

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017**

Outcome: Higher Education Research and International

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ16-001159

Senator O'Neill, Deborah asked on 20 October 2016, Proof Hansard page 106

Higher Education Reform expert panel - Terms of reference

Question

Senator Birmingham: I made sure that it was an expert panel who I thought had the right mix of knowledge about higher education policy and policy settings and that they could provide robust advice and thoughts to me. I am quite confident that they have a wide appreciation of the different views in the sector.

Senator O'NEILL: Are there terms of reference for their engagement?

Senator Birmingham: Yes.

Senator O'NEILL: Can these be tabled or made public?

Senator Birmingham: I do not see why not. Indeed they have been already.

Answer

The terms of reference for the expert panel appointed to assist higher education reforms can be found at **Attachment A**.

Terms of Reference – Expert Panel

Driving Innovation, Fairness and Excellence in Australian Higher Education

Background

The Australian Government is determined that Australia will be a nation that is agile, innovative and creative. A strong education and training system is key to achieving this. It is through access to excellent early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education that Australians are able to achieve their potential – in the labour market, in the social and cultural life of the nation, and as engaged global citizens.

The Government is committed to a higher education system that provides genuine choice and appropriate support for students, removes barriers for under-represented groups, underpins economic growth and allows institutions to excel and innovate to deliver world-class education. At the same time, it recognises that this system must be affordable and provide a return on investment for both students and the nation.

Scope

As part of the 2016–17 Budget, the Government released a policy options paper that sets out options for reform that support the Government's vision. The reforms are intended to:

- provide increased opportunity and choice for students that enhances their employment opportunities
- ensure fairness and equity in access to and participation in higher education
- provide institutions with the flexibility to provide education in an innovative manner that provides excellence and quality across teaching, learning and research
- ensure the affordability and sustainability of higher education provision, including the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP).

The panel will provide advice on the issues that have been identified for reform in the Government's policy options paper, including:

- how the Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding clusters should be designed
- what share of the cost of higher education funding should be borne by students
- how HELP can be made more sustainable
- how to give universities the flexibility to be innovative in their course design and delivery, and the concept of flagship courses
- what types of higher education courses should be funded on a demand driven basis
- how Commonwealth supported postgraduate places should be funded and allocated
- how best to support students from regional or disadvantaