Evaluation of the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) program

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National Curriculum Branch

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Executive Summary

The Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) has positively contributed to the teaching and learning of Civics and Citizenship. PACER seeks to meet the aims of the *2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians,* including that all Australian school students gain the knowledge and skills that underpin effective participation in society and employment, to become successful learners, be confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. PACER aims to assist students to achieve those aims through its support for excursions to Australia's national capital and visits to nationally significant civic institutions.

The PACER program was introduced in July 2006 replacing two predecessor programs, the Education Travel Rebate (ETR) and the Citizenship Visits Program (CVP).

Purpose and scope of PACER evaluation

The purpose of the PACER evaluation was to review the appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and governance of the program and to identify opportunities for improving its operation. It was not aimed at assessing the validity of the program compared to other civics and citizenship education programs.

The PACER evaluation has been conducted within DEEWR by the National Curriculum Branch within the Schools Cluster under the guidance of DEEWR's Education Evaluation team. Input and advice was provided by members of the PACER Advisory Committee which includes representatives of the institutions students visit in Canberra, as well as the ACT Government and the National Capital Authority.

The results of the evaluation will inform the future management of the program, providing an evidence base for possible changes to make the program more effective. This report is for the information of relevant decision makers and those directly involved in the delivery of PACER. It has not been prepared for publication.

Overview of PACER and its administration

PACER provides a financial subsidy to eligible schools for students in Years 4 to 12 travelling more than 150 kilometres to Canberra as part of a school civics and citizenship education excursion. The rebate varies depending on the distance travelled, starting at $20 per student travelling and increasing up to $260 per student for those travelling more than 4,000 kilometres.

The National Capital Attractions Association (NCAA) has provided administration and promotion services for the PACER program through its project team, the National Capital Educational Tourism Project (NCETP), since the program's commencement.

The PACER program is ongoing and has roughly $4 million per annum, indexed annually, allocated under the Quality Outcomes Program appropriation.

Funding for PACER administration services and rebate payments since the program was introduced is set out in the table below. It shows the payments for outsourced service delivery in the year payments were made and rebate payments to schools based on the year the payment was accrued (ie the year the travel was undertaken). The table does not include costs associated with the development and dissemination of the PACER education resource ($262 000 paid over

two financial years). Consequently, the total amount will not match the allocation shown in the Portfolio Budget Statement. To support the high number of eligible PACER applications received, funding additional to the original allocation was provided in 2007–08, 2008–09 and 2009–10 and is included in the figures provided.

Year	Administration funding (ex-GST)	Rebate payments	Total
2006-2007	$175,000	$3,203,465	$3,378,465
2007-2008	$191,000	$3,678,580	$3,869,580
2008-2009	$202,000	$3,884,350	$4,086,350
2009-2010	$235,000	$4,496,600	$4,731,600

Table 1: PACER funding 2006-07 to 2012-13

Demand for PACER has increased over time and exceeded the available funding each financial year since 2007–08. From 2007–08 to 2009–10, supplementary funding was made available to ensure that no school eligible for the PACER rebate missed out. In 2010–11, Budget Rules prevented the program being topped up in this way (decision of 28 February 2011).

With demand consistently and increasingly exceeding available funding, it may be appropriate to revise the PACER eligibility criteria and/or rebate rates to better balance program demand and funding.

Findings and recommendations

The terms of reference for the evaluation assessed the program's appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and governance.

Appropriateness

With respect to the appropriateness of the PACER program, the evaluation found that:

- The PACER program is consistent with the Australian Government's commitment to students to become active and informed citizens as set out in the 2008 *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians.*
- While the availability of PACER influences many schools to visit Canberra, it is not possible to isolate the impact of PACER on a school's decision to travel.
- Higher travel costs have eroded the value of PACER since it was introduced.
- Some schools, particularly those from low SES regions, would not undertake the excursion without PACER.
- Some students would not be able to participate in an excursion to Canberra without PACER.
- Requiring a unit of work or learning sequence provides assurance that the excursion is educationally valid and efforts are made by teachers and schools to maximise the educational benefits of the excursion.
- Visits to Parliament House, the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, the National Electoral Education Centre and the Australian War Memorial are highly valued by teachers and provide excellent civics and citizenship education experiences for students.
- A visit to Parliament House and, where possible, participation in a Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) program is a central component of a civics and citizenship education visit to the national capital.

- Institutions such as the High Court of Australia, the National Archives of Australia, the National Portrait Gallery, Government House, the National Gallery of Australia and the National Museum of Australia also offer excellent civics and citizenship education programs.
- The requirement for schools to apply prior to travelling ensures fairness and efficiency in administering the PACER to schools.
- The requirements set out in the guidelines are fair, allow the program to be administered equitably and strongly encourage good educational outcomes. As such, they are appropriate, educationally valid and justifiable.
- To better balance demand with available funding it will be necessary to increase funding for the program or consider options for redesigning the program.
- The evaluation recommended that:
- the aim of the PACER program be clearly articulated in the Guidelines
- the PACER guidelines be reviewed to align with the Australian Curriculum for Civics and Citizenship Education when it is finalised
- consideration be given to revise eligibility criteria to ensure that PACER assists those least likely to undertake and excursion in the absence of a rebate
- the PACER guidelines be amended to reflect that learning can take place before or after the excursion
- the PACER guidelines be amended so that students who have participated in a PEO program but have been unable to also undertake a guided tour in Parliament House, are eligible for the rebate
- the guidelines be made more explicit in relation to the alternate institutions which schools can access when unable to book into the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House and the National Electoral Education Centre provided students participate in education programs at these institutions
- a process be established whereby other institutions can be considered for inclusion in the PACER guidelines if they can demonstrate a quality civics and citizenship education program
- PACER continue to be paid only to the primary education provider for students
- the requirement for schools to apply for PACER prior to travelling remains in the guidelines. Communication to schools regarding PACER should continue to remind schools about this requirement
- the current requirements for approving PACER applications as set out in the PACER guidelines be retained
- the requirement to inform the school community about receiving the PACER rebate be retained
- possible options for supplementing funding or, alternately, redesigning the PACER eligibility criteria and associated guidelines be investigated in order to rebalance the level of eligible demand with the available funding.

Effectiveness

With respect to the effectiveness of the PACER program, the evaluation found that:

- PACER has supported its target number of schools since the program was introduced with demand for the rebate steadily increasing over time.

- The number of schools receiving PACER is not a useful or meaningful measure.
- While PACER assists schools from all states, locations and sectors across Australia to visit the national capital, utilisation is uneven across the states, geographical locations and sectors.
- The value of PACER in reducing the cost of travel (excluding all other costs of an excursion) is greater for schools located closer to Canberra.

- The existing eight zones are a defensible and manageable, but necessarily imperfect, way to determine the rebate.
- The excursion to Canberra is regarded highly by teachers. There is a high level of satisfaction with the civics and citizenship learning experiences their students gain on an excursion to Canberra.

The evaluation recommended that:

- in any changes to eligibility, consideration be given to prioritising those travelling greater distance
- the rate of rebate be based on the road distance from the school to Canberra regardless of how travel is undertaken, unless otherwise agreed by the Department on a case by case basis.

Efficiency

With respect to the efficiency of the PACER program, the evaluation found that:

- The cost of administering PACER is considered reasonable given the necessarily intensive nature of administration.
- An excursion to Canberra provides experiences which generally result in increased student engagement, interest and motivation and cannot be replicated.
- Most teachers involved in excursions which received PACER in 2009 were satisfied with the support they received from the NCETP and the payment of the rebate to their school.
- Ongoing efforts are required to ensure all schools know about the requirements for PACER including the need to apply before travelling.

Governance

With respect to the governance of the PACER program, the evaluation found that:

- While most schools planning a visit to Canberra know about PACER, a range of communications covering the availability of the rebate and the program requirements, need to be ongoing.
- The PACER processes are implemented fairly and consistently. Schools are well supported through communication by email, phone and mail.

The evaluation recommended that:

- that the layout and content of the PACER guidelines and application form be reviewed with a view to making to them simpler and the form easier to complete
- That processes for administering PACER be reviewed regularly and modified as required.

Terms of Reference and structure of report

The findings and recommendations of the evaluation are presented against each of the 11 Terms of Reference[1]. The terms of reference were framed around the dimensions of appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and governance and presented as the following set of questions:

Appropriateness

1) To what extent is this Program consistent with current Australian Government priorities?
2) To what extent does the PACER affect whether or not schools visit Canberra as part of students' civics and citizenship education?
3) Are the requirements set out in the PACER guidelines appropriate, educationally valid and justifiable?

Effectiveness

4) Are we supporting our target number of schools?
5) Are the rebate zones as set out in the guidelines appropriate (ie do they make the cost of travel more equitable) or are there alternate zones and/ or rebate amounts which should be considered?
6) Do the expected and actual learning experiences from a subsidised excursion to the national capital meet the objectives of the PACER program?

Efficiency

7) What is the ratio of administration costs to rebate payments?
8) In relation to cost per student, does the education outcome represent good value for money?
9) What is the level of satisfaction from schools with the delivery of PACER?

Governance

10) Do stakeholders and potential recipients know about the PACER program and how to access it?
11) Could the process of administering PACER be improved?

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation included four key components:

- an online survey of teachers whose school received PACER in respect of an excursion in 2009;
- data from a University of Canberra survey of all Australian schools conducted in 2010;
- the views of an external civics and citizenship expert; and

[1] The Terms of Reference were developed with assistance from the Department's Education Evaluation section and input from the PACER Evaluation Sub-Committee.

- research and analysis of existing data about the program, information from key stakeholders, unpublished surveys and relevant published literature.

Online survey of teachers

An online survey targeted teachers or other school staff from the 1,817 schools which received PACER for an excursion in the 2009 calendar year. The questions covered:

- demographic information about the school;
- information about the excursion including:
    - o - the year level/s of students who participated in the excursion; and
    - o - both the learning objectives and learning outcomes of the excursion; and
- information about PACER and the application process.

In accordance with Australian Government requirements, approval for the survey was sought and obtained from the Statistical Clearing House. The survey had a 40 per cent response rate, with the respondent group generally representative of all sectors and states. Raw data from the survey was tallied and free text fields were analysed. Indicative comments from the survey are included in this report. The questions are at **Appendix 1**.

Data from the University of Canberra survey

At the time the PACER evaluation was initially being considered, an opportunity arose for the Department to support a project being conducted by Ms Naomi Dale, a University of Canberra PhD student, who was investigating the factors which influence schools to make decisions about destinations for overnight excursions. Because Ms Dale was targeting all Australian schools, the Department decided to include two questions seeking information about awareness of the PACER program. A copy of the questions about PACER asked in this survey are at **Appendix 2**.

Input from a civics and citizenship education expert

It was considered important to have the views of an external independent expert in civics and citizenship education to comment on:

- the extent the PACER program requirements support students' civics and citizenship education, including through programs offered by national civics and cultural institutions which schools must visit in order to receive PACER as well as those institutions which are not mandatory to visit; and
- whether the same civics and citizenship outcomes could be achieved in different ways.

The Australian Curriculum Studies Association was contracted to provide an independent expert report to the Department on these two matters.

Desk-top research and analysis

A significant amount of data about usage of the PACER program has been collected since the program was introduced. This was collated, organised and analysed in-house. In addition, unpublished surveys on educational tourism to Canberra provided information about factors which affect school excursions. A small amount of literature relating to the value of school excursions and the issues which affect excursions was also gathered and reviewed.

Input was also provided by key stakeholders including representatives from each of the institutions students visit under the PACER program and the NCETP.

Appropriateness

ToR1: To what extent is this program consistent with current Australian Government priorities?

One of the goals of *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*, signed by all education ministers in 1999, was that when students leave schools, they should be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life. To achieve that goal, the Government committed significant financial support to the *Discovering Democracy* program, under which an extensive range of civics an citizenship education resources were developed and made available to all Australian schools. From 2004 ongoing support through a national civics and citizenship education program was provided to maintain the momentum, focus and priority for civics and citizenship education.

The PACER program was introduced in this context in 2006, combining two existing programs which supported civics and citizenship education, with a particular focus on parliamentary education.

In the current environment, Goal 2 of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for young Australians*, issued by all ministers of education in December 2008, includes the aim that 'all young Australian become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens'. Amongst other things, it notes that active and informed citizens

> … have an understanding of Australia's system of government, history and culture, … are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life … work for the common good … [and] are responsible global and local citizens.[2]

As part of the commitment to action, the Declaration notes that:

> the curriculum will support students to relate well to others and foster an understanding of Australian society, citizenship and national values, including through the study of civics and citizenship.

Under the identified learning areas listed in the Declaration, civics and citizenship is listed as an element of Humanities and social sciences (which also includes history, geography, economics and business).

At its April 2010 meeting, the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) agreed to the development of a number of learning areas including civics and citizenship education as part of phase three of the Australian Curriculum development process.[3] The Australian Curriculum is being developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). The teaching and learning of civics and citizenship will also be supported by the development of the *Australian Curriculum: History* which was endorsed by all

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[2] Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians available at www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf

[3] ACARA information from their website (www.acara.gov.au viewed on 1 June 2010)

education ministers in December 2010 and by the Australian Curriculum in geography which is part of a second phase of ACARA's work.

The Australian Government's support for school excursions to Canberra under the PACER program occurs within this policy environment.

The PACER guidelines include the following statement as the program objective:

> The PACER program encourages students' on-site learning about national democratic, historical and cultural institutions. The program will benefit students living further than 150 kilometres from Canberra.

The guidelines also set out the tiered structure of the rebate, specify the institutions which students must visit and note that the excursion must be connected to relevant civics and citizenship education class work. Through these requirements, it is clear the program is about supporting travel costs to visit specific institutions as part of students' civics and citizenship education. These purposes of the program should be explicitly stated in the program aim.

Furthermore, the term 'on-site learning' reflects the view of the institutions which the students visit, rather than that of the classroom teacher and students for whom the excursion is an off-site learning experience.

By providing a financial subsidy to reduce the cost of travel to Canberra, PACER aims to improve students' knowledge of, and engagement with, civics and citizenship education through visiting national civics institutions such as Parliament House and participating in education programs where possible.

The PACER guidelines require the excursions to be embedded in a framework of relevant class work ensuring maximum educational benefit will be achieved from the excursion. The guidelines also require visits to specific institutions in Canberra:

visits to Parliament House, the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House and the National Electoral Education Centre support students' understanding of our democratic framework and how it has changed over time;
visits to the Australian War Memorial support students' understanding about key aspects of Australian history, responsible global and local citizenship and the importance of working for the common good.

Finding: The PACER program is consistent with the Australian Government's commitment to students to become active and informed citizens as set out in the 2008 *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*.

Recommendation: That the aim of the PACER program be clearly articulated in the Guidelines.

Recommendation: That the PACER guidelines be reviewed to align with the Australian Curriculum for Civics and Citizenship Education when it is finalised.

ToR2: To what extent does the PACER affect whether or not schools visit Canberra as part of students' civics and citizenship education?

Numbers of interstate student visitors to Canberra

Unpublished research conducted by Brent Ritchie and Sue Uzabeaga and finalised in 2008, draws on data from a number of sources including the institutions which students visit, accommodation venues and travel providers to estimate the number. Based on their research over a number of years, the 2008 report includes the following indicative number of all student visitors to Canberra from 2001–2007.[4]

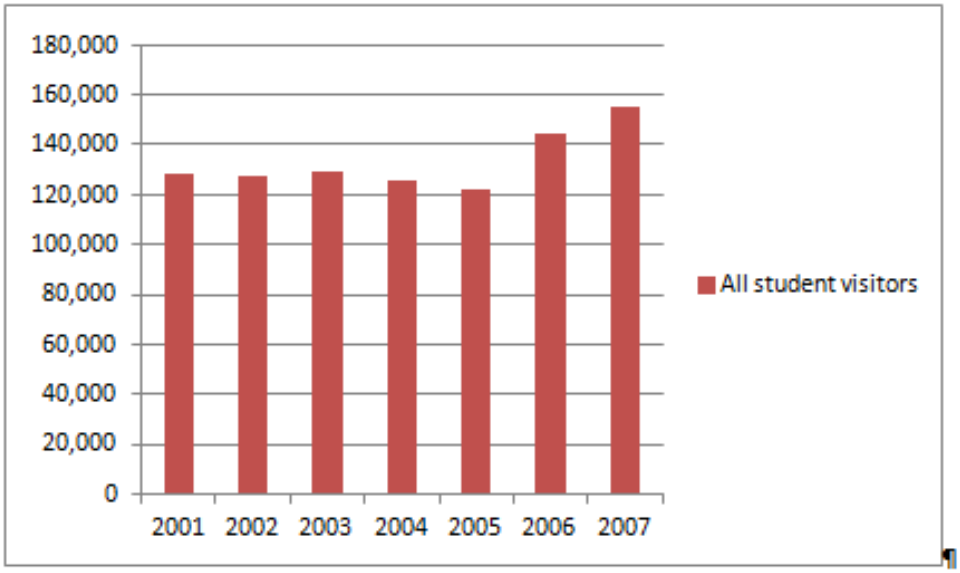

Table 2: Estimated total number of student visitors to Canberra

In 2006–07, PACER was paid in respect of 73,207 students which was approximately 48 per cent of all interstate student visitors to Canberra (estimated at 153,467). This proportion has gradually increased so that in 2009–10, PACER was paid to schools in respect of 60 per cent of the total number of student visitors (estimated at 165,875).[5]

In relation to the number of schools receiving a financial subsidy, the following table shows a peak in 2001–02 (Centenary of Federation), followed by four years with a slightly fewer number of schools receiving one of the two rebates available at that time. From 2006–07 to 2009–10 there has been a steady increase in the number of schools receiving PACER, with 1,426 schools receiving the rebate in 2006 increasing to 1,901 schools receiving the rebate in 2009–2010.

[4] Ritchie, Dr Brent and Uzabeaga, Sue, unpublished research report: 'Discover what it means to be Australian in your National Capital: Size and effect of school excursions to the National Capital, 2007-08', Centre for Tourism Research, University of Canberra, July 2008.

[5] NCETP reports to PACER Advisory Committee meetings AC0801 (February 2008) and AC1002 (July 2010)

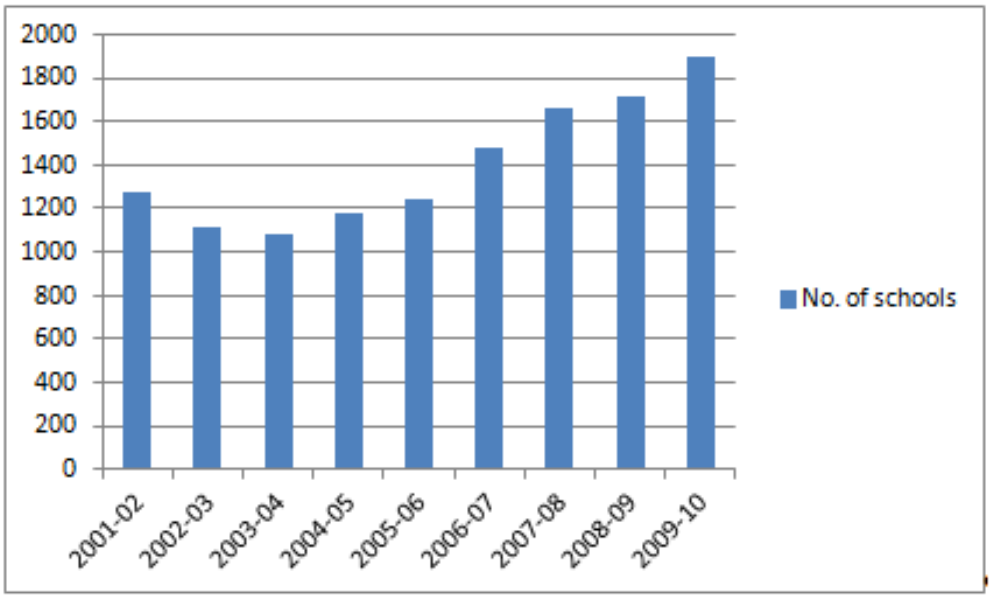

Table 3: Table 3: Schools receiving a financial subsidy to visit Canberra

What influences decisions regarding school excursions?

A survey conducted by the University of Canberra (sent to all schools) found that for the majority of schools (53.8 per cent) a financial subsidy was one of many factors which affected their decision on where to visit. Fewer than one-fifth (17.4 per cent) of responding schools indicated that the availability of the financial subsidy did not impact on their decision at all. Twenty-nine per cent indicated that the subsidy influenced their decision on where to travel.[6]

Previous research on educational tourism to Canberra conducted by Dr Brent Ritchie and Ms Sue Uzabeaga in 2007-08 also provided evidence of the value placed on a financial subsidy for an excursion to Canberra by teachers.[7] Their research found that 89.4 per cent of respondents thought that PACER was important or very important in assisting their school to travel to Canberra. Three per cent stated it was not important.

A similar question was asked in the online survey which targeted teachers involved in a school excursion in 2009 for which PACER was paid. Sixty per cent of respondents indicating that the availability of PACER affected their decision to travel to Canberra 'a lot' or they 'would not travel without PACER'.[8] Comments included:

- 'We could not go without the help' (respondent 29667)
- 'Cannot attend without it' (respondent 29505)
- 'Our students generally do not have the financial means to afford excursions. PACER enables costs to be kept lower than anticipated. It would be unfortunate if the PACER were ever stopped.' (respondent 29246)
- 'PACER is a valuable part of making the trip affordable' (respondent 29375)

[6] Research conducted by Naomi Dale as part of her PhD studies at the University of Canberra

[7] Ritchie, Dr Brent and Uzabeaga, Sue, ibid

[8] Question 3.1 of the PACER online survey

- ‘makes it worthwhile and cost effective to travel from WA to the other end of the country’ (respondent 29643)
- ‘the $30 we receive from PACER is critical to our ability to visit Canberra’ (respondent 29997)
- ‘We are a highly disadvantaged school, and really appreciate the difference the PACER rebate makes to our total charge to the students’ (respondent 29377)
- ‘We wouldn’t be able to do the trip without the assistance of PACER’ (respondent 30082)
- [The availability of PACER] ‘is the only way that keeps the tour within a viable price range that Rural Australian parents can afford’ (respondent 29822)

While cost is a significant factor in the viability of the excursion, a number of other factors influence school decision making about excursions. These include current curriculum requirements, the educational experiences being sought, as well as more pragmatic issues such as the availability of suitable transport, accommodation and time in the school timetable and the capacity of the school to organise the excursion.

Not all excursions to Canberra are PACER excursions

Not all schools conducting excursions to Canberra seek to meet the PACER requirements and therefore do not apply for the rebate. Visitation data from sources such as accommodation venues and national cultural institutions indicated that in 2009, 165,875 students visited Canberra[9]. PACER was paid for approximately 60 per cent of these visitors.
School groups whose principal purpose for visiting the national capital is to engage in sporting or social activities are not eligible for PACER funding. Other school excursions to Canberra also have a focus in different curriculum areas.

Finding: While the availability of PACER influences many schools to visit Canberra, it is not possible to isolate the impact of PACER on a school’s decision to travel.

Value of the rebate

A number of respondents to the PACER survey commented on the increased cost of travel. Comments included:

- ‘the value of PACER has eroded over the years’ (respondent 29352); and
- ‘the PACER Rebate needs to increase to $50. It has been at $20 for far too long and does not reflect inflation.’ (respondent 29692)
- ‘Please continue this rebate and even increase it as the cost of transport has increased dramatically over recent years.’ (respondent 29248)
- ‘I would love to see the Subsidy increase. ... I fear that costing pressure ... is making it more and more difficult to justify.’ (respondent 29286)
- ‘Costs are going up substantially ... our trip was more than 100% up on the price of our first one in 1998’ (respondent 29718)
- ‘The PACER for Victorian schools needs to be doubled. All our expenses in the past three years have increased substantially but the grant has stayed the same.’ (respondent 29798)

[9] NCETP report to PACER Advisory Committee meeting AC1002 (July 2010)

Some respondents noted that while the school would still attempt to organise an excursion to Canberra if PACER was not available, not all students would be able to participate. This could in turn jeopardise the viability of the excursion.

- 'Although we would still try and take a group of children to Canberra without PACER, it would disadvantage many of the families who were able to send their child because of the cut in costs' (respondent 29814)
- 'A reduction in this support [PACER] would result in a loss of 75% of the students attending and therefore the viability of the excursion' (respondent 29665)
- 'Highly valued resource by our school community as it makes the excursion cost more within a realistic range - would LOVE it if the PACER amount for our trip was more - students paid around $1600 last year ($1750 without PACER) - costs much higher than this will end up excluding large number of our students due to our community's SES. (many of our families already "'stretch" to be able to send their children but do it because they see so much worth in the trip)' (respondent 29420)
- 'The actual contribution for PACER is helpful, but goes nowhere near supporting the costs. We ... receive $30, even though the costs from our area are considerable. The PACER grant should have been increased in line with increased costs. Last year, the cost of the excursion for our students was $450 after PACER contribution. To ensure all students participated, we needed to financially support all students, as we are from a low SES area...' (respondent 29668)
- 'Could be increased in line with rising accommodation, venue and transport costs. Our school might not be able to afford to visit Canberra in 2011' (respondent 29756)
- 'We are a school located in a low socio-economic status community and PACER helps to make our excursion more affordable which allows more children to participate' (respondent 30488)
- 'Helps many drought affected families to be able to afford the camp' (respondent 29260)
- 'PACER makes ... an impact on the number of students who can afford to attend the camp.' (respondent 29336)
- 'It makes the trip more affordable for our families. It means that all students can attend' (respondent 29844)
- 'It is vital in making sure this trip is affordable for students from less socially advantaged families in our school. These are perhaps the kids who get the most out of the trip!' (respondent 29846)

Noticeably, most of the comments in relation to the socio-economic status (SES) of the school and the need to increase the rate of PACER came from schools in the two zones closest to Canberra.

Finding: Higher travel costs have eroded the value of PACER since it was introduced.

Finding: Some schools, particularly those from low SES regions, would not undertake the excursion without PACER.

Finding: Some students would not be able to participate in an excursion to Canberra without PACER.

Recommendation: That consideration be given to revise eligibility criteria to ensure that PACER assists those least likely to undertake an excursion in the absence of a rebate.

ToR3: Are the requirements set out in the PACER guidelines appropriate, educationally valid and justifiable?

Background

The PACER guidelines (Appendix 3) were developed in the middle of 2006. Some changes, mostly minor, have been made to the guidelines since then. The most significant change was to provide some flexibility in the institutions students must visit in Canberra when a school is unable to book into one of the two institutions located in Old Parliament House.

The guidelines cover requirements which ensure:

- maximum educational benefit from the excursion; and
- an accountable and manageable process.

Maximizing the educational benefits

The PACER program aims to support students' civics and citizenship education. Several aspects of the guidelines focus on ensuring that the financial subsidy provided is used for this purpose. The relevant requirements are:

- the visit should be embedded in a unit of class work;
- schools must visit specific institutions which focus on civics or parliamentary education; and
- schools must participate in an educational program at those institutions where possible.

Embedding the excursion in a unit of class work

The guidelines state that teachers must ensure 'use of current civics and citizenship education resources in preparation for the visit [and] civics and citizenship unit/course outlines or equivalent are provided'. Schools are required to provide a copy of relevant civics and citizenship education class work after the excursion, before the application is approved for payment.

The guidelines state that civics and citizenship education resources must be used *prior* to the visit. However, in practice, relevant class work after the visit is deemed acceptable. Indeed, the Australian Curriculum Studies Association in its report on aspects of the PACER program, found that many of the educators at institutions which students visit 'felt that students may be more engaged with the relevant concepts by having these introduced during the "spectacle"' of visiting the national institutions'. The report also noted that 'many factors will influence whether a classroom-based learning sequence will take place before or after the excursion.'[10]

ACSA recommended that:

> Teachers participating in the PACER program need to provide a copy of a planned learning sequence for their class that will be completed before or after the excursion to Canberra.

[10] Australian Curriculum Studies Association (2010), *Professional advice on selected aspects of the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) program*, unpublished consultancy report to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Recommendation 3, page 7.

The learning sequence should relate to the learning outcomes for the education programs they select to participate in during the Canberra excursion.[11]

Staff at most of the mandatory institutions strongly supported a requirement for schools to show evidence that the excursion was linked to class work. However, staff from one institution suggested that whether class work was done or not, the visit was educationally valid and provided students with some civics and citizenship education. The program administrators suggested that schools could provide a justification for their excursion rather than photocopied pages of units of work which do not necessarily demonstrate a connection between the excursion and class work.

Finding: Requiring a unit of work or learning sequence provides assurance that the excursion is educationally valid and efforts are made by teachers and schools to maximise the educational benefits of the excursion.

Recommendation: That the PACER guidelines be amended to reflect that learning can take place before or after the excursion.

Which institutions?

The current PACER guidelines require schools to visit three institutions and state that:

Unless otherwise approved by the Department, students are required to visit:

- Parliament House (including taking a guided educational tour, and wherever possible, participating in a Parliamentary Education Office Program and meeting their local Member/Senator);
- Old Parliament House (OPH) (including undertaking an educational program at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House and/or the National Electoral Educational Centre);
- the Australian War Memorial; and
- other national civic institutions where possible.
- These nominated institutions were selected on the basis of their significance for civics and citizenship education.

As the number of schools visiting Canberra has increased, access to the required institutions, particularly the two institutions (Museum of Australian Democracy and National Electoral Education Centre) located in Old Parliament House, has become progressively more difficult. Some schools were unable to receive PACER because they were unable to make a booking at the specified institutions. As a way of dealing with this, the guidelines were amended so that in these instances, a visit to another institution could be approved instead of a visit to Old Parliament House.

The Department agreed to five institutions being acceptable for visits if a school could not make a booking at Old Parliament House. They were:

- Government House
- High Court of Australia

[11] ibid.

- National Archives of Australia
- National Portrait Gallery (students must participate in a civics and citizenship education program)
- National Museum of Australia (students must participate in a civics and citizenship education program).

Visits to these alternate institutions have been managed by the NCETP on behalf of the Department.

As part of its report on aspects of the PACER program, ACSA was asked to assess the extent to which the program requirements support students' civics and citizenship education and, in responding to this issue, to comment on the quality and extent of civics and citizenship education programs provided at the compulsory institutions (Parliament House; Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House; National Electoral Education Centre and the Australian War Memorial) as well as education programs offered at other national civic and cultural institutions in Canberra. In addition, ACSA was asked to recommend whether any venues should be compulsory for students to visit, and if so, which ones.

ACSA considered PACER supported excursions in terms of the unique attributes of visiting the national capital, the experience of the student visit and the quality of educational programs available, noting that 'student learning outcomes are greater where education programs have been developed by educators who are able to articulate their pedagogical approach and learning outcomes and where programs are presented by education officers'. Comments made by ACSA on specific venues are included in the information, below, about the different institutions.

Parliament House and the Parliamentary Education Office

Currently, schools must visit Parliament House in order to receive PACER. It is preferred that they participate in an education program at the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) located in Parliament House and meet their local Member or a Senator from their state under the hospitality program managed by the Serjeant-at-Arms Office. When schools are unable to access these special programs, the minimum requirement which must be met in order to receive PACER is for schools to undertake a guided tour of Parliament House, conducted specifically for school students.

Teachers strongly support the experiences students get at Parliament House recognising this is something that cannot be achieved elsewhere. One teacher described the specific benefit as being 'to actually see with their own eyes where important decisions and law making takes place' (respondent 30074). As such, 95 per cent of teachers responding to the PACER survey indicated they would visit Parliament House whether or not it was required.

- Approximately 80 per cent of schools receiving PACER in 2009 participated in a PEO program[12] and 76 per cent of respondents to the PACER survey indicated they would participate in a PEO program even if not required.
- 'The PEO was EXCELLENT as the kids got to be very hands on.' (respondent 29524)
- 'PEO was the best presentation! The presenters and learning activities were fabulous with the students - fully involved and kept their attention.' (respondent 29772)

[12] NCETP database for 2009

- [Parliament House] 'is the centrepiece for Australian citizenship.' (respondent 29439)
- 'The role play at the PEO was brilliant.' (respondent 29859)
- 'The role play experience at the PEO is an outstanding learning opportunity. (respondent 29666)'

ACSA recommended that all schools participating in the PACER program should be required to visit Parliament House, including taking a guided tour, and wherever possible, participating in a Parliamentary Education Office program and meeting their local Member/Senator[13]. This recommendation is consistent with the current PACER guidelines.

Staff from Parliament House agreed that a visit to Parliament House should be required under PACER. They suggested that students who had participated in a PEO program but were unable to participate in an educational guided tour of the House, receive PACER.

Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House

Schools must visit Old Parliament House (the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House and/or the National Electoral Education Centre). Visits to both institutions involve participation in a facilitated education program.

There are a range of educational programs available at the Museum of Australian Democracy including role-plays conducted in the chambers, focussed activities involving the new museum displays and guided tours of the House. Significant changes were made to the Museum of Australian Democracy, formally known as Old Parliament House, during 2009. Some new education programs were trialled early in the year, and in some cases were still being refined throughout the year.

- When asked in the PACER online survey whether they would visit the Museum of Australian Democracy even if not required 68 per cent of teacher respondents agreed they would. This question did not differentiate between schools which had visited these institutions and those which had not. Consequently, it is appropriate to consider the responses in the context of the number of schools which did visit these institutions in 2009. Approximately 66.8 per cent of schools receiving PACER visited the Museum of Australian Democracy, indicating that the vast majority of these schools strongly valued the educational programs at this institution and would make every effort to visit whether or not it was a requirement under the PACER program.

Comments made about visiting the Museum of Australian Democracy included:

- 'Old Parliament House was FANTASTIC. The role play that occurred in the House of Reps chamber is still being talked about as a highlight of our camp.' (respondent 29770)
- 'The recently added research facility at Old Parliament House is a significant improvement.' (respondent 29638)
- 'I would also definitely take classes to … Old Parliament House.' (respondent 29272)
- 'Old Parliament house was fantastic with the new interactive areas.' (respondent 29261)

A number of respondents indicated they were unable to access the Museum of Australian Democracy because it was booked out. A few suggested the learning experience was too similar

[13] ACSA page 7

to that of Parliament House. One respondent indicated they would prefer students had more time to look around the Old Parliament House building rather than the exhibition area.

ACSA recommended that for both primary and secondary school students a visit to the Museum of Australian Democracy could be one of two optional education programs in which students participate.

National Electoral Education Centre

As set out above, schools must visit either the Museum of Australian Democracy or the National Electoral Education Centre. When asked whether they would visit the National Electoral Education Centre even if not required 74 per cent of respondents to the PACER questionnaire agreed they would. It should be noted that only 69 per cent of schools which received PACER in 2009 visited the National Electoral Education Centre. Assuming that a similar proportion of respondents to the survey visited the National Electoral Education Centre, the implication is that all respondents had a high level of satisfaction with the programs delivered there.

