

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DepEd Gets P494 million from AusAID for basic education

The Australian Government, one of the country's largest bilateral grant donors, has earmarked some A\$13 million (approximately P494 million) to the Department of Education (DepEd) in 2008 giving it a wider financial berth to pursue its Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA).

The amount forms part of the substantial Australian support through the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) for the Philippine basic education sector.

BESRA is a package of policy reforms that aims to put in place an education system that is able to deliver a sustainable quality education for all Filipino children.

In 2007, AusAID released A\$10 million to fund initiatives that accelerate the introduction of BESRA and provide for a sustainable framework for improved access to quality education.

The support of the Australian government to improve basic education in the Philippines is expected to increase in the next four years based on progressive performance in implementing BESRA.

According to Australian Ambassador to the Philippines Rod Smith, the A\$13 million has been allotted for incentive-based funding and will be released subject to performance against agreed benchmarks.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus welcomes the support of the Australian government saying that "critical to the successful implementation of BESRA is the continuing assistance extended by our partners in development such as AusAID."

Lapus pointed out that incentive-based performance is focused on improving resource allocation to schools, including performance-based management of teachers. Also up for performance review are the internal audit and reporting capacity of DepEd's division and regional offices as well as improvements in medium-term planning, budget allocation and budget execution

The Australian government's official development assistance to the Philippines for 2008-2009 is estimated to reach A\$109.3 million ((P4.4 billion) representing an increase of some 9 percent, close to 40% of which is allocated to basic education.

Australia, through AusAID, is one of the top three bilateral donors outside of the US Aid for International Development (USAID) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). These official development assistance (ODA) organizations provide financial assistance to developing countries in the form of grant packages.

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As stipulated in the current framework of the jointly agreed Australia-Philippines Development Assistance Strategy from 2007- 2011, the Australian government aid will continue to have a strong focus on basic education.

“With funding support from international donor agencies coming in, I believe this is the best time to implement comprehensive and strategic reforms in basic education,” Lapus stressed.

According to AusAID, BESRA is a vibrant framework that can deliver a sustainable quality education for Filipino children. It observed, however, that the basic issues of learning space, quality materials, relevant curriculum, well-trained teachers and efficient management system remain at the heart of the reform process.

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