth and State legislative requirements precludes sharing of some data across agencies. The Department of Education would welcome the opportunity to participate in activities that comply with legislation and share data so that better outcomes can be achieved for children and their communities.</p> <p>The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI), which gives a population level measure of young children's development, provides data that may inform child professionals of potential health issues within a population.</p>
<p>Recommendation 18</p> <p>That the Department of Health ensure that the final version of the presentation of the clinical pathways is prepared in a way that makes them readily comprehensible to parents.</p>	DOH	Noted	<p>The Department of Education has partnered with the Mental Health Commission of Western Australia to improve parent connections to the range of clinical pathways.</p> <p>As the lead agency, the Mental Health Commission has implemented a range of new services for children, young people and their families.</p> <p>The clinical model for these new services has been developed to ensure a consistent approach to diagnosis and treatment of complex attention difficulties.</p> <p>The Complex Attention and Hyperactivity Disorders Service (CAHDS) centres that link with Western Australian Country Health Service Districts, with the aim of ensuring consistent state-wide service provision, have been established in Joondalup and Murdoch.</p> <p>The two services include multidisciplinary teams consisting of professional staff including: consultant psychiatrist, paediatrician, neuropsychologist, senior occupational therapist, senior speech pathologist, senior</p>

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			<p>social worker, and research psychologist.</p> <p>In supporting the partnership, the Department is funding a full-time Senior School Psychologist position at both the Joondalup and Murdoch Complex Attention Hyperactivity Disorder Services Centres.</p>
<p>Recommendation 19</p> <p>That the Department of Health ensure that data on child health outcomes and resource shortfalls in Western Australia produced from the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) is integrated with other data it collects, such as that held within the Child Development Information System.</p>	DOH	Noted	<p>Current Commonwealth and State legislation restricts the level of access to AEDI data and data linkages, especially in relation to access to individual student and school information.</p> <p>The Department of Education is working with other agencies to analyse the AEDI data to look at the way services are delivered to improve child development. Results from the AEDI, together with other demographic data, will enable communities and governments to pinpoint the types of services and resources needed to better support young children and their families. The AEDI does not provide data on resource shortfalls.</p>
<p>Recommendation 20</p> <p>That the Government provide additional funds of approximately \$10 million for the Department of Health to implement a universal neonatal hearing screening program in Western Australia by 2013.</p>	DOH	Noted	<p>The majority of children who are deaf or hard of hearing are identified in the first two years of life and are supported by the Western Australian Institute for Deaf Education.</p> <p>Approximately 70 per cent of Aboriginal children have an otitis media hearing loss and it is this group of children who remain undiagnosed and/or receive limited support.</p> <p>The National <i>Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy</i> includes a range of initiatives to address learning difficulties arising from conductive hearing loss among Aboriginal children.</p>
<p>Recommendation 21</p> <p>That the Department of Health assess the ability of midwives, Child Health Nurses and maternity nurses to be trained to carry out the greater number of neonatal hearing screening tests that will be required under the new universal testing scheme being</p>	DOH	Noted	