Comments made about the education programs at the National Electoral Education Centre included:

- 'Really find the information and activities at these places invaluable. After doing the Election Centre and holding the mock election, the children really understand it. I know we could do it at school, but doing it in a different setting/different teacher, they remember it.' (respondent 29452)
- 'The program at the electoral commission was terrific' (respondent 30008)
- 'These were all fantastic places to visit. In particular the Electoral Education Centre was excellent!' (respondent 30102)
- 'This is a fantastic interactive learning experience for children. They always love the EEC.' (respondent 30035)
- 'The learning from the National electoral education centre was very effective and powerful in relation to the electoral process.' (respondent 29624)

Some teachers commented that they can access electoral education elsewhere (particularly in Western Australia) and consequently they were more inclined to take up opportunities in Canberra which were not available locally. It should be noted that the electoral education to which they refer is provided by states and consequently does not reflect Commonwealth electoral processes.

- 'There are electoral education centres in WA that are very good that we visit in other excursions, so instead of going to similar institutions in Canberra, we try to use our time there to visit other institutions of political and historical benefit to our students that we can't access in WA.' (respondent 29498)

ACSA recommended that for both primary and secondary students a visit to the National Electoral Education Centre could be one of two optional education programs in which students participate.

While a visit to the National Electoral Education Centre provides an excellent civics and citizenship education experience, capacity restraints preclude it being listed as a mandatory institution under the PACER program. Additional funding would be required to increase the National Electoral Education Centre's capacity to provide education programs for additional student visitors.

Australian War Memorial

While schools must visit the Australian War Memorial, they are not required to participate in an education program at the Memorial. In 2009, however, approximately 60 per cent did participate in one of the many education programs offered at the Memorial. Support from teachers was extremely positive about their visit to the Memorial with nearly 97 per cent of respondents indicating they would visit whether or not it was required.

Comments made by teachers included:

- 'We organised to lay a wreath at the War Memorial which was a very special experience, I have also been at the War Memorial at closing when they play the Last Post - also very special.' (respondent 30064)
- 'Students would happily spend days at the War Memorial.' (respondent 29791)
- 'There is never enough time spent at the War Memorial' (respondent 29830)
- '[The AWM] is where our students soaked in the values and ambiance of their ancestors. It is always top of their list in the debrief.' (respondent 29526)
- 'LOVE the War Memorial' (respondent 29805)

Some respondents did not see the connection between the Australian War Memorial and civics and citizenship education.

Other national civic institutions

Teachers were not asked to comment on the five 'alternate' institutions which are accepted under the PACER program when schools are unable to book into one of the two institutions located in Old Parliament House. A few, however, did comment on these institutions:

- 'The National Museum is quite interesting but not on your list. So is Government House. We always go to these two places.' (respondent 29914)
- 'Some students had difficulty with the High Court, so that would have been one place we would have only considered for our A students.' (respondent 29579)
- 'I also see the High Court as a valuable place to visit and could see it as an option' (respondent 29718)
- 'I would like to see the scope opened up to make other areas such as the Australian Museum, the Australian National Gallery, and the National Portrait Gallery included as some of the three institutions visited which qualifies the school for the rebate.' (respondent 30084)
- 'Many of the students had been in primary school and were revisiting sites.' (respondent 29893)

ACSA suggested that the following institutions, currently only used in exceptional circumstances, be accepted as one of two optional education programs in which students participate.

For primary students:

- National Archives of Australia
- National Portrait Gallery
- National Museum of Australia

For secondary students:

National Archives of Australia

- National Portrait Gallery
- National Museum of Australia
- High Court of Australia
- Government House

In addition, ACSA recommended that a visit to the National Gallery of Australia be acceptable under PACER for secondary school students. They noted that the Gallery:

> uses the art collection to portray aspects of Australia's heritage and identity, and to encourage students to look at who we are as Australians and how we got to this point. In this respect, the programs support the civics and citizenship learning outcomes relating to the values and principles that underpin Australia's democracy; the knowledge skills and values that support active citizenship; and historical perspectives on Australia's development as a democratic nation. (p3)

The PACER guidelines also note that schools should visit 'other national civic institutions where possible'. While these visits are not monitored in any way, there are a number of possible institutions on the Civic Institution Visitation Form which schools have stamped at each of the institutions when they visit, to provide evidence of visits.

ACSA's recommendation to extend the scope of the program needs to be balanced against the strong support for visiting the current mandatory institutions shown in the teacher survey.

Finding: Visits to Parliament House, the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, the National Electoral Education Centre and the Australian War Memorial are highly valued by teachers and provide excellent civics and citizenship education experiences for students.

Finding: A visit to Parliament House and, where possible, participation in a Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) program is a central component of a civics and citizenship education visit to the national capital.

Recommendation: That the PACER guidelines be amended so that students who have participated in a PEO program but have been unable to also undertake a guided tour in Parliament House, are eligible for the rebate.

Finding: Institutions such as the High Court of Australia, the National Archives of Australia, the National Portrait Gallery, Government House, the National Gallery of Australia and the National Museum of Australia also offer excellent civics and citizenship education programs.

Recommendation: That the guidelines be made more explicit in relation to the alternate institutions which schools can access when unable to book into the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House and the National Electoral Education Centre provided students participate in education programs at these institutions.

Recommendation: That a process be established whereby other institutions can be considered for inclusion in the PACER guidelines if they can demonstrate a quality civics and citizenship education program.

Requirements which support an accountable and manageable process

A number of requirements in the guidelines aim to ensure that all schools have an equal opportunity to apply for PACER, that decisions to grant or not grant the rebate are accountable and that the process is readily manageable for both the schools and the program administrators.

Recognised education provider

Students must be enrolled with a 'recognised' education provider (generally a school). The great majority of PACER applications are from schools. A few applications have been received each year from families which home-school their children. These are checked (ie registration for home-schooling) and the rebate duly paid to the families if eligible.

In addition, a small number of applications have been submitted from organisations which provide some sort of educational program for participants, but are not necessarily the main schooling institution which participants attend. The guidelines have been interpreted to mean that PACER is payable only to the primary institution students attend. Because paying PACER to students travelling with other institutions (such as community language schools, air cadets and youth groups) could result in them receiving PACER more than once in a year, PACER has been deemed not to be payable to these institutions. Since PACER was introduced, only one institution has objected to this decision by writing to the Minister.

Recommendation: That PACER continue to be paid only to the primary education provider for students.

Requirement to apply before travelling

Schools must apply for PACER prior to travelling. The guidelines state three weeks. Approximately 224 schools have missed out on PACER since the program was introduced because they have not met this requirement. In that time, more than 6,700 schools have successfully applied for PACER.

This requirement allows the PACER administrator to manage effectively and fairly the available funding, including ensuring that the school meets the program requirements at a stage when changes to the program can be made (such as integrating the excursion to Canberra with relevant civics and citizenship class work, visiting the required institutions and participating in education programs at national institutions where possible). After schools have travelled, it is not always possible to verify the school has visited the required institutions.

Approving applications after a school has travelled would be likely to result in a significant proportion of applications received in this way and a greater commensurate administration cost. It may also result in eligible schools missing out towards the end of each financial year when funds are fully committed. Information about PACER has been sent to all schools on numerous occasions. Further information is provided under ToR 10.

While a small number of schools which missed out on PACER for this reason pursued their claim through a letter to the Minister, no change was made to the decision not to pay the rebate. More

than one third of schools which missed out on PACER for this reason successfully applied for the rebate in respect of a later excursion.

Finding: The requirement for schools to apply prior to travelling ensures fairness and efficiency in administering the PACER to schools.

Recommendation: That the requirement for schools to apply for PACER prior to travelling remains in the guidelines. Communication to schools regarding PACER should continue to remind schools about this requirement.

Approval of visit

Under the current arrangements, schools must provide a completed application form and a copy of the excursion itinerary to the PACER administrators before a funding commitment is made to the school.

In early 2010, Mr Gary Gray AO MP, Member for Brand, proposed that schools should have their PACER application authorised at their local Member's electoral office. He suggested this 'would ensure that the school and the Member's office had direct contact before the trip to Canberra [and] … could result in further engagement in the electorate.' Mr Gray acknowledged in his letter that Members of Parliament are notified when schools from their electorate book to visit Parliament House and Members and their staff are also able to check visits for the coming month on the Senators' and Members' intranet portal.

From a teacher's perspective, the process is already quite complicated. Not only must they book into the mandatory institutions and book all the travel and accommodation, they must also complete the PACER application and send it well before the excursion in order to receive the funding. To require schools to contact their local Member's office as well could be considered an unnecessary additional burden. It would also require ensuring electorate offices knew and understood their obligations so that the school could get its application approved. Schools may be disadvantaged if they are not all treated efficiently by electorate offices.

As there are already established procedures in place for informing Members about school groups visiting Parliament House (the Serjeant-at-Arms office emails MPs when a booking is made, sends a reminder closer to the date, posts the visit on an intranet site and the Front of House staff telephones the Members' offices when the school group arrives), it is not considered necessary to modify the process.

Recommendation: That the current requirements for approving PACER applications as set out in the PACER guidelines be retained.

Requirement to inform parent community about the subsidy

PACER is paid to schools in respect of the number of students who travel. It is expected that these funds will be used to reduce the cost of the excursion for individual students through either a refund of amount received after the excursion or a reduced excursion cost (subsidised by the school until the PACER is received). In order to encourage schools to ensure this saving is passed on to students' families, the school is required to inform the school community about PACER and the excursion and to send a copy of that correspondence when acquitting the PACER application.

A sample letter is provided, but is not required to be used as long the parent community is informed.

There has been one objection to the requirement to demonstrate evidence that the school had informed the school community about receiving PACER. The purpose of this requirement is to encourage schools to pass on the savings to the students who actually travelled through having the school community know about the funding. It is not possible to monitor whether schools have actually passed on the subsidy to families.

Recommendation: That the requirement to inform the school community about receiving the PACER rebate be retained.

Finding: The requirements set out in the guidelines are fair, allow the program to be administered equitably and strongly encourage good educational outcomes. As such, they are appropriate, educationally valid and justifiable.

Alternate approaches to distribution of PACER

The analysis above (ToR3), on whether the requirements set out in the guidelines support an accountable and manageable process, is based on PACER being available to all schools more than 150 kilometres from Canberra. Where there is sufficient funding to support all eligible schools, this is an appropriate aim. However, if there is insufficient funding to support all schools, alternate eligibility criteria could be considered. Practicality, equity and administrative efficiency should be key considerations in establishing new criteria for the program.

The demand for PACER has exceeded the available funding each financial year since 2007–08. From 2007–08 to 2009–10, supplementary funding was made available to ensure that no school eligible for PACER missed out. With demand exceeding available funding, it may be appropriate to revise the PACER eligibility criteria and/or rebate rates to better balance program demand and available funding.

The rebate is of most value to those travelling the greater distances and to those from low socio-economic backgrounds. It is unclear the extent to which those students would not travel to Canberra should the rebate no longer be available to them.

Finding: To better balance demand with available funding it will be necessary to increase funding for the program or consider options for redesigning the program.

Factors which could be used to target the rebate include:

- Time of application and travel (funding is currently allocated in order of application)
- School year (currently payable in respect of eligible students in Years 4–12)
- Distance (currently all schools located more than 150 km from Canberra)
- Socio economic status (currently not considered and limited robust data for all schools)
- The rate of rebate (currently $20, $30, $60, $80, $120, $150, $240, $260 per student)
- Relative educational advantage/disadvantage

Recommendation: That possible options for supplementing funding or, alternately, redesigning the PACER eligibility criteria and associated guidelines be investigated in order to rebalance the level of eligible demand with the available funding.

Effectiveness

ToR4: Are we supporting our target number of schools?

A Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of the number of schools assisted each year was devised, based on an estimate of increases over the next few years. This was reassessed early in 2010 based on the average PACER payment and the program budget.

PACER met its KPI target in all years with the exception of 2009, when one less school than the revised KPI was assisted. Table 1 below sets out KPI targets and the number of schools assisted under the PACER program each year since the program was introduced.

Year	KPI	Number of schools assisted
2006–2007	1050	1426
2007	1155	1603
2008	1270	1672
2009	1397	-
2009 (revised)	1818	1817

Table 4: PACER KPIs and number of schools assisted

The KPI for 2009 was increased because additional funds were made available at the end of the 2008–09 financial year allowing more schools travelling between April and June 2009 to be funded.

The KPI for 2010 and beyond is estimated based on the funding currently allocated to PACER. As the demand is likely to be greater than the current allocation allows, additional funding would enable more schools to be assisted.

While the target number of schools provides a useful indicator of the uptake of PACER, both the number of schools and the number of students assisted is really only meaningful if PACER funding is uncapped. If the program has finite funds and is not able to support all eligible applications, the KPI – whether schools or students – will vary depending on how far the students travelled. For example, funding of $1 million could support 50 000 students travelling from Sydney, but only 3846 students travelling from remote Western Australia. The number of schools in each instance could vary immensely and does not provide any significant understanding regarding the value of the program.

Finding: PACER has supported its target number of schools since the program was introduced, with demand for the rebate steadily increasing over time.

Finding: The number of schools receiving PACER is not a useful or meaningful measure.

ToR5: Are the rebate zones as set out in the guidelines appropriate (ie do they make the cost of travel more equitable) or are there alternate zones and/or rebate amounts which should be considered?

Purpose of PACER

For equity reasons, PACER (like its predecessor schemes, the ETR and CVP) provides a smaller subsidy to schools closer to Canberra than to schools further from Canberra. Eight rebate zones are specified in the guidelines as shown below:

Distance from Canberra	REBATE Per student
150–499 kilometres	$20
500–999 kilometres	$30
1,000–1,499 kilometres	$60
1,500–1,999 kilometres	$80
2,000–2,499 kilometres	$120
2,500–2,999 kilometres (includes all students from Tasmania because of additional air/sea travel expenses.)	$150
3,000–3,999 kilometres	$240
4,000 kilometres and over	$260

Table 5:Rebate amounts

All Tasmanian schools receive a higher rate of rebate because of the additional costs associated with air and/or sea travel. Other island schools such as those on Flinders Island and the Cocos Keeling Islands have sought an increased rate of rebate, but the current guidelines do not provide flexibility for the rate of rebate to be varied for individual schools on a case-by-case basis.

The Department has been advised that schools in some rural locations need to use coaches from larger metropolitan areas as the local coach companies do not have vehicles suitable for long distance travel. Consequently, these schools must pay for the coach to drive to their location to pick them up as well as the travel to Canberra.[14] Other factors which affect the cost of travel include the mode of travel (ie by bus or by airline) and whether discounted fares are available. The rate of rebate is not affected by cost variations such as these.

It should be noted that PACER is a subsidy for travel costs only. PACER was never intended to support other costs associated with school excursions such as the cost of accommodation and the cost of cold weather clothes for those travelling from the tropics. Nor has it varied according to issues such as whether a school is located in an area with low socio-economic status (SES) or a drought-affected area.

[14] Advice to the NCETP from Queensland tour operator provided to the Department on 27 May 2010.

Use of PACER

The following information sets out the number of schools which were granted PACER in 2009 and analyses it by year level, state, geographical classification and by educational sector. Schools less than 150 kilometres from Canberra are not eligible for PACER, so these statistics are based on all Australian schools, excluding those in the ACT.

Usage by year level

As shown in Figure 1 below, the vast majority of students receiving PACER are in the final years of primary school. Approximately 16 per cent of all final year primary school students receive PACER. Students in Year 7 at a Queensland independent school are the largest sub-group with 46 per cent of all students in this category undertaking the excursion and receiving PACER.

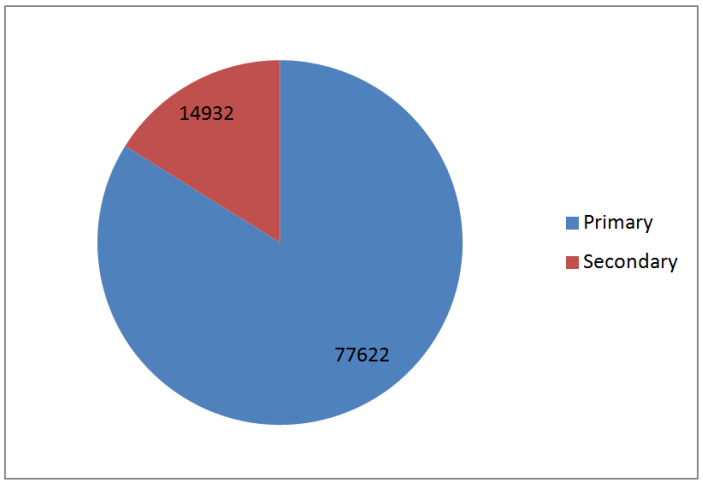

Figure 1: Number of students receiving PACER in 2009 by education level.

Usage by state

In 2009, the greatest usage of PACER by state, in both numbers and as a proportion of total schools and students in the state, as well by funding utilised, was by New South Wales. Approximately half of the schools which received PACER, (representing nearly 57 per cent of students for whom PACER was paid, but, because they received a lower rebate, only 28 per cent of PACER funds) were from New South Wales. Because these schools are in the state closest to Canberra, this is not surprising.

