

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017

Outcome: Skills and Training

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000012

Senator Cameron, Doug provided in writing

Regulatory issues in the sector

Question

Senator CAMERON: This links back with ASQA, who were concerned about the rise as well—so both ASQA and the department—and you were saying that it was of particular note?

Dr Banerjee: Yes.

Senator CAMERON: That is quite a strong statement in terms of this issue. So you had no discussions about this, no concern about it, during 2012-13?

Dr Banerjee: That is what I am looking to distinguish—that, in the general run of all of the possible regulatory issues in the sector, ASQA and the department have regular interaction. So, given that VET FEE- HELP is a significant program in the sector, it is likely that in general terms it was canvassed throughout that period.

Senator CAMERON: So it is likely that it was raised in general terms.

Dr Banerjee: Yes.

Senator CAMERON: Do you have file notes about this issue being raised in general terms?

Dr Banerjee: As Mr Lavarch has mentioned, the conversations that we have with ASQA are very regular. They are not of the nature of full conferences in that sense; they are working meetings. We will certainly have a look at the record from those working meetings.

Senator CAMERON: If you had an issue of particular note starting to come through—I want to know exactly when you discovered that there was an issue of particular note and I want the date of that and I want any file notes, any correspondence and any minutes of meetings in relation to that. Thanks.

Dr Banerjee: Yes, we can take that on notice.

Answer

The Department of Education and Training became concerned about the volume and nature of specific complaints in mid to late 2014. The department worked closely with the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) in relation to the exchange of provider intelligence and individual complaints during 2014. The department convened a roundtable with vocational education and training agencies and regulators, including ASQA, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, the Australian Securities and Investment Commission, the NSW Department of Finance and Services, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Industry, on 13 November 2014, following increasing concerns about inappropriate behaviour connected with providers and their agents. This formed the basis for subsequent cooperative action between agencies.

For details of the correspondence between the department and ASQA over this period, refer to SQ17-000009.