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implemented in Western Australia.			
<p>Recommendation 22</p> <p>The Child Development Information System (CDIS) project should be urgently expanded so that data on the screening programs delivered to Indigenous children, especially hearing screening, can be gathered across the State.</p>	DOH	Noted	
<p>Recommendation 23</p> <p>That the Department of Health review its decision to remove the vision screening test for three-year-olds, as such a test would give affected children a better chance of receiving remedial treatment prior to their commencing school.</p>	DOH	Noted	
<p>Recommendation 24</p> <p>That the Department of Health and Department of Education develop greater collaboration between service providers to review the possibility of multi-disciplinary teams, consisting of government and non-government organisations, to service the vision needs of children in rural and remote areas.</p>	DOH	Noted	<p>The Department of Education and the Department of Health are progressing the establishment of four Children and Family Centres in remote locations that will provide access to quality early childhood education, care, health and family services through the delivery and integration of a range of services. The nature of services provided at each centre will depend upon the needs identified during community consultation and service delivery organisations in the community. Vision screening will be included in the range of early intervention health services. Vision screening will be undertaken on at-risk children.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 25</p> <p>That the Government give a high priority to provide additional staff and other resources to address the current inadequacies in Western Australia's speech and language services.</p>	DOH	Supported	<p>The Department of Education employs speech and language consultants to inform educational plans. There has been an increasing number of schools accessing support to address the needs of students with speech and language impairments. The Department is currently undertaking an internal review of all statewide specialist services including the Statewide Speech and Language Service.</p>
<p>Recommendation 26</p> <p>That the Department of Health and the Department of Education develop a joint business case for government on the introduction of a standardised speech and language screening tool, such as <i>MELS</i> or <i>Catch Them Before They Fall</i>, to be used at pre-primary level throughout Western Australia.</p>	DOH	Noted	<p>The On Entry Assessment tool provides valuable data on the literacy and numeracy skills of all pre-primary aged children in public schools. The diagnostic data will identify those children who are at educational risk. The tool was trialled in 50 schools in 2010 and is now fully operational in all schools. This information, together with the information on children's social and emotional development provided through the AEDI will provide a more comprehensive picture on how we can collectively support children's learning and development.</p>
<p>Recommendation 27</p> <p>That the Department of Health undertake a review of dental health services offered in rural and remote regions of Western Australia and report to the Ministers for Health and Indigenous Affairs on the dental health of children in regional and remote regions.</p>	DOH	Noted	
<p>Recommendation 28</p> <p>The Department of Health should develop a business case for government on a formal evaluation of programs to assist children entering school, such as <i>LEAF</i> and <i>A Smart Start</i>.</p>	DOH	Noted	<p>The Linking Education and Families (LEAF) program has operated since 2007 as a pilot program in six schools in Bunbury. While the Department of Education acknowledges the benefits of the program such as improved home-to-school transition for children entering school and early identification of children at educational risk, it is currently not in the remit of the Department under the <i>School Education Act 1999</i> to provide programs for children prior to kindergarten age.</p>

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			<p>In partnership with the Department of Health, the Department of Education offers a <i>Positive Parenting Program</i> (Triple P) to parents of children aged from three to five years old. The \$1.47 million evidence-based program which provides a road-map for positive parenting is being delivered by school psychologists and school nurses in metropolitan and rural schools.</p> <p>The Department of Education is allocating \$450 000 per year, over five years (2009-2014), to the Department for Communities to conduct the <i>Best Start Program</i> at three school sites in Western Australia. The project aims to improve school readiness of young Aboriginal children by increasing the participation by children and their families in early childhood learning and language activities.</p> <p>The <i>Better Beginnings Program</i> is a Commonwealth Government initiative funded jointly by the State Library and Rio Tinto Future Fund Board and supported by the Department of Education. The program, which delivers early literacy resources, targets 8 750 four and five year olds in selected remote, regional and metropolitan communities.</p>
<p>Recommendation 29</p> <p>That the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Education (DoE) ensure that resources from Federal health initiatives in the area of early child health be fully utilised and integrated into current services in Western Australia. DOH and DET should include information in their annual reports on what Federal funds were available, have been applied for, accessed, and how the funds were utilised.</p>	DOH/DOE/ DSC	Noted	<p>The Department of Education and the Department of Health are jointly progressing improved integration of services for young children and their families through the Commonwealth Children and Family Centres initiative. The Department of Education reports biannually to the Commonwealth Government on how funds are expended.</p>
<p>Recommendation 30</p> <p>That the Department of Education, the Department of Health and the Disability Services Commission</p>	DOH/DOE/ DSC	Noted	