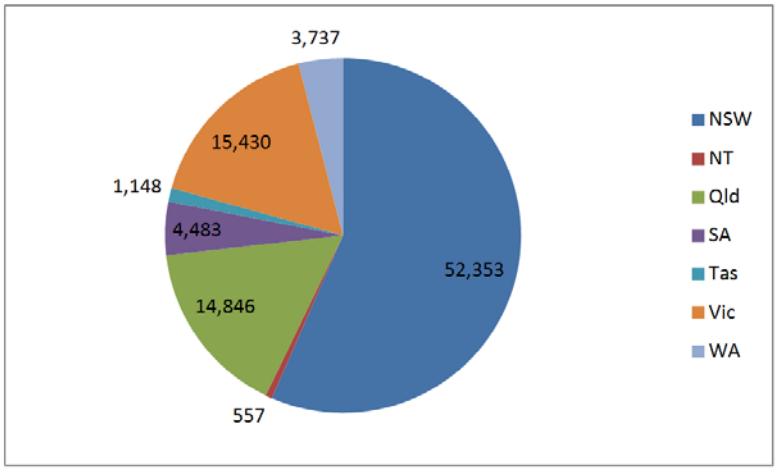

Figure 2: Number of students receiving PACER in 2009 by state or territory

The proportion of all New South Wales schools which received PACER was noticeably higher than the 18.5 per cent national average, with 28 per cent of all NSW schools receiving PACER in 2009. At the other end of the scale, 7.4 per cent of Northern Territory schools received PACER in 2009. New South Wales was the only state above the average number of schools of 18.5 per cent.

Usage by geographical classification

The utilisation of PACER was analysed against the following geographical classifications:

- Metropolitan Zone Mainland State Capital City regions (e.g. Sydney, Perth)
- Metropolitan Zone Major urban Statistical Districts (e.g. Newcastle)
- Provincial Zone Provincial City Statistical Districts 50,000 to 99,999 (e.g. Albury, Orange, Bathurst)
- Provincial Zone Provincial City Statistical Districts 25,000 to 49,999 (e.g. Dubbo, Tamworth, Lismore)
- Provincial Zone Inner provincial areas (e.g. Kempsey, Cootamundra, Casino)
- Provincial Zone Outer provincial areas (e.g. Moree, Griffith, Bellimbopinni)
- Remote Zone Remote areas (e.g. Brewarrina, Lightning Ridge)
- Remote Zone Very Remote areas (e.g. Bourke, NSW & Nhulunbuy, NT)

The highest proportion of schools was from Provincial Zone Provincial City Statistical Districts 25,000 to 49,999 with 23.5 per cent of schools with that geographical classification utilising PACER in 2009. This was closely followed by schools in Metropolitan Zone Major Urban Statistical Districts (23.1 per cent).

At the other end of the spectrum, schools in Remote Zone Very Remote areas and Remote Zone Remote areas had the lowest proportion of schools utilising PACER with 4.4 and 10.8 per cent respectively.

Usage by sector

In relation to educational sector, independent schools were most likely to access PACER with nearly 30 per cent of all independent schools in Australia receiving PACER in 2009, compared to 16 per cent of government schools and 20 per cent of Catholic schools.

Further information on PACER utilisation by year level, state, geographical zones, and educational sector is included at **Appendix 4**.

Finding: While PACER assists schools from all states, locations and sectors across Australia to visit the national capital, utilisation is uneven across the states, geographical locations and sectors.

Rate of rebate

Travel costs provided to the Department indicate that the $20 rebate for students attending school in Sydney, covers just over 80 per cent of the cost of a coach. For Melbourne based students, the rebate of $30 per student covers about 68 per cent of the cost of a coach. Students from Perth are most likely to fly to Canberra. The rebate of $240 is approximately 48 per cent of the flight costs. Students from Brisbane receive a $60 rebate which is approximately 24 per cent of the cost of a coach trip, but only 16 per cent of a flight to Canberra.

While the rebate of $240 for Darwin students is approximately 43 per cent of the flight cost, the difference between the rebate and the full cost is $340. Similarly, the rebate of $120 for students in North Queensland is 24 per cent of the flight cost, with the difference between the rebate and

the full cost being approximately $380 per student. Indicative costs for students from most PACER zones are set out in **Appendix 5**.

Finding: The value of PACER in reducing the cost of travel (excluding all other costs of an excursion) is greater for schools located closer to Canberra.

Recommendation: That in any changes to eligibility, consideration be given to prioritising those travelling greater distance.

Rebate zones

The rebate amounts are based on the distance travelled from the school to Canberra. This creates eight 'zones'. The provisions in the guidelines relating to how this distance is measured have at times been difficult to interpret. The guidelines say 'Distances are calculated by road to Canberra using the most favourable travelling routes which are not necessarily the shortest. The website www.whereis.com.au will be used to determine this'. This wording was aimed at ensuring schools, such as those at Cloncurry, which may need to travel a longer route on a better road, were able to receive a rebate based on the distance they needed to travel. Such a variation in measuring the distance might also occur when, for example, a school from Kalgoorlie travels to Perth in order to fly to Canberra.

Complications have arisen when schools have flown to Canberra via another city (eg Perth to Canberra via Sydney, Mackay to Canberra via Brisbane). In some instances, schools might change transport at these key points (ie fly from Perth to Sydney and catch a bus) or they might simply change flights. Distances between each of these points are measured by road, which is anomalous. The result is that schools travelling from the same locality may receive a different amount of rebate depending on how they travel. In addition, an increasing number of schools, particularly from Perth or its immediate environs, have received the slightly higher rebate intended for schools in remote regions.

Usage by zone

Figure 3 below shows the number of students for whom a PACER payment was made in 2009 from each of the eight PACER zones. It should be noted that this shows the usage by zone based on the payment made, not by where the school is located (as explained above). As an example, in zone 8 - 4,000 kilometres and over, which is shown as being paid to 2,943 students, 1,255 of these students were from Perth, but had to travel via another city and were therefore paid the higher rebate.

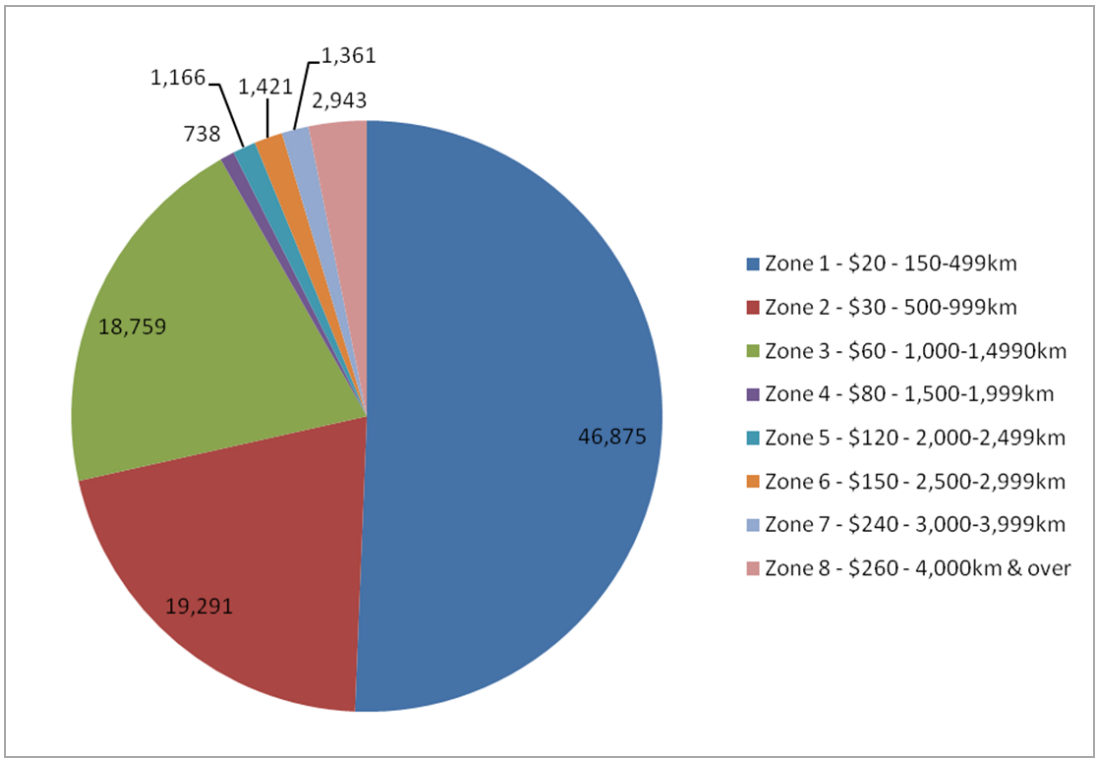

Figure 3: Number of students receiving PACER in 2009 by PACER zone

Recommendation: The rate of rebate be based on the road distance from the school to Canberra regardless of how travel is undertaken unless otherwise agreed by the Department on a case by case basis.

Zone borders

Schools travelling just under the maximum number of kilometres for a particular zone are not able to obtain the higher rebate. On occasions this has caused some disappointment. Any scheme which has defined areas as in the PACER program will result in some participants 'just missing out' on a higher rate of funding. Conversely, some schools are lucky enough to receive greater funding because they are just a few kilometres further away. There is no easy solution to this situation particularly on the eastern seaboard where schools are located relatively closely together. Consequently, it is inevitable that some schools located close to an outer zone border will be relatively disadvantaged while those located close to an inner zone border will be relatively advantaged.

- 'We receive $60 rebate because of the distance category. Maryborough is 91 kilometres short of receiving $80. Because of the low socio-economic rating of Wide Bay, if the funding was worked out on the SES of the electorate, then we would be able to receive $80 as do some other schools in our electorate. As the economic times get harder, an extra $20 rebate may assist struggling families and students who may not go otherwise. Because the College sees the value in such a trip (our students pay approx $440), we have organised the trip as a compulsory curriculum trip for over 20 years.' (respondent 29345)

Finding: The existing eight zones are a defensible and manageable, but necessarily imperfect, way to determine the rebate.

ToR6: Do the expected and actual learning experiences from a subsidised excursion to the national capital meet the objectives of the PACER program?

As discussed under ToR1, (although not clearly articulated in the program guidelines), the aim of PACER is to improve students' knowledge of, and engagement with, civics and citizenship education through visiting national civics institutions such as Parliament House and participating in education programs where possible.

Furthermore, PACER does not identify specific curriculum outcomes to be met through the excursion. By visiting Parliament House, the Museum of Australian Democracy, the National Electoral Education Centre and the Australian War Memorial students have the opportunity to learn about democratic principles, the processes of parliament, the electoral system, the development of our democratic system, the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact on Australian society in a rich, authentic and nationally significant setting.

The PACER teachers' questionnaire asked teachers to identify the civics and citizenship learning outcomes they wished to address through the visit to Canberra and the extent to which they considered these had been achieved. Sixteen possible civics and citizenship topics were listed and teachers were asked to what extent they felt students achieved the desired learning objectives (indicating 'not applicable' if it was not a learning objective they were seeking to achieve from the excursion).

In addition to these sixteen topics, respondents were given the opportunity to identify four additional civics and citizenship learning outcomes they were seeking to achieve and to indicate the extent to which they believed they were achieved.

Not surprisingly, the two most desired civics and citizenship outcomes from the excursion were the acquisition of a basic knowledge and understanding of the federal parliamentary system and elections/ electoral system/ voting. More than 82 per cent of teachers who wanted to cover the outcome about elections and the electoral system while in Canberra found this outcome was fully achieved. For the outcome about the federal parliamentary system, 78 per cent seeking to achieve this outcome felt it was fully achieved, 21 per cent thought it was partially achieved. In addition, only five respondents indicated that knowledge of the federal parliamentary system was an outcome they did *not* want to achieve while in Canberra and only one teacher indicated it was not achieved.

The outcomes identified by teachers as ones they wanted to achieve on the excursion which received the highest number of 'did not achieve' ratings were:

- Concept of common good (3.7%)
- Identity of politicians and leaders (3.5%)
- Australian Constitution (3.2%)

As these are more difficult concepts, this is perhaps not surprising. It should also be noted, that for every outcome, less than 5 per cent of respondents indicated they had not achieved the sought outcomes, indicating that teachers were satisfied overall that the excursion provided relevant learning outcomes for their students.

The concept of 'common good' was the civics and citizenship education outcome least frequently covered in excursions. It also received the highest number of 'did not achieve' and the highest 'partially achieved'.

Only 49 per cent thought that the curriculum outcome of 'role and responsibilities of political leaders' was fully achieved.

A summary of responses to the key questions from the PACER questionnaire is included at Appendix 6.

Feedback from teachers about education programs at Old Parliament House prior to 2009 was also provided. It demonstrated a similarly high level of satisfaction.[15]

Repeat visitation

Another indicator of the perceived value of an excursion to Canberra is the number of schools which visit on a regular basis. About 95 per cent of respondents indicated their school was likely to organise another excursion to Canberra. Many commented that they had already made the bookings, that it was an annual event or that it was conducted biennially. A similar number of respondents indicated they expected their school would apply for PACER again.

Finding: The excursion to Canberra is regarded highly by teachers. There is a high level of satisfaction with the civics and citizenship learning experiences their students gain on an excursion to Canberra.

Efficiency

ToR7: What is the ratio of administration costs to rebate payments?

The administration and promotion of PACER was outsourced from the program's inception in July 2006. The Department took responsibility for paying the rebate to schools from October 2006 until June 2010. Outsourced administration and promotion of PACER includes:

- Informing all schools about PACER and the conditions under which it is paid;
- Supporting schools throughout the PACER application process;
- Ensuring schools have met the stated requirements before they are paid the rebate;
- Monitoring usage to ensure PACER is not overspent, overcommitted, underspent or under committed; and
- Providing regular accurate information to the Department and the PACER Advisory Committee.

The outsourced costs compared to the total amount of rebate payments for each year are shown below.

[15] Information provided by Museum of Australian Democracy 17 December 2009

2006–2007	Amount
- outsourced administration and promotion costs	$175,000
- rebate payments to schools which travelled in 2006–2007	$3,203,465

2007–2008	Amount
outsourced administration and promotion costs	$191,000
- rebate payments to schools which travelled in 2007–2008	$3,678,580

2008–2009	Amount
- outsourced administration and promotion costs	$202,000
- rebate payments to schools which travelled in 2008–2009	$3,884,350

2009–2010	Amount
- outsourced administration and promotion costs	$235,000
- rebate payments to schools which travelled in 2009–2010	$4,496,600

The cost of outsourced administration and promotion services as a proportion of the PACER budget has been approximately under six per cent of the program's operation each year. This is a reasonable proportion of the total costs given the high workload needed to ensure schools meet requirements. (See also comments on processes under ToR 3 and ToR 8.)

Finding: The cost of administering PACER is considered reasonable given the necessarily intensive nature of administration.

ToR8: In relation to cost per student, does the education outcome represent good value for money?

PACER provides an opportunity for students to participate in an educational excursion focussed on civics and citizenship. In considering the value for money, the learning outcomes from an excursion meeting the requirements of the PACER program were investigated. Without PACER, some students would not be able to undertake the excursion (see ToR 2 for more information on this aspect). It should be noted that some of the schools and students would still undertake the excursion and would therefore still gain these educational outcomes.

Attributes of learning at national institutions

In order to assess value for money, it is necessary to consider the educational outcomes from eligible excursions to Canberra. Feedback on desired learning outcomes and teachers' views on actual learning outcomes were sought in the online survey. Results indicated that the educational outcomes are significant, reaching more broadly and more effectively than classroom lessons on this content. This question did not allow for statistical data to be collected, however the overwhelmingly positive comments were analysed and illustrative examples of comments made by teachers are included below.

Teachers nominated three key elements as being integral to the benefits of learning about civics and citizenship through the excursion to Canberra. They were:

- students are seeing the 'real' thing, the real place, real work (while this predominantly referred to being in Parliament House and often actually seeing Parliament in action, teachers also thought being in Canberra was part of the 'real thing' experience, as was viewing historic objects at the Australian War Memorial);
- presenters are experts in their field: they are knowledgeable about the subject matter, they deliver focused programs at an appropriate level, they adjust the level to suit the learners, they provide immediate and informed feedback on queries asked by students and their passion for their subject matter is infectious; and
- the education programs are excellent as they are well developed, structured and targeted, interactive, hands-on and engaging.

The immediate outcomes from these experiences were positive responses from students: they were engaged, motivated, asked questions, the subject matter came alive, they felt an emotional impact (at the AWM in particular), demonstrated positive behaviour and values of pride and respect. All these responses strongly support the notion that the learning is effective.

The longer term outcomes teachers identified included a deeper understanding of the subject matter, longer retention of the content, more interest and greater engagement in the longer term ie as an active citizen.

Many teachers also commented that the experience consolidated, reinforced and/or complemented relevant class work and, for many students, it was the experiences on the excursion which gave the subject matter relevance. As civics and citizenship education is often considered to be dry for students, such positive responses and the excursion outcomes perceived by teachers are extremely important.

Specific comments made by teachers included:

- ' the wow factor is irreplaceable' (respondent 29375)
- 'Canberra gives the wow factor on a national scale' (respondent 29698)
- 'You cannot underestimate the impact of Parliament House and the War Memorial on a 15 year old student from regional NSW.' (respondent 29644)

How else could these learning outcomes be achieved?

