



Boost for Aboriginal Literacy

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Chair of the NSW Public Accounts Committee (PAC), Jonathan O’Dea has tabled a report in Parliament, which should help boost literacy standards for young Aborigines.

In 2013 there were 49,000 students identifying themselves as Aboriginal. As a group, the students returned lower literacy levels.

The previous NSW State Plan revealed Aboriginal students were 19 months behind in literacy by Year 3 and more than three years behind by Year 5.

An August 2012 Auditor-General report then found there had been ‘no significant improvement’ in Aboriginal literacy over the previous decade.

As part of its inquiry, the Committee visited schools in Broken Hill, Wilcannia and Menindee. It heard directly from teaching staff about the work they are doing to improve Aboriginal literacy.

The NSW PAC has made six recommendations in its report to the Parliament.

Mr O’Dea said, “Closing the gap in literacy outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students is essential to addressing Aboriginal disadvantage in the long-term.

“The PAC considers more must be done to improve the identification, monitoring and assessment of students in need of assistance.”

The Committee recommends the Department of Education and Communities, as a matter of priority, implements its business intelligence tool to improve monitoring of students’ progress and that the Department routinely evaluates efforts to promote greater involvement of Aboriginal parents and the local Aboriginal community.

Other recommendations include the development of Personal Learning Plans for Aboriginal students and that the new Deputy Ombudsman be given powers to investigate all education initiatives designed to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

**Media Contact: Mr Jonathan O’Dea MP, NSW Public Accounts Committee Chair
Phone: 0418 241 500**