



Higher Education Support Amendment (VET FEE-HELP Assistance) Bill 2008

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Higher Education Support Amendment (VET FEE-HELP Assistance) Bill 2008

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Portfolio: Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

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Links: The [relevant links](#) to the Bill, Explanatory Memorandum and second reading speech can be accessed via BillsNet, which is at <http://www.aph.gov.au/bills/>. When Bills have been passed they can be found at ComLaw, which is at <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>.

Purpose

The Bill amends the VET FEE-HELP provisions introduced in 2007 into the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*. The amendments effectively refine the programme's guidelines to ensure that it is operating as intended.

Background

Income contingent loans for students that had been available in the higher education sector for some time were extended to the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector under the *Higher Education Support Amendment (Extending Fee-Help for VET Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Courses) Act 2007*.

VET FEE-HELP, as the loans are known, have been introduced in a limited way. They are only available for full-fee Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate courses. They are also only available where arrangements have been put in place between an approved VET provider and a higher education provider to credit the qualification towards a higher education award.

At a time when there has been little growth in government VET funding, VET FEE-HELP offers the potential to raise the levels of private revenue available to the VET sector. For this reason governments, business and public and private VET providers have all supported the initiative.¹

1. For an overview of the issues relating to the introduction of VET FEE-HELP see Carol Kempner, [Higher Education Support Amendment \(Extending Fee-Help for VET Diploma](#)

Warning:

This Digest was prepared for debate. It reflects the legislation as introduced and does not canvass subsequent amendments.

This Digest does not have any official legal status. Other sources should be consulted to determine the subsequent official status of the Bill.

Main provisions

The provisions of the Bill are primarily technical in nature. In general they involve refining the administrative Guidelines for the programme. Only a brief overview is provided here as they are well described in the *Explanatory Memorandum*.

Item 1 ensures that credit transfer arrangements are in place between VET units/courses to higher education awards.

Item 2 requires compliance with any guidelines by VET providers relating to the charging of tuition fees.

Item 3 inserts a qualification into subclause 28(1) that excludes cases where there are VET restricted access arrangements (i.e. where there are arrangements between the VET provider and an employer/industry body and some or all enrolments in the course are limited) from the requirement under this subclause for providers to provide a schedule of tuition fees. **Item 4** then inserts new subclauses 28(2A) and (2B) placing specific requirements on the provision of tuition fee schedules in cases where there are restricted access arrangements. **Items 5** and **6** involve consequential changes from the insertion of special requirements for restricted access arrangements.

Item 7 adds a student entitlement clause relating to the student meeting any other requirements set out in the guidelines.

Item 8 repeals existing subclause 45(1) and replaces it with a new version to ensure that in order to qualify for VET FEE-HELP a course should meet all the requirements of the guidelines in relation to credit transfer and that it is not one excluded by the Minister.

Items 9 and **10** insert the new definitions of ‘VET credit transfer arrangement’ and VET restricted access arrangement’, respectively.

[and VET Advanced Diploma Courses\) Bill 2007](#), *Bills Digest*, no.11, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2007-08 and Senate. Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee, [Higher Education Support Amendment \(Extending FEE-HELP for VET Diploma and VET Advanced Diploma Courses\) Bill 2007 \[Provisions\]](#), 2007.

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