Teachers were also to comment on whether or not these learning outcomes could be achieved in another way. Approximately 90 per cent of the open text responses indicated that while the

content could be covered in a classroom, the excursion provided other benefits or more effective learning. There were three sub-groups as follows:

- - 29.7 per cent of respondents said no ('No the opportunities provided are fabulous, it also helps to have another 'teacher' provide information as a back up to what happens in the classroom' – respondent 29444)
- 36.7 per cent indicated the learning outcomes could not be achieved as effectively in other ways
- 24.3 per cent said that the learning outcomes could be achieved in another way, but qualified this statement with a comment noting that the visit to Canberra provided significant learning benefits. Comments from this last group of respondents included:

- 'Some children would not have understood these concepts as well if we had not undertaken this excursion. Students all have different learning styles.' (respondent 29510)
- 'The "head" knowledge could be achieved in the classroom, but the "heart" knowledge is enhanced by visiting the institutions. It is the heart knowledge that will foster active and positive citizenship in our young people.' (respondent 29366)
- 'Yes, through audiovisual resources (DVDs, videos, internet), guest speakers, classroom role play, books, Discovering Democracy kit, but not as effectively!' (respondent 29921)
- 'Seeing the artefacts and the first hand experience gave them a personal connection with otherwise dry material' (respondent 29964)
- '[The excursion] adds depth to an otherwise rather dry topic.' (respondent 29861)
- 'The students who couldn't go on the school trip did an online tour of Canberra and they worked through a civics CD-ROM package etc. but hearing both groups of children speak, I know that the students who went to Canberra have a much better understanding of the election process and of Australian democracy and parliament than those children who did not go there.' (respondent 29908)

These views were reinforced by ACSA in its professional advice on the benefits of school civics and citizenship education excursions to the National Capital.

> The power of the Canberra excursion to provide students with an overview of the strength of Australia's democracy and an appreciation of our national heritage should not be understated. There is no real substitute for visiting Canberra and undertaking a set of planned learning experiences developed to meet relevant civics and citizenship learning outcomes.[16]

A number of teachers acknowledged that there are some excellent educational resources available which could be used to teach civics and citizenship education in the classroom. These included resources produced by the national institutions they visit in Canberra and those produced under the Australian Government's Discovering Democracy program. Many of these are available online. The availability of specific resources did not however replace the perceived value of an excursion to Canberra.

[16] ACSA report page 8

Some teachers noted that some states and territories also provide educational programs at their parliaments and courts, thus suggesting that alternate excursions could fill the need to some extent.

Costs per student

In 2009–10, the 'average' rebate payment per student was $45.89 and the 'average' outsourced administration cost was $2.40 per student. Departmental costs are not included. This contribution covers only a small proportion of the total cost of the excursion with individual students, their parents and possibly schools paying the major component of the cost.

In addition, schools forgo the alternative educational contributions by teachers during the period of their absence.

Given the valuable educational outcomes teachers identify from excursions to Canberra, as outlined above, including the engagement of students in civics and citizenship, the availability of PACER is considered to be an appropriate use of Government funds.

Finding: An excursion to Canberra provides experiences which generally result in increased student engagement, interest and motivation and cannot be replicated.

Due to limitations on the information obtained, including in relation to measurable learning outcomes and more specific information on alternate approaches to meeting similar learning outcomes it is not possible to reach a definitive conclusion as to whether the PACER provides 'good value for money'.

ToR9: What is the level of satisfaction from schools with the delivery of PACER?

In the PACER questionnaire, teachers and school administrators were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with:

a) the services and support provided by the National Capital Educational Tourism Project (the service provider for PACER administration and communication services); and

b) the processing of the rebate payment (which the Department was responsible for until 30 June 2010).

A summary of responses to these questions is shown in Table 5 below.

	Very satisfied	***Satisfied***	***Not satisfied***	***Very dis-satisfied***	***Not aware***	***Total***
Q 3.2 To what extent were you satisfied with the guidance and assistance you received from the NCETP?	485	214	7	11	12	729

	Very satisfied	*Satisfied*	*Not satisfied*	*Very dis-satisfied*	*Not aware*	*Total*
Percentage of total responses to this question	66.5%	29.4%	1.0%	1.5%	1.6%	100.0%
Q 3.3 To what extent were you satisfied with the processing of the rebate payment; ie, timeliness, accuracy.	465	232	8	7	11	723
Percentage of total responses to this question	64.3%	32.1%	1.1%	1.0%	1.5%	100.0%

Table 5: Satisfaction with PACER administration services

Respondents also had an opportunity to provide 'additional comments' at the end of the survey. Overwhelmingly, these comments expressed gratitude for the program and strongly supported its continuation. A relatively small number of teachers suggested changes to processes. These are dealt with under ToR 3 and ToR 11.

Another measure of satisfaction with the PACER program can be determined by correspondence received from those who are not satisfied with the program, its requirements or how it is administered.

The NCETP advised that it handled:

- 15 unsuccessful applications in 2006–07 (NB: while schools could apply late in 2006 because the program was in transition from predecessor programs, these 15 schools applied in the following financial year);
- 64 unsuccessful applications in 2007–08;
- 94 unsuccessful applications in 2008–09; and
- approximately 51 unsuccessful applications in 2009–10 (up to May 2010).

Most unsuccessful applications were due to schools not applying for PACER before travelling to Canberra. Further information on this requirement, and actions taken to ensure it is met, are set out under ToR 11.

Other reasons for unsuccessful applications included:

- *inability to make a booking* at one of the mandatory institutions (usually one of the two institutions at Old Parliament House). This issue was addressed in July 2008, by amending the guidelines to allow some flexibility when schools were unable to book into a mandatory institution. Instead, schools must visit one of five other institutions. This situation is handled on a case-by-case basis. Further information regarding this requirement is set out under ToR 3.
- *the school did not wish to visit a mandatory institutions*, because the excursion was linked to specific studies and the focus was on one institution or different institutions to those

which must be visited under PACER. This can occur even with civics and citizenship excursions. Discussion regarding the mandatory institutions schools must visit is set out under ToR 3.

- *the school did not have enough time to visit all mandatory institutions*. Fitting in all of the required visits, particularly with large groups of students can be difficult as all institutions have limited group sizes and allow a limited number of visits at any time. In addition, some schools try to limit their visit to one day to reduce costs and/or because students are unable to make overnight stays for cultural reasons.

On occasions, schools have provided other reasons to justify their non-compliance with the requirements including:

- the mandatory institutions are not appropriate for disabled students; and
- it was too late to change the itinerary to book into a required institution.

As all the mandatory institutions tailor their education programs to suit the needs of their student visitors, the reasons above are not considered bona fide. Schools which say it is too late to change their itinerary may have applied for PACER late or may not genuinely wish to change their itinerary.

Just over a third of schools which unsuccessfully applied for PACER have successfully applied for the rebate for a later visit.

A small number of correspondents (23) have written to the Minister regarding the PACER program since the program was introduced in July 2006. Eight of these were seeking the payment of PACER to a school although it had not met the requirement to apply before travelling. Some letters were written by senior school staff and others written by local Members of Parliament or Senators on behalf of the school. In each case the request was denied as the guidelines were clear and there had been extensive, ongoing communication with all schools since the PACER program commenced. In several of these instances, the school had successfully applied for PACER previously, indicating an awareness of the conditions under which it was granted.

Another six correspondents (eight letters – two wrote twice) sought an increase in the rate of rebate payments. Some of these requests were specific to individual schools and others addressed the rate of rebate amounts more generally. Two correspondents noted the high costs incurred by island schools such as those on Flinders Island and the Cocos Keeling Islands.

Finding: Most teachers involved in excursions which received PACER in 2009 were satisfied with the support they received from the NCETP and the payment of the rebate to their school.

Finding: Ongoing efforts are required to ensure all schools know about the requirements for PACER including the need to apply before travelling.

Governance

ToR10: Do stakeholders and potential recipients know about the PACER program, how to access it and do they understand the guidelines?

Since PACER was announced in May 2006, there have been ongoing efforts to inform all Australian schools about the availability of, and requirements for, PACER including:

- The former Minister for Education, Science and Training wrote about PACER to all federal parliamentarians in December 2006 and to all school principals in January 2007.
- Information about PACER was included in most issues of the *National Capital Excursion News* sent to all schools three or four times each year.
- A copy of the PACER guidelines was included with several of these mail outs.
- The PACER guidelines were included in the 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 *National Capital Excursion Planners* which were sent to all schools.
- A letter was sent by the NCETP to all school principals in August 2008 regarding minor changes to the PACER guidelines. This letter mentioned the need to apply three weeks prior to travelling and included a full copy of the PACER guidelines.
- The Department wrote to all schools in February 2010 regarding the PACER program including the need to apply prior to travelling.

The Department has also worked with the mandatory institutions which schools visit to encourage communication to schools about the existence of PACER and the need to apply prior to travelling.

A sample survey of schools visiting Canberra, conducted in 2007 and 2008 by Dr Brent Ritchie and Ms Sue Uzabeaga, found that 93.4 per cent were aware of PACER and its requirements.[17] It should be noted however that this survey was only completed by schools which had already visited Canberra. The response rate was 22 per cent.

A survey conducted by the University of Canberra in 2010 found that approximately 72 per cent of those who answered this question were aware of the PACER program. Of these respondents, nearly 38 per cent were from schools which had already received PACER. The relevant questions in this survey had a low response rate.

Despite information about PACER being sent to all Australian schools at least three or four times each year, that information does not necessarily reach the most appropriate person in the school. Anecdotal advice from the NCETP indicates that many schools rely greatly on bus and tour operators to plan and organise the school excursion. By also informing bus and tour operators about PACER, teachers are more likely to be made aware of the program and to have a better understanding of the requirements involved.

As well as regular distribution to schools of hard copies of the PACER guidelines and application form, it is also available electronically from three websites:

- the Department's website
- the NCETP's website
- the national civics and citizenship education website.

In relation to teachers' understanding of the guidelines, the NCETP has estimated that approximately two-thirds of the PACER applications were incomplete or would be deemed ineligible when initially received. These applicant schools were provided with additional assistance. Required information not initially entered on the application form or required details

[17] Data provided by the Centre for Tourism Research, University of Canberra through the NCETP. Results of this research were included in the unpublished report: Ritchie, Brent & Uzabeaga, Sue, July 2008. *Discover what it means to be Australian in your National Capital: Size and effect of school excursions to the National Capital, 2007/*2008.

about the excursion itinerary to demonstrate the school was booked into the mandatory institutions, is sought to ensure applications meet the guidelines. The NCETP has suggested that redesigning the guidelines to rearrange and reduce the content may reduce this high rate of additional assistance which currently needs to be provided.

Finding: While most schools planning a visit to Canberra know about PACER, a range of communications covering the availability of the rebate and the program requirements, need to be ongoing.

Recommendation: That the layout and content of the PACER guidelines and application form be reviewed with a view to making to them simpler and the form easier to complete.

ToR11: Could the process of administering PACER be improved?

Processes for administering PACER have been developed on the basis of the program requirements which are considered under ToR 3 of this report. This part of the report deals with the implementation of these requirements. This can be seen as two stages: prior to the visit (approval) and after the visit (acquittal).

A number of teachers commented positively on the process:

- 'I found the whole process very clear and not onerous. The use of email is great.' (respondent 29940)
- 'Very easy to do and on my initial first time organisation of trip to Canberra the feedback by phone and email was excellent.' (respondent 29334)
- '... the staff could not have been more helpful' (respondent 29978)

Other teachers commented on aspects which they found to be burdensome. In some cases specific changes were suggested. In particular, comments and suggestions included:

- 'If it has been granted once, I think it should be automatic for the following years, because it is the same paperwork each time' (respondent 29970)
- 'I would consider providing ... the grant upfront ... so that the grant can be used to pay or subsidise costs for those children whose parent/s find it difficult to pay the cost.' (respondent 29548)
- 'Having to tick a box for each institution visited can be trivial and an extra thing to consider when taking 50 students away' (respondent 29463)
- 'Collecting the stamps can be a bother with multiple groups ... This adds to the complexity of the task.' (respondent 29276)

In each year, a number of schools apply for PACER, but do not acquit their application, despite constant reminders[18]. In some instances the school has cancelled its excursion, but in other instances the teacher organising the excursion may have left or be on leave or it is not considered worthwhile pursuing the application.

[18] For example, a commitment was made for approximately 60 schools travelling in 2009–10 which subsequently did not acquit their application and receive the rebate. This accounted for about 3 per cent of applications for which a commitment was initially made.

One of the final processes in acquitting a PACER application is for schools to confirm the final number of students that actually travelled. In most instances, the result is less than the figure on which the application has been based.

Although a survey respondent suggested that an acquittal process from a previous year should be sufficient to pay PACER in subsequent years, the Department does not consider this to be appropriate as different staff might be involved, schools may not remember all the requirements and parents of each student group needs to be aware the rebate is being paid to the school.

While the work for supervising teachers is acknowledged, it would be inappropriate to pay PACER to a school before it travels as this may result in:

- the application not being acquitted through providing evidence of the visit and of post-visit requirements,
- having to seek a refund from the school if fewer students than originally planned travel,
- having to pay an additional amount to the school if more students travel.

There have been minor changes to the processes since PACER was introduced, including revising standard correspondence with schools and providing for online applications of PACER.

Finding: The PACER processes are implemented fairly and consistently. Schools are well supported through communication by email, phone and mail.

Recommendation: That processes for administering PACER be reviewed regularly and modified as required.

Conclusion

Through the provision of financial support for excursions to the national capital, Canberra, the PACER program assists students to participate in experiences aimed at improving their engagement and interest in civics matters, deeper and longer-term learning and increased engagement as active citizens in the longer term.

The opportunity to directly observe democratic processes, such as Question Time at Parliament House, and to examine how these processes have changed over time at the Museum of Australian Democracy, brings their civics and citizenship education to life and provides a meaningful context for classroom studies on these matters.

As such, the PACER program strongly supports Goal 2 of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* which states the aim that 'all young Australian become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens'.

The PACER program has supported students travelling to Canberra on a school excursion as part of their civics and citizenship education, but distribution of limited resources could be more equitable.

Appendix 1

PACER Schools Questionnaire

In 2009, your school undertook an excursion to Canberra, the national capital, that included visits to specific institutions. Funding was provided under the Australian Government's ***Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) program****. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is evaluating the PACER program in order to improve its design and delivery. To assist in this evaluation, could you please answer the following questions by 2 May 2010.*

Australian Government Statistical Clearing House Approval Number: 02084 - 01

Section 1: About your school

Please select the appropriate option/s to tell us about your school.

1.1	Educational level:	Primary	Secondary	Combined (Primary/Secondary)				Type here
1.2	Sector:	Government	Catholic	Independent				Type here
1.3	No. of students:	<50	50-100	101-500	501-1000	>1000		Type here
1.4	State:	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	TAS	Vic	WA	Type here

1.5 What is the postcode of the location of your school? _____

1.6 (optional) School name _____

1.6 b (optional) School address _____

Section 2: About your school excursion to Canberra

2.1 Please select the year level/s of the students who participated in the excursion:

4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

2.2 Please select the appropriate choice to indicate the civics and citizenship education (CCE) topics you wanted students to explore while in Canberra and the extent to which you felt students achieved the desired learning objectives. If this was not a topic you wished students to explore in Canberra select 'not applicable'.

CCE topics you wanted students to explore while in Canberra	**Extent to which you felt students achieved the desired learning objectives of the excursion (select most appropriate choice):**			
What it means to be Australian	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Concept of common good	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Active citizenship	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Democratic principles and values	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Purpose of laws	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Australian Constitution	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Development of Australian democracy	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Federation	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Features of Australian democracy	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Elections (electoral system/ voting)	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Features of representative government	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Three levels of government	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Federal parliamentary system	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Roles and responsibilities of political leaders	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Making and changing laws	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
Identity of politicians and leaders	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable

2.3 Please provide any additional CCE topics you wanted students to explore while in Canberra and indicate the extent to which you felt students achieved the desired learning objectives.

Additional CCE topics you wanted students to explore while in Canberra	*The extent to which you felt students achieved the desired learning objectives:*			
	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable
	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did not Achieve	Not applicable

2.4 Other than civics and citizenship education, what were the key purposes or aims of the excursion?

2.5 What are the specific benefits of learning about civics and citizenship, at the institutions you visited?

2.6 Could these learning objectives have been achieved another way, and if so, how?

2.7 Are there specific class room resources which could assist students to achieve similar civics and citizenship learning outcomes to those gained from visiting Canberra?

No

Yes (please specify)

2.8 Are there difficulties or problems in relation to participating in activities at civic institutions, museums, galleries and historic places?

No

Yes (please specify)

In order to obtain PACER you are required to visit Parliament House, Old Parliament House (Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House and/or the National Electoral Education Centre) and the Australian War Memorial.

2.9 Which of the following institutions would you choose to visit even if you were not required to?

Institution	**Would Visit even if not required**
Parliament House	☐
Parliamentary Education Office	☐
Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House	☐
National Electoral Education Centre	☐
Australian War Memorial	☐

Comments:

2.10 Are there are other venues in Canberra which would more effectively provide appropriate civics and citizenship education for your students?

No

Yes (please specify and say why)

2.11 Did you use the education resource *Exploring Civics and Citizenship Through a Visit to the National Capital, Canberra* which was designed to support schools visiting Canberra under the PACER program?

No Please explain why not.

Yes Please comment on its usefulness and educational value.

Section 3: PACER

Your school received the PACER. This section is about the need for PACER and delivery of PACER.

3.1 To what extent did the availability of PACER affect the school's decision on whether or not to travel to Canberra?

It didn't	Not much	A little	A lot	Would not travel without PACER

3.2 On behalf of the Australian Government, the National Capital Educational Tourism Project (NCETP) provides information about PACER to schools, receives and checks applications for PACER, and ensures schools complete the requirements after they have travelled. To what extent were you satisfied with the guidance and assistance you received from the NCETP?