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<p>formalise their work on improving the health of Western Australian children by establishing an across-government State-wide approach to a common child health and development strategy, including all screening programs.</p>			
<p>Recommendation 31 In her role promoting public awareness of matters relating to the wellbeing of children and young people, the Commissioner for Children and Young People should annually maintain a child health identification and treatment register which collects and reports data from the Department of Health on the number of children who have been identified as needing treatment for health problems, and those who have been unable to receive treatment.</p>	<p>Commissioner for Children and Young People</p>	<p>Noted</p>	
<p>Recommendation 32 That the Government continue to pursue the benefits of having one Minister with portfolio responsibility for early childhood education and development.</p>	<p>DOH</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>The Western Australia Government has given priority to improving the quality and integration of early childhood development and learning by establishing a dedicated Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning. Ministerial responsibility for the early childhood portfolio resides with the Hon Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 33</p> <p>The Government should ensure that any new Public Health Act address the identification, prevention, treatment and evaluation of contemporary and emerging child health issues.</p>	DOH	Supported	
<p>Recommendation 34</p> <p>The number of school health nurses, community child health nurses and allied health professionals employed within Western Australia's child health services should be urgently increased as per the business cases developed by the Department of Health. The new staff required are 126 full-time-equivalent (FTE) in the Child Development Services, 105 FTE Community Child Health Nurses and 135 FTE for school nurses.</p>	DOH	Supported.	<p>The Department of Education highly values the services provided by School nurses. Additional school nurses would be welcomed.</p> <p>The MOU between the Department of Health and Department of Education for the delivery of school health services was reviewed in 2010 and a new MOU was signed off by the respective Directors General in July 2010.</p>
<p>Recommendation 35</p> <p>That the Government conduct a review to assess what early childhood services can be transferred to, and resourced within, the Department of Education and Training.</p>	DOH	Supported.	<p>The Minister for Education has commissioned the "Review of Educational Practice in Kindergarten, Pre-primary and Year 1 Provision in Western Australia: Synthesis of Findings" by Professor Collette Tayler, Chair, Early Childhood Education and Care at the University of Melbourne.¹</p> <p>This review identifies a series of local and system-level drivers that are required to deliver best practice curriculum, pedagogy and assessment across Early Years provision in Western Australia, and, ultimately, to improve educational outcomes for all children. The final report of the review was provided to Government in 2010.</p>

¹ http://www.det.wa.edu.au/education/ece/docs/KP1_Synthesis_Paper_Final_010111.PDF

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			The Department of Education, furthermore, continuously assesses how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services it provides.
<p>Recommendation 36</p> <p>That both the Department of Education and the Department of Health report separately their allocations for school and early childhood health programs (including screening) in their annual budgets. This should show costs for screening, costs for treatment and waiting times for each program by age group.</p>	DOH / DOE	<p>Conditionally Supported by DOH</p> <p>Not supported by DOE</p>	<p>The Department of Education currently contributes \$6 million per year to support the delivery of School Health Services by school/community nurses.</p> <p>Once funding has been transferred to the Department of Health the responsibility for the reallocation and reporting of the funding rests with the Department of Health.</p> <p>Given the allocative mechanisms are owned by the Department of Health, the Department of Education does not have the capacity to report on the requirements of the recommendation.</p> <p>Department expenditure on School Health Services is noted in the Department's Annual Report.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 37</p> <p>The Department of Education should adopt evidence-based language and literacy teaching for use in Western Australian schools to mandate the increased use of phonemic awareness (phonics) in the pre-primary and primary curricula.</p>	DOE	Endorsed	<p>Early in 2010 the Department of Education enhanced the online K-3 explicit literacy resources. The refinements strengthen the direction and advice for staff and allowed for increased accessibility. These resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten - Words, Sounds and Letters; • Pre-primary and Year 1 - Phonics and Phonological Awareness for Reading and Spelling; and • Year 2/3 – Spelling and Word Study. <p>If necessary these resources will be further modified to align with the final version of the Australian Curriculum.</p> <p>The Department continues to promote the <i>First Steps</i> materials through ongoing professional learning and the facilitation of Train the Trainer workshops for school-based staff.</p> <p>The use of the explicit literacy resources for K, P/1 and 2/3, in conjunction with <i>First Steps</i> Reading and Writing resources, is incorporated into professional learning forums for classroom teachers through the Vacation School program, Literacy Specialist Teacher training and <i>First Steps</i> workshops.</p> <p>Literacy E-notes will be developed to complement the current suite of online resources. They will link research, system requirements and resources, and provide practical advice for teachers to assist with classroom-based implementation of different instructional strategies.</p> <p>The Aboriginal Literacy Strategy is based on the work by Hill and Crevola (1999) and takes a scaffolded approach to English language and literacy learning. The components of the session include evidenced-based planning (using monitoring tools such as the <i>ESL/ESD Progress Map</i>), culturally and linguistically appropriate text-selection and explicit ESL/ESD language instruction.</p> <p>A range of practical supports are being implemented by the Aboriginal Literacy team, including the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IBM KidSmart project, which integrates ICT into early childhood language and literacy curriculum; • ALSS handbook, which provides practical examples of how to incorporate explicit English language and literacy teaching into the learning program; • Tracks to Two-Way Learning (as described above); and • ESL/ESD Work Sample Project that involves the collection of ESL/ESD students' work to assist teachers in making consistent assessments.