Very Satisfied	**Satisfied**	**Not Satisfied**	**Very dissatisfied**	**Not aware**

Comments:

3.3 To what extent were you satisfied with the processing of the rebate payment, ie timeliness, accuracy.

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not aware

Comments:

3.4 Is your school likely to organise another excursion to Canberra? (please select one option)

Yes

No

Possibly

Comments:

3.5 Is your school likely to apply for PACER again?

Yes

No

Possibly

Comments:

Yes

No

Possibly

Comments:

3.6 Please make any other comments regarding PACER here:

Comments:

Thank you for participating in this evaluation of the PACER program.

Please tell us how long it took you to complete this questionnaire.

minutes

Appendix 2: PACER questions included in University of Canberra survey

1. Are you aware of the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) program which provides a subsidy to schools travelling to Canberra as part of Year 4-12 students' civics and citizenship education?

- Yes, our school has used PACER
- Yes, but our school has not used PACER
- I have heard about it, but don't know much about it
- No, I have never heard about PACER

If you answered yes to the question above:

2. Would the availability of this financial subsidy impact on your decision about your school excursion destination?

- Yes, we would be more likely to travel to Canberra because of the PACER
- It is one of many factors which would influence our decision
- No, we decide on the basis of other matters.

Appendix 3

Australian Government
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

PACER Guidelines

Objective

The PACER program encourages students' on-site learning about national democratic, historical and cultural institutions. The program will benefit students living further than 150 kilometres from Canberra.

Funding

The program operates as a rebate which is paid direct to schools after they have met the eligibility requirements for funding. This payment is GST free. The payment is a subsidy and is not meant to cover all costs. Distances are calculated by road to Canberra using the most favourable travelling routes which are not necessarily the shortest. The website www.whereis.com.au will be used to determine this.

Funds are allocated on a per student basis at rates varying according to distance travelled. The distance criteria (zones) are as follows:

Distance from Canberra	Funds Allocated Per student
150–499 kilometres	$20
500–999 kilometres	$30
1,000–1,499 kilometres	$60
1,500–1,999 kilometres	$80
2,000–2,499 kilometres	$120
2,500–2,999 kilometres*	$150
3,000–3,999 kilometres	$240
4,000 kilometres and over	$260

*includes all students from Tasmania because of additional air/sea travel expenses.

Funds should be used to reduce the costs for individual students.

Schools are encouraged to apply early as applications for funding will be dealt with in order of receipt. As there is a limited amount of funding, teachers are encouraged to apply as early as possible. Each application will be dealt with in order of receipt until funds are exhausted. At this point a waiting list will be created in the case of cancellations.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the subsidy, students must be enrolled with a recognised education provider (generally a school) 150 km or more away from the Canberra GPO and be part of a school excursion group whose principal purpose for travelling to Canberra is to enhance student learning in civics and citizenship education. School groups whose principal purpose for visiting the National Capital is to engage in sporting or social activities are NOT eligible for funding.

A student is only eligible for the subsidy once per calendar year and the onus is on the school to ensure that each student for whom the funding is claimed has not, to the best of the school's knowledge, received the subsidy previously.

Teachers or other adults accompanying the students are not eligible for a rebate. Funding will be available to students in years 4–12 only.

Teachers will need to submit an application at least three weeks prior to the excursion. To be eligible for the subsidy, prior approval must be obtained.

On approval of your application, teachers will be provided with appropriate paperwork to complete.

Requirements

Unless otherwise approved by the Department, students are required to visit:

- Parliament House (including taking a guided educational tour, and wherever possible, participating in a Parliamentary Education Office Program and meeting their local Member/Senator);
- Old Parliament House (OPH) (including undertaking an educational program at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House and/or the Electoral Educational Centre);
- the Australian War Memorial; and
- other national civic institutions where possible.

Teachers must ensure:

- Funding provided and activities undertaken are reported in your school newsletter or equivalent. (sample letter available);
- Use of current civics and citizenship education resources in preparation for the visit;
- Civics and citizenship unit/course outlines or equivalent are provided;
- The paperwork provided on approval of PACER application is completed and returned within six (6) weeks after the excursion.

Appendix 4: Utilisation of PACER in 2009 by state, sector and geographical classification

PACER schools 2009 by state and education sector

	Catholic	Gov't	Ind	Home	Total
NSW	187	594	120		901
NT	2	9	3		14
Qld	54	163	71	1	289
SA	19	71	39		129
Tas	10	11	10	1	32
Vic	57	199	63		319
WA	14	60	46	1	121
Total	343	1107	352	3	1805
% of all PACER	19.0%	61.3%	19.5%		1,805
Sectors as % of total schools	17.9%	69.6%	12.5%		

PACER schools as % of relevant number in state and sector

	Catholic	Gov't	Ind	Home	Total
NSW	30.8%	26.9%	30.6%		28.1%
NT	11.8%	6.0%	12.5%		7.4%
Qld	18.2%	13.1%	35.9%		16.6%
SA	17.3%	11.8%	35.1%		15.7%
Tas	25.0%	5.2%	23.3%		10.8%
Vic	11.2%	12.5%	21.7%		13.3%
WA	8.5%	7.8%	29.1%		11.1%

	Catholic	Gov't	Ind	Home	Total
Total	19.6%	16.3%	28.9%		18.5%

Key findings:

- Across Australia, independent schools are most highly represented and government schools have the lowest usage of PACER.
- Schools from New South Wales are most likely to access PACER with 28.1 per cent of all schools from NSW receiving PACER in 2009.
- Schools from NT are least likely to access PACER with only 7.4 per cent of all NT schools receiving PACER in 2009. Tasmania is also underrepresented as is Western Australia.
- Queensland independent schools are the most highly represented group by state and sector. Tasmanian government schools are the lowest represented group by state and sector.
- Western Australian independent schools are 3-4 times more likely to receive PACER than Western Australian government and Catholic schools.

PACER students and rebate payments by sector

	Catholic	Gov't	Ind	Home	Total
Students	18,595	55,968	17,983	8	92,554
Rebate payments	$767,690	$2,238,580	$1,137,970	$1,460	$4,145,700

PACER schools in 2009 by educational level of participating students

	Upper Primary	Lower Secondary	Middle Secondary	Upper Secondary	Schools bringing groups from multiple year levels	Total
NSW	817	4	63	6	11	901
NT	6	1	4	1	2	14
Qld	233	3	15	16	22	289
SA	84	2	16	17	10	129
Tas	18	0	6	0	8	32
Vic	258	13	24	18	6	319

	Upper Primary	Lower Secondary	Middle Secondary	Upper Secondary	Schools bringing groups from multiple year levels	Total
WA	39	2	38	21	21	121
Total	1455	25	166	79	80	1805

PACER schools by level & state as a percentage of PACER schools

	Upper Primary	Lower Secondary	Middle Secondary	Upper Secondary	Schools bringing groups from multiple year levels	Total
NSW	45.3%	0.2%	3.5%	0.3%	0.6%	49.9%
NT	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.8%
Qld	12.9%	0.2%	0.8%	0.9%	1.2%	16.0%
SA	4.7%	0.1%	0.9%	0.9%	0.6%	7.1%
Tas	1.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.4%	1.8%
Vic	14.3%	0.7%	1.3%	1.0%	0.3%	17.7%
WA	2.2%	0.1%	2.1%	1.2%	1.2%	6.7%
Total	80.6%	1.4%	9.2%	4.4%	4.4%	100.0%

Key findings:

- 80.6 per cent of PACER schools coming to Canberra consist entirely or predominantly primary students
- Only 1.4 per cent of PACER schools consist of students in the lower secondary level
- 45.3 per cent of PACER schools coming to Canberra consist entirely or predominantly primary students from NSW

- 4.4 per cent of PACER schools coming to Canberra are groups consisting of students from multiple educational levels
- 9.2 per cent of PACER schools coming to Canberra consist entirely or predominantly of middle secondary students

PACER students as a percentage of all students by year level, state & sector

	Primary				Secondary						
	Yr 4	**Yr 5**	**Yr 6**	**Yr 7 Pr**	**Yr 7 Sec**	**Yr 8**	**Yr 9**	**Yr 10**	**Yr 11**	**Yr 12**	**TOTAL**
NSW - C	0.03%	11.35%	42.95%		0.30%	0.08%	3.71%	3.72%	0.00%	0.24%	6.58%
NSW - G	0.75%	18.91%	33.63%		0.62%	0.13%	1.30%	3.01%	0.21%	0.01%	6.72%
NSW - H											
NSW - I	0.21%	11.44%	43.62%		0.18%	0.45%	1.18%	6.05%	0.44%	0.00%	6.36%
NT - C	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%		0.00%	0.00%	3.64%	22.69%	0.00%	2.12%
NT- G	0.00%	1.78%	5.73%	0.00%		4.56%	0.00%	4.66%	0.00%	0.00%	2.01%
NT - H											
NT - I	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%		3.10%	5.59%	16.10%	0.00%	0.00%	3.25%
Qld - C	0.00%	0.00%	4.31%	22.66%		0.37%	0.20%	1.09%	0.00%	0.33%	2.96%
Qld - G	0.08%	0.11%	1.84%	13.84%		0.83%	0.75%	0.75%	0.64%	0.94%	2.27%
Qld - H											
Qld - I	0.02%	0.11%	3.92%	46.17%		1.32%	0.29%	0.40%	0.42%	0.56%	5.29%
SA - C	0.00%	0.23%	1.93%	13.34%		0.00%	1.52%	1.51%	1.40%	0.38%	2.20%

	Primary				Secondary						
	Yr 4	**Yr 5**	**Yr 6**	**Yr 7 Pr**	**Yr 7 Sec**	**Yr 8**	**Yr 9**	**Yr 10**	**Yr 11**	**Yr 12**	**TOTAL**
SA - G	0.21%	0.12%	2.05%	6.63%		1.05%	1.71%	1.67%	1.69%	0.18%	1.63%
SA - H											
SA - I	0.00%	0.00%	11.04%	30.95%		0.00%	4.29%	1.53%	2.94%	2.11%	5.64%
Tas - C	0.00%	5.79%	20.86%		0.00%	0.08%	14.64%	0.33%	0.23%	0.43%	4.83%
Tas - G	0.00%	1.23%	3.13%		0.16%	0.51%	1.41%	1.18%	0.00%	0.00%	0.87%
Tas - H											
Tas - I	0.00%	0.00%	28.44%		0.32%	0.11%	8.23%	2.49%	1.00%	0.82%	4.24%
Vic - C	0.00%	3.65%	12.92%		0.00%	0.01%	1.08%	2.15%	1.18%	0.98%	2.36%
Vic - G	0.10%	5.61%	12.41%		0.09%	0.70%	1.24%	0.61%	0.11%	0.45%	2.53%
Vic - H											
Vic - I	0.19%	3.53%	27.67%	-	0.16%	2.94%	1.70%	1.34%	0.17%	0.69%	3.40%
WA - C	0.00%	0.00%	0.47%	0.41%		0.00%	3.37%	2.11%	1.20%	0.78%	1.01%
WA - G	0.00%	0.04%	0.79%	2.41%		0.36%	2.15%	2.46%	1.03%	0.61%	1.01%
WA -H											

	Primary				Secondary						
	Yr 4	**Yr 5**	**Yr 6**	**Yr 7 Pr**	**Yr 7 Sec**	**Yr 8**	**Yr 9**	**Yr 10**	**Yr 11**	**Yr 12**	**TOTAL**
WA - I	0.17%	0.43%	5.41%	17.91%		1.48%	7.73%	0.66%	1.95%	2.90%	3.87%
TOTAL	0.23%	6.72%	16.60%	14.99%	0.94%	0.62%	1.72%	2.01%	0.58%	0.50%	3.85%

Key findings:

- 16.6 per cent of Year 6 primary students receive PACER.
- Year 7 students in Queensland independent schools are the most highly represented sub-group, followed closely by Year 6 students from New South Wales independent schools. Both sub-groups are the final year of primary school for their relevant states.
- Student utilisation of PACER is extremely variable.

PACER schools 2009 by state and geographical classification

-	1.1	1.2	2.1.1	2.1.2	2.2.1	2.2.2	3.1	3.2	Other*	Total	& of PACER
NSW	487	119	31	37	111	102	10	3	1	901	49.9%
NT	N/A	N/A	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	1		14	0.8%
Qld	126	50	33	2	29	30	14	5		289	16.0%
SA	62	N/A	N/A	N/A	25	41	1	0		129	7.1%
Tas	N/A	19	9	N/A	N/A	4	0	0		32	1.8%
Vic	163	6	23	24	71	31	1	N/A		319	17.7%
WA	72	N/A	N/A	12	9	16	9	3		121	6.7%
Total	910	194	105	75	245	224	39	12	1	1805	100.0%
-	50.4%	10.7%	5.8%	4.2%	13.6%	12.4%	2.2%	0.7%			100%

* This refers to Norfolk Island Central School, which operates under the NSW education department, but is not listed on the geographical classification database.

PACER schools as percentage of total number of schools with that state and geographical classification

	1.1	1.2	2.1.1	2.1.2	2.2.1	2.2.2	3.1	3.2	Other	Total
NSW	32.0%	29.0%	28.4%	29.8%	21.9%	21.9%	19.6%	17.6%		28.1%
NT	N/A	N/A	15.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	10.5%	1.1%		7.4%
Qld	22.3%	20.9%	22.1%	5.7%	12.2%	9.0%	13.1%	6.3%		16.6%
SA	13.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	22.1%	23.7%	2.8%	0.0%		15.7%
Tas	N/A	17.3%	8.7%	N/A	N/A	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%		10.8%
Vic	12.0%	7.5%	12.6%	32.0%	15.1%	14.4%	7.1%	N/A		13.3%
WA	11.2%	N/A	N/A	12.8%	18.8%	13.8%	8.3%	3.6%		11.1%
TOTAL	19.9%	23.1%	17.4%	22.9%	17.8%	16.3%	10.8%	4.0%		18.5%

1.1 Metropolitan Zone Mainland State Capital City regions

1.2 Metropolitan Zone Major urban Statistical Districts

2.1.1 Provincial Zone Provincial City Statistical Districts 50,000 to 99,999

2.1.2 Provincial Zone Provincial City Statistical Districts 25,000 to 49,999

2.2.1 Provincial Zone Inner provincial areas

2.2.2 Provincial Zone Outer provincial areas

3.1 Remote Zone Remote areas

3.2 Remote Zone Very Remote areas

Key findings:

- Schools from Major urban statistical districts are most highly represented with 23.1 per cent of all schools in that geographical classification receiving PACER. This is followed closely by schools in Provincial city statistical districts 25,000 to 49,999 with 22.9 per cent of these schools receiving PACER.
- Schools from Very remote areas have the lowest representation with only 4 per cent of schools with this geographical classification receiving PACER.
- 16.2 per cent of all regional schools receive PACER compared to 20.4 per cent of all metropolitan schools

Appendix 5: Travel costs to Canberra

Place of origin	Cost to travel	Method of travel	Current rebate	% of travel cost	Difference between rebate and travel cost	Rebate zone
Sydney	$24	coach	$20	83.3%	$4	1
Melbourne	$44	coach	$30	68.2%	$14	2
Perth	$500	fly	$260	52.0%	$240	8
Perth	$500	fly	$240	48.0%	$260	7
Darwin	$600	fly	$260	43.3%	$340	8
Tasmania	$400	fly	$150	37.5%	$250	6
Brisbane	$250	coach	$60	24.0%	$190	3
North Queensland	$500	fly	$120	24.0%	$380	5
Brisbane	$265	fly to Sydney, then coach to Canberra	$60	22.6%	$205	3
Adelaide	$350	fly	$60	17.1%	$290	3
Brisbane	$365	fly directly to Canberra	$60	16.4%	$305	3

Appendix 6: Summary of responses to PACER survey

An email with a link to the online survey was sent to 1,805 teachers who were the nominated contact for PACER excursions in 2009. This was only sent to schools which had finalised their PACER application. There was some difficulty in contacting a small number of schools, however, 98.5% of schools were successfully contacted.

Electronic responses were received from 40% of these schools (735 schools responded electronically and 18 provided hard copy responses). All questions were optional.

Section 1: About your school

1.1	**Educational level:**	
1.1	Primary	543
1.1	Secondary	110
1.1	Combined (Primary/Secondary)	79
1.2	**Sector:**	
1.2	Government	450
1.2	Catholic	133
1.2	Independent	148
1.3	**1.3 No. of students:**	
1.3	<50	133
1.3	50-100	144
1.3	101-500	278
1.3	501-1000	125
1.3	>1000	50
1.4	**State:**	
1.4	NSW	371
1.4	NT	6

1.4	**State:**	
1.4	Qld	104
1.4	SA	53
1.4	Tas	18
1.4	Vic	130
1.4	WA	48
1.5	What is the postcode of the location of your school?	-
1.6	(optional) School name	-
1.6	(optional) School address	-

Section 2: About your school excursion to Canberra

2.1 Please select the year level/s of the students who participated in the excursion:

Year 4	25
Year 5	261
Year 6	472
Year 7	140
Year 8	26
Year 9	56
Year 10	65
Year 11	34
Year 12	31

2.2 Please select the appropriate choice to indicate the civics and citizenship education (CCE) topics you wanted students to explore while in Canberra and the extent to which you felt students achieved the desired learning objectives. If this was not a topic you wished students to explore in Canberra select 'not applicable'.

CCE topics you wanted students to explore while in Canberra	**Extent to which you felt students achieved the desired learning objectives of the excursion (select most appropriate choice):**			
-	**Fully Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Did not achieve**	**Not applicable**
What it means to be Australian	277	259	7	142
Concept of common good	133	283	16	231
Active citizenship	361	248	3	81
Democratic principles and values	489	186	2	33
Purpose of laws	420	217	1	61
Australian Constitution	314	284	20	72

CCE topics you wanted students to explore while in Canberra	Extent to which you felt students achieved the desired learning objectives of the excursion (select most appropriate choice):			
-	Fully Achieved	Partially achieved	Did not achieve	Not applicable
Development of Australian democracy	431	220	4	49
Federation	334	265	8	80
Features of Australian democracy	487	198	2	20
Elections (electoral system/voting)	564	115	7	31
Features of representative government	494	196	4	18
Three levels of government	455	205	10	36
Federal parliamentary system	559	152	1	5
Roles and responsibilities of political leaders	323	324	10	37
Making and changing laws	378	269	8	44
Identity of politicians and leaders	264	343	22	65

2.3 Please provide any additional CCE topics you wanted students to explore while in Canberra and indicate the extent to which you felt students achieved the desired learning objectives.

Additional CCE topics you wanted students to explore while in Canberra	The extent to which you felt students achieved the desired learning objectives:		
	Fully achieved	Partially achieved	Did not achieve
Topics suggested by respondents	125	51	5

2.4 Other than civics and citizenship education, what were the key purposes or aims of the excursion?

2.5 What are the specific benefits of learning about civics and citizenship, at the institutions you visited?

2.6 Could these learning objectives have been achieved another way, and if so, how?

2.7 Are there specific class room resources which could assist students to achieve similar civics and citizenship learning outcomes to those gained from visiting Canberra?

No 392

Yes (please specify) 285

2.8 Are there difficulties or problems in relation to participating in activities at civic institutions, museums, galleries and historic places?

No 482

Yes (please specify) 224

In order to obtain PACER you are required to visit Parliament House, Old Parliament House (Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House and/or the National Electoral Education Centre) and the Australian War Memorial.

2.9 Which of the following institutions would you choose to visit even if you were not required to?

Institution	Would visit even if not required
Parliament House	617
Parliamentary Education Office	457

Institution	Would visit even if not required
Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House	410
National Electoral Education Centre	452
Australian War Memorial	633

Comments:

2.10 Are there are other venues in Canberra which would more effectively provide appropriate civics and citizenship education for your students?

No 601

Yes (please specify) 60

[Comment box not available online]

2.11 Did you use the education resource Exploring Civics and Citizenship Through a Visit to the National Capital, Canberra which was designed to support schools visiting Canberra under the PACER program?

No 142

Yes (please specify) Please comment on its usefulness and educational value. No responses

Section 3: PACER

Your school received the PACER. This section is about the need for PACER and delivery of PACER.

3.1 To what extent did the availability of PACER affect the school's decision on whether or not to travel to Canberra?

It didn't 57

Not much 66

A little	168
A lot	274
Would not travel without PACER	166

3.2 On behalf of the Australian Government, the National Capital Educational Tourism Project (NCETP) provides information about PACER to schools, receives and checks applications for PACER, and ensures schools complete the requirements after they have travelled. To what extent were you satisfied with the guidance and assistance you received from the NCETP?

Very satisfied	485
Satisfied	214
Not satisfied	7
Very dissatisfied	11
Not aware	12

Comments:

3.3 To what extent were you satisfied with the processing of the rebate payment, ie timeliness, accuracy.

Very satisfied	465
Satisfied	232
Not satisfied	8
Very dissatisfied	7
Not aware	11

Comments:

3.4 Is your school likely to organise another excursion to Canberra? (please select one option)

Yes	690

No	7
Possibly	29

Comments:

3.5 Is your school likely to apply for PACER again?

Yes	703
No	4
Possibly	19

Comments:

3.6 Please make any other comments regarding PACER here:

Thank you for participating in this evaluation of the PACER program.

Please tell us how long it took you to complete this questionnaire.
Average time - 12.6 minutes

DEEWR Briefing No. BR08-000837

TITLE Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (Pacer) Program	For: Ms Julia Gillard Copy to:	Due date and reason: 28 April 2008.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister RECEIVED 15 APR 2008

Recommendation:

That you:

Note the
Information about the PACER program including the proposed review of the program in 2009-2010

Noted

Review of PACER program

- A review of the PACER program, scheduled for 2009-2010, will cover the rate of rebate payable for the different zones, schools' awareness about the program, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the program.
- PACER was over-subscribed last financial year and additional funds were drawn from other aspects of the program budget. All components of the program budget are fully committed for this financial year and current applications indicate there will also be an increase in PACER payments. (Rebate payments of approximately $3.2 million will be paid to schools which travel this financial year.)
- You may receive requests from schools for a higher rebate payment. A number of such requests, none of which were agreed to, were received last year. As funding in each financial year is fixed, an increased payment for one school may mean other schools are unable to obtain the rebate. The amount of rebate payable for the different zones will be considered as part of the program review.

CLEARED BY: Marie Hird, CURRICULUM BRANCH, 14 Apr, 2008

Ms Julia Gillard 4/5/08	COMMENTS: COMPLETED Scanned Copy on P.D.M.S 5/5/08
DATE REGISTERED: 18 February 2008	DATE RECEIVED IN MO: (date stamped in MO)

Primary Contact:	Marie Hird	W: 02 62407898	H:
Alternative Contact:	Rob Mason	W: 02 6240 8894	H:

Brief Number: BR11-005398

Australian Government
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth **Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations**	**Action required by Minister by: 21 October 2011** RECEIVED 8 NOV 2011 Parliamentary Services Section
	Branch/Group: NC/CAT

PACER Evaluation

- An internal evaluation of PACER was recently undertaken in consultation with the PACER Advisory Committee, which includes representatives of the institutions students visit in Canberra, as well as the ACT Government and the National Capital Authority.
- The final evaluation report (Attachment F) is for internal use only and will not be published. The report will, however, be provided to the PACER Advisory Committee in-confidence.
- The evaluation found PACER to be a successful program; valued by teachers, which supports the Government's commitment to students becoming active and informed citizens. The evaluation also found that:
    - Increased travel costs have eroded the value of PACER over time;
    - Some schools, particularly those from low socio-economic regions, would not undertake the excursion without PACER; and
    - Utilisation of PACER is uneven across states, locations and sectors.
- The evaluation suggested that options for supplementing funding or, alternatively, revising the eligibility criteria be investigated to better balance the level of eligible demand with the available funding. It should be noted, however, that the evidence of PACER changing behaviour and promoting student visits to Canberra is equivocal.
- Other recommendations, which the department has addressed in the revised program guidelines attached to this brief include the need to:
    - Clearly articulate the aim of the program and civics and citizenship learning objectives;
    - Clarify that relevant civics and citizenship learning can take place either before or after the excursion;

- Clarify that students who have participated in a Parliamentary Education Office program at Parliament House but have been unable to also undertake a guided tour, may still receive the rebate; and
- Be more explicit about the alternative institutions that schools can access when unable to book into Old Parliament House, provided students participate in education programs at the alternative institutions.

The Department will also establish a process through which national institutions can become recognised 'alternative institutions' under PACER (by demonstrating quality civics and citizenship education programs).

6. **note** the internal PACER Evaluation Report at Attachment H	Noted / Please discuss
7. **note** that the internal PACER Evaluation Report will not be published but will be	Noted / Please discuss

CLEARED BY Alex GORDON National Reform Support Branch 07/10/2011 16:53

COMMENTS: COMPLETED Scanned Copy on P.D.M.S. 8/11/11		Peter Garrett 24/10/2011	
Primary Contact:	Alex Gordon	Branch Manager	W: (02) 62407093
Branch/Group:	National School Reform Support/Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching		
Alternative Contact:	Scott Lambert	Director	W: (02) 62407073
Branch/Group:	National School Reform Support/Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching		

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PACER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Friday 25 November 2011
2.00pm - 4.00pro

Attendees

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)
Scott Lambert', Director, National CurricUlum Section (A/g Chair)
Declan O'Connell, Civics and Citizenship team

Australian War Memorial
Carol Cartwright, Head, Education and Visitor Services
Stuart Baines, Education Manager

National Capital Attractions Association
Heather Millard, Manager, Marketing &. Communication, National Film & Sound Archive; President, National Capital Attractions Association

National Electoral Education Centre
Jenny Pettigrove, Manager, National Electoral Education Centre

Parliament House, (Serjeant-at-Arms Office) Department of the House of Representatives
Siwan Davies, Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms

ACT Government
Chriz Sanchez

National Capital Education Tourism Project (NCETP)
Garry watson, Project Leader (ex-officio)

Apologies

Alex Gordon, DEEWR (Chair)
Jennifer Welch, DEEWR
Glenda Smith, Museum of Australian Democracy
Seona Doherty, National Capital Authority
Jonathon Kovacs, ACT Government

Item	Decisions, actions and outcomes
-	-

Item 3	**DEEWR's internal evaluation of the PACER program** Mr Lambert reported that a copy of the evaluation report had been provided to Committee members a few days ago. He thanked Committee members for their input which had helped to inform the report. He advised that the Minister had decided not to rebasethe program or move to a different model. Mr Lambert also reminded Committee members that, due to a Cabinet decision on Budget rules, it was no longer possible to top up PACER (a capped program) with funding from other sources. Apart from any consideration of rebasing the program or moving to a different model, the evaluation report recommended some separate administrative changes to the program. The Committee noted its support for these recommendations. Mr Lambert advised that there may be opportunities to revisit them. Ms Davis suggested that some advice be provided to agencies or Ministers about the future of the program and the outcomes of the review. She sought permission for circulation of the evaluation report within agencies and departments. Mr Lambert Undertook that DEEWR would investigate how such advice about the future of the program might be provided and respond to the request for further circulation of the evaluation report.

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PACER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 9 August 2011

2:00pm – 4:00pm

Attendees

PACER Advisory Committee

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)
Alex Gordon, Branch Manager, National Curriculum (Chair)
Jennifer Welch, Team Leader, Civics and Citizenship

Australian War Memorial
Carol Cartwright, Head, Education and Visitor Services

Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House
Glenda Smith, Manager, Learning and Interpretation

National Capital Attractions Association
Heather Millard, Manager, Marketing & Communication, National Film & Sound Archive; President, National Capital Attractions Association

National Capital Authority
Seona Doherty, Manager, Exhibition Facilities

National Electoral Education Centre
Jenny Pettigrove, .Manager, National Electoral Education Centre

Parliament House, (Serjeant-at-Arms Office) Department of the House of Representatives
Siwan Davies, Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms
Lynne Eveston, Assistant Serjeant-at-Arms

National Capital Education Tourism Project (NCETP)
Garry Watson, Project Leader (ex-officio)

Apologies

Chriz Sanchez and Jonathon Kovacs, ACT Government
Scott Lambert, Director, National Curriculum Support Section, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)

Item	Decisions, actions and outcomes

Item 4	**DEEWR's internal evaluation of the PACER program** Ms Gordon thanked the National Capital Educational Tourism Project Stakeholder Council for its submission to the evaluation, and invited members to provide written feedback to DEEWR by no later than Friday 26 August 2011. The feedback would be included in the review as appropriate. DEEWR will be undertaking modelling to explore the effects different eligibility criteria and/or rebate=rates would have if applied. The finalised evaluation report and additional advice about the operation of the program will be provided to the Minister.

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PACER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 29 March 2011

2.00pm - 4.00pm

Attendees

PACER Advisory Committee	
ACT Government	Jonathon Kobus for Chris Sanchez
Australian War Memorial	Carol Cartwright Head, Education and Visitor Services
Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House	Glenda Smith Manager, communications and Visitor Programs
National Capital Attractions Association	Lorraine Neish Chair, NCETP Stakeholder Council
National Capital Authority	Seona Doherty Manager, Exhibition Facilities
National Electoral Education Centre	Rick Banfield Assistant Manager, Marketing and Communications for Jenny Pettigrove
Parliament House (Serjeant-at-Arms Office)	Lynne Eveston Assistant Serjeant-at-Arms
National Capital Education Tourism Project (NCETP)	Garry Watson Project Leader (ex-officio)
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)	Alex Gordon Branch Manager, National Curriculum, (chair) Scott Lambert Director, National Curriculum Support Section Jennifer Welch Team Leader, Civics and Citizenship
Apologies	Siwan Davies Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms Office, Department of the House of Representatives Jenny Pettigrove Manager, National Electoral Education Centre Chris Sanchez, Senior Business Manger, Territory and Municipal Services

Item 6	**DEEWR's internal review of the PACER program** Ms Gordon indicated that although much work has been done on the internal DEEWR review, further work will be required in light of changes to Budget Rules. Input from the Committee was invited for possible inclusion in the review. **ACTION:** DEEWR to convene a meeting 0(the Committee to consider a final draft of the review report as soon as that had been prepared.

PAPER AC1004/2.1

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PACER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

30 NOVEMBER 2010

10:30am- 12:00pm

Attendees

Australian War Memorial
Carol Cartwright, Head, Education and Visitor Services

Department of the House of Representatives
Siwan Davies, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms ..

Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House
Glenda Smith, Manager, Communications and Visitor Programs

National Capital Authority
Seona Doherty, Manager, Exhibition Facilities

National Electoral Education Centre
Rick Banfield, Assistant Manager.

National Capital Attractions Association
Heather Millard, Manager, Marketing and Communications

ACT Government
Jonathon Kobus, Product and Tourism

National Capital Educational Tourism Project
Garry Watson, Project Leader (ex officio)

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)
Scott Lambert, Director, National Curriculum Support Section (NCSS) (Chair)
Esther Robinson, Assistant Director, NCSS
Jennifer Welch, Assistant Director, NCSS, PACER Program Officer
30/11/2010) (Minutes).

ITEM 4 Internal review of the PACER program

Mr Lambert reported that although additional work has been undertaken on the PACER review, DEEWR has experienced significant delays in finalising the report due to a significant restructure at DEEWR and the need to respond to day to day imperatives.

The draft review is currently being considered by DEEWR.

Mr Lambert thanked the Committee for their valuable contributions to the review and reminded the committee that the report can only make recommendations to Government. The outcomes of those recommendations are subject to the Government's priorities.

Action: A meeting of the PACER Advisory Committee will be held to consider the draft report when it has been internally cleared.

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PACER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

27 July. 2010
10 am - 11.50 am

Attendees

Australian War Memorial
Carol Cartwright, Head, Education and Visitor Services

Department of the House of Representatives
Lynne Eveston, Assistant Serjeant-at-Arms

Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House
Glenda Smith, Manager, Communication and Visitor Programs

National Capital Attractions Association
Trish Kirkland, President

National Capital Authority
Seona Doherty, Manager, Exhibition Facilities

National Electoral Education Centre
Rick Banfield, Assistant Manager, National Electoral Education Centre

National Capital Educational Tourism Project
Garry Watson, Project Leader (ex officio)

DEEWR
Sarojini Mitchell, Director, Humanities Section (Chair)
Esther Robinson, PACER Program Officer (Minutes)

ITEM 4 PACER program evaluation

Ms Mitchell noted that a short written report updating members on progress of the PACER evaluation was included in the meeting papers. She thanked members for their input to the evaluation, and in particular, the feedback provided to the Australian Curriculum Studies. Association.

As part of the evaluation, Ms Mitchell said that the Department would like to meet with members individually. A draft report would then be circulated for members' input.

Mr Watson asked if they Evaluation Sub-committee would meet prior to finalising the report. Ms Mitchell agreed that this would be possible.

Ms Mitchell reminded members that the PACER evaluation report can only make recommendations on the program. Implementation of recommendations is subject to approval by the Minister for Education.

MINUTES OF THE PACER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

30 March 2010

Attendees

Australian War Memorial
Sarah Hitchcock, A/g Head, Education and Visitor Services
Stuart Baines, A/g Manager, Education

Department of the House of Representatives
Lynne Eveston, Assistant Serjeant-at-Arms

Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House
Glenda Smith, Manager, Communication and Visitor Programs

National Capital Attractions Association
Trish Kirkland, President

National Capital Authority
Seona Doherty, Manager, Exhibition Facilities

National Electoral Education Centre
Rick Banfield, A/g Manager, National Electoral Education Centre

National Capital Educational Tourism Project
Garry Watson, Project Leader (ex officio)

DEEWR
Sarojini Mitchell, Director, Humanities Section (Chair)
Esther Robinson, PACER Program Officer (Minutes)

ITEM 4 PACER program evaluation

Ms Mitchell noted that a short written report updating members on progress of the PACER evaluation was included in the meeting papers. She thanked members for their input to the evaluation, and in particular, the feedback provided on the online questionnaire for teachers who travelled with a PACER excursion in 2009.

Ms Mitchell reported that Australian Curriculum Studies Association have been contracted to provide external professional advice on the PACER program with Ms Kathy School and Ms Judy Gauld being the key personnel working on the project. Ms School would like to provide members with the opportunity to talk to them. Ms Mitchell asked if members were happy to do this. All members agreed to be contacted by Australian Curriculum Studies Association. In response to a question from Ms Smith, Ms Robinson noted that the consultancy was included in the evaluation Terms of Reference. Its purpose was to provide the view of an informed civics and citizenship expert on the civics and citizenship learning students gained from a 'PACER excursion'. It was not the intention of the consultancy to undertake extensive research. The consultant would speak to institutions which schools must visit under the PACER program in the first instance.

Mr Watson said that when asked by other national capital attractions about how they might link into the PACER program, he has advised them that a program review would be undertaken in 2009-10 and recommended they write to the Department. While he thought the review was an

opportune time to talk to representatives from other institutions, he acknowledged that this might raise expectations.

There was a brief discussion on the timing of potential changes to the PACER program. It was agreed that a lead time of several months was highly desirable if implementing changes to the PACER guidelines or program requirements.

Ms Mitchell advised members that, where appropriate, the Department would contact members by email to seek their input to the PACER evaluation via email.

DRAFT Minutes of the PACER AC Evaluation Sub-Committee

Held 14 December 2009

Attendees

ACT Government
Chris Sanchez, Senior Business Manager, Australian Capital Tourism

Australian War Memorial,
Sarah Hitchcock, Head, Education and Visitor Services

Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House
Glenda Smith, Manager, Learning and Interpretation

National Capital Educational Tourism Project (NCETP)
Garry Watson, Project Leader

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Declan O'Connell, A/g Director, Humanities Section (Chair)
Tracie Ennis, Director, Education Evaluation Section
Yingru Wu, Assistant Director, Education Evaluation Section
Esther Robinson, Assistant Director, Humanities Section
Millennia Pullen, Humanities Section (Minutes)

ITEM 3 PACER program evaluation.

Dr O'Connell explained that the Department was previously required to formally evaluate programs every four years and that such evaluations were usually conducted by an external evaluation consultant. These evaluations could affect the whether or not the program continued to operate, while the requirements for PACER changed in 2006, when it became an ongoing program, it was still considered appropriate practice to evaluate programs regularly.

The PACER evaluation would be conducted internally under the guidance of the Education Evaluation team. The results would inform how to manage the program in the future including identifying any changes to make the program more effective.

Ms Robinson provided a general introduction to the evaluation explaining that the aim was to evaluate the existing program, not to do general research about civics and citizenship education or consider the broader field of educational tourism in Canberra. The focus would be on the outcomes of the program, rather than auditing what has already happened. She saw the evaluation as providing a valuable opportunity to develop an evidence base justifying the program and possibly for recommending any changes to the program.

The Department identifies four key areas for its program evaluations - appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and governance. A data matrix has been prepared showing the

information needed to answer each question as well as the likely source of the information and how it will be collected. The four proposed methodologies to be used are:

- desktop research (internal, drawing on existing data or published research);
- a survey of all schools (through Naomi Dale's research project);
- a survey of teachers who have already accessed PACER;
- an expert analysis of aspects of the program (this would be quite specific tasks).

Ms Ennis said that it was good practice to evaluate the program thoroughly and not do a minimal evaluation in order to 'tick the box'. Involvement by the Education Evaluation team provides a certain amount of independence for the evaluation.

ITEM 3.1 PACER program evaluation - Appropriateness questions

It was explained that the Appropriateness section of the evaluation deals with the role of the Australian Government and why it is appropriate for the Australian Government to be running this program as distinct from state and territory education departments, ACT government or private enterprise.

There was some discussion regarding whether the PACER program should be evaluated in relation to the Australian Government's social inclusion agenda. Ms Wu explained that the first question deals specifically with current Australian Government policies and priorities and the program needs to be considered against these. It was agreed that this question could incorporate how the PACER program assists students on the basis of distance, being one feature of possible disadvantage and PACER usage would also be looked at in relation to socio economic status indicators.

This question would also cover how the program meets the Governments aim as set out in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians for all young Australians to become active and informed citizens. The statements of Learning for Civics and Citizenship could be used to examine learning goals.

It was noted that the third question deals with the guidelines and whether they achieve their aim. Mr Watson suggested the evaluation should consider whether it would be appropriate to broaden the list of institutions schools could visit while in Canberra. It was explained that this was covered in question 3 and the current draft of a survey to teachers included these questions.

ITEM 3.2 PACER program evaluation - Effectiveness questions

In introducing the questions under Effectiveness, Ms Robinson said that question 5 deals with a core issue of the PACER program, that of the travel costs of school excursions compared with the subsidy PACER provides. The PACER program has eight levels of rebate aimed at making excursions to the national capital more equitable for everyone, regardless of where they live. It was noted that a travel subsidy would never cover all costs nor would it remove all of the barriers to organising a school excursion.

Mr Watson agreed that it was important to consider whether or not the current zones were appropriate. He also noted that issues they face in relation to administering PACER usually come from schools on zone border and those schools which travel indirectly to Canberra eg Perth schools often travel via Sydney because of available flights.

Question 6 aims to identify what teachers expect to achieve from the excursion and what is actually achieved, as well as using existing data in the form of units of Work which schools provide to demonstrate the link between the excursion and their civics and citizenship teaching. Ms Robinson explained that

assistance identifying relevant research and evaluation in relation to student learning on school excursions and specifically in cultural institutions

would be appreciated. In addition, the views and knowledge of education staff at each of the institutions could be useful. Ms Smith said that Old Parliament House surveyed teachers in the past regarding their educational programs. While they could probably provide raw data, the data had not been analysed.

Mr Watson commented that the CCE national assessment report indicated that non-school activities were important in developing students' CCE understanding. Dr O'Connell explained that this referred to students' participation in school governance activities (eg SRCs) and in civics and citizenship related activities outside school (eg voluntary work and specific activities such as Clean Up Australia Day) in a broad sense.

ITEM 3.3 PACER program evaluation - Efficiency questions

Ms Robinson noted that in relation to the questions under Efficiency and the issues raised in these questions, there is already a reasonable understanding of the answers. The evaluation process will provide an opportunity to formalise and document this information.

Question 8 addresses value for money and as such explores the educational value of on-site learning. As this question deals with similar issues to those which institutions would consider when explaining and justifying their education programs, Ms Robinson asked members to assist by identifying relevant research on which to draw and allowing the views and knowledge of staff in each of the institution to be documented if necessary.

Action Ms Smith will email names of researchers who have worked in the area of school excursion learning. She noted that Dr Piscitelli AM, a researcher in education and the arts, will be conduct a workshop with MoAD staff in March 2010.

In relation to improving the current processes for administering PACER, Ms Ennis explained that while the evaluation might identify areas where this could happen, it would not specifically address it.

ITEM 3.4 PACER program evaluation - Governance questions

Ms Robinson said that Governance questions address whether the program is operated in a fair and equitable manner. She noted that considerable thought and energy had been put into making the PACER program open, transparent, accountable and fair. Despite this, issues sometimes arose often around the wording of the guidelines.

Question 10 covers awareness of PACER. While we know all schools have been told about the program many times, the purpose of the question is to confirm that the message is getting through and teachers are hearing what is being said. As well, it is the opportunity to formally document this information. Mr Watson agreed, noting he was interested in knowing whether the NCETP's promotion activity was effective. He suggested the question should also incorporate whether teachers understand the requirements set out in the guidelines. This was agreed.

In relation to Question 11, Ms Robinson said that it is always appropriate to seek feedback on our processes. Ms Ennis asked if the evaluation would consider whether the guidelines needed to be refined or clarified. It was noted that this would be covered under Question 11 with some elements also covered in Question 3.

ITEM 3.5 PACER program evaluation – Timeline

A time frame for the evaluation was included in meeting papers. The intention is to complete the evaluation by June 2010.

Close

Dr O'Connell thanked members for their input to the PACER evaluation. He suggested that it may be easier to communicate about the evaluation by email rather than through formal meetings. The meeting closed at 11.00 am.

MINUTES OF THE PACER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

1 December 2009

Attendees

ACT Government
Chris Sanchez, Senior Business Manager, Territory and Municipal Services

Australian War Memorial
Samantha Tidy, Education Manager
Sarah Hitchcock, A/g Head, Education and Visitor Services

Electoral Education Centre
Jenny Pettigrove, Manager, National Electoral Education Centre

Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House
Glenda Smith, Manager, Communication and Visitor Programs

National Capital Attractions Association
Trish Kirkland, President

National Capital Authority
Seona Doherty, Manager, Exhibition Facilities

National Capital Educational Tourism Project
Natasha Watson, Marketing Manager (ex officio)

DEEWR
Suzanne Northcott, Branch Manager, National Curriculum Branch
Declan O'Connell, A/g Director, Humanities Section
Esther Robinson, PACER Program Officer (Minutes)

ITEM 5 PACER program evaluation Sub-Committee

Ms Northcott informed members that the Department has entered into a contract with the University of Canberra to purchase some data which is being collected as part of a research project being conducted by Ms Naomi Dale. The questions deal with whether schools are aware of the PACER program and whether the financial subsidy would affect the school's decision about travelling. Because Ms Dale was contacting all schools as part of her project, this was identified as a useful and efficient Way to obtain relevant information for the PACER program evaluation.

Action: The Evaluation Sub-Committee will meet before the end of 2009 to consider the PACER program evaluation terms of reference.

Mr Sanchez agreed to participate in the sub-committee along with Ms Smith, Mr Watson, Ms Hitchcock and representatives from the Department.

Action: The NCETP will send the .Department a copy of the diagram from the NCETP Business Plan which shows the various committees around the PACER program and the NCETP for distribution to members.

MINUTES OF THE PACER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

28 July 2009

Held at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House

Attendees

ACT Government
Chris Sanchez, Senior Business Manager, Territory and Municipal Services

Australian War Memorial
Samantha Tidy, Education Manager

Electoral Education Centre
Jenny Pettigrove, Manager, Electoral Education Centre

Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House
Glenda Smith, Manager, Learning and Interpretation

National Capital Attractions Association
Trish Kirkland, President

National Capital Authority
Seona Doherty, Manager, Exhibition Facilities

Parliament House
Claressa Surtees, A/g Serjeant-at-Arms

National Capital Educational Tourism Project
Garry Watson, Project Leader (ex officio)

DEEWR
Suzanne Northcott, Branch Manager, National Curriculum Branch (Chair)
Declan O'Connell, A/g Director, Humanities Section
Esther Robinson, PACER Program Officer (Minutes)

ITEM 6 Evaluation Sub-Committee

Ms Northcott explained that the terms of reference for the PACER program evaluation have been drafted, but not approved. As Ms Cartwright is no longer at the Australian War Memorial, members were invited to contribute to the PACER program evaluation.

Action: Ms Tidy undertook to see if another AWM staff member would be able to participate.

Action: Ms Pettigrove was invited to consider if she was able to participate.

PAPER 2

PAPER 2

DRAFT Minutes of the PACER AC Evaluation Sub-Committee

Meeting 2: Held 4 February 2009

Attendees

Australian War Memorial,
Carol Cartwright, Head, Education and Visitor Services
Linda Ferguson, Evaluation and Visitor Research Manager

National Capital Educational Tourism Project (NCETP)
Garry Watson, Project Leader

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Declan O'Connell, A/g Director, Humanities Section (Chair)
Sandra Fox, Director, Education Evaluation Section
Esther Robinson, Assistant Director, Humanities Section (Minutes)

ITEM 4 PACER program evaluation

Dr O'Connell explained that the PACER program evaluation would largely be conducted in-house drawing on the expertise of staff in the Education Evaluation Section. Ms Fox explained that program reviews look at the reason a program was funded and whether the outcomes are meeting that requirement. While work has begun on the program evaluation, the intention is to finalise it in 2009-10.

Minutes of the PACER AC Evaluation Sub-Committee

15 January 2009

Attendees

Old Parliament House
Kate Cowie, Deputy Director, Exhibitions, Research and Programs
(and Chair, NCETP Stakeholder Council)

Australian War Memorial,
Carol Cartwright, Education and Visitor Services
National Capital Attractions Association
Chris Owens, Vice President

National Capital Educational Tourism Project (NCETP)
Garry Watson, Project Leader

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Susan Smith, Group Manager, National Initiatives Group (Chair)
Declan O'Connell; A/g Director, Humanities Section
Lisa Cox, Assistant Director Humanities Section (Minutes).

ITEM 2 Proposed evaluation research project

Ms Smith invited Mr Watson to outline the proposal, before other members provided comments.

Mr Watson explained that Dr Brent Ritchie has suggested a project utilising an Australian Research Council (ARC) Grant, similar to a recent Queensland research project which investigated evidence of behavioural change in students who visited environmental-based attractions such as national parks. Mr Watson has previously worked with Dr Ritchie, who is currently based at the University of Queensland and was formerly employed at the Centre for Tourism Research at the University of Canberra.

The proposed project, Mr Watson suggested, could look at civics and citizenship education broadly, including elements such as the PACER program, the national and cultural institutions in Canberra, the Australian Government's civics and citizenship education program, and the civics and citizenship national assessment program. The research could consider behavioural change in students, the impact of visits to Canberra and possibly also look at previous financial assistance programs.

Ms Cowie noted that research of this kind would also give institutions the chance to study the long-term impact of their education programs. They need feedback of this sort but do not have the capacity to do this long-term research themselves. The research could investigate whether their programs are meeting both the institutions' and the Government's objectives.

Mr Watson advised that ARC Grants are provided on an 80 per cent/20 percent basis, with

the ARC providing 80 per cent and partners in the project providing 20 per cent. There is only a 50-50 success rate with grant applications. The grant would have to be applied for by the end of March although there are possibly two funding rounds each year. This means that, if the proposed approach was agreed, research needs would have to be identified by the end of February in order to give Dr Ritchie a month to write the application.

Ms Cartwright noted that it would be good to see if the programs offered by institutions are making a difference. Mr Watson said that if the programs are not making a difference, they would like to know now.

Ms Smith said that there was merit in a broad approach and that the collaborative approach that already exists should be built on.

Ms Cowie noted that the institutions have a long record of collaboration and have conducted research in the past which has informed the development of programs. This provides a successful model to build on. Ms Cowie also said that they wanted to link with the Department's aims (eg educational outcomes) not just the aims of individual institutions.

Ms Cartwright indicated that the AWM would be very supportive and that it was the long-term focus and depth of scholarship that appeals. It would have more credibility than what the Memorial could do with its own evaluations.

Mr Owens noted that the proposed research project would enable national institutions beyond those involved with PACER to see how they could contribute and improve their programs.

Mr Watson indicated that at least ten institutions would be prepared to participate in the project:

- Old Parliament House
- National Museum of Australia
- Questacon
- Australian War Memorial
- National Portrait Gallery
- National Gallery of Australia
- Parliament House
- National Archives of Australia
- Australian Electoral Commission
- NCETP/NCAA

In addition, he thought, the National Capital Authority would try to be involved. As a way forward, Ms Smith suggested that we need to identify exactly what is needed and/or wanted from the proposed research. We also need to look at whether one particular evaluation model is better than others. The institutions interested in participating could be approached to ask them what they want researched.

The steps would be:

- clarify the purpose of the research;
- look at possible models;
- consider whether or not the proposed ARC project model is the best model;
- investigate the funding issues; and
- decide who is leading/endorsing the project and consider how it fits with each participant's evaluation plans.

Dr O'Connell explained that the PACER program was due to be evaluated as part of good business practice, through an internal evaluation in 2009-10. As PACER is an ongoing program, external evaluation is not a requirement.

Ms Smith noted that the Department is also doing some strategic thinking on CCE. The PACER program binds elements of CCE together, but strategically it would be good to look at CCE more broadly. She also explained there is less discretionary funding available now because of the new state/territory funding arrangements.

Mr Watson said that a possible fundamental question for the research is: 'Are we effective in the range of programs currently being offered in improving knowledge in civics and citizenship education?'

Ms Smith noted that the conceptual framework for most evaluation projects includes effectiveness, efficiency, appropriateness and value for money. The Department could do some preliminary work with its internal evaluation area.

Dr O'Connell noted that the results of the 2007 CCE National Assessment will be released shortly. As well as the test results, the report will include a survey of the students, including identifying opportunities students have had to participate in CCE activities. This information will be an important resource.

ACTION: DEEWR will circulate information on the National Assessment Program Civics and Citizenship including information about the student background survey.'

Ms Smith noted that it would be wise to have some evaluation options available in the lead up to the release of the 2007 results rather than leaving it until 2009-10. MCEETYA could ask these sort of questions eventually so it is appropriate to consider these issues now.

Mr Watson suggested that the proposed research might be able to draw on work already done, if data could be re-used.

Ms Smith said it would be good for sub-committee members to know what MCEETYA is doing so that the national assessment framework is understood.

ACTION: DEEWR will provide information about current MCEETYA work in relation to civics and citizenship education.

Ms Smith suggested that work commences before the next meeting on developing a set of questions that need to be answered (with a need to think broadly), thinking through what the relevant activities would be, what the links are, and how it could all be put together.

Ms Cowie asked whether DEEWR is able to apply for ARC grants. Ms Smith said that these sort of questions would need to be worked through as well as issues such as procurement.

Ms Smith noted that while the proposed research is a relatively small part of CCE it is valuable as the role of the national capital is a significant element of civics knowledge and understanding.

ACTION: Sub-committee members will consider:

- **what needs to be asked (both collectively and individually)**
- **how to combine these questions in an evaluation framework**
- **what evaluation models are available.**

Members should also consider what not to include in the proposed research project.

Ms Smith suggested a representative from the DEEWR evaluation area could come to the next meeting. Ms Cartwright offered to bring an evaluation expert from the AWM.

ACTION DEEWR will circulate the Melbourne *Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians.*

The next meeting will be held on either 3 or 4 February 2009.
ACTION: DEEWR will identify possible times and arrange a meeting at this time.
ACTION: Mr Watson will do some more checking, including investigating ARC processes before the next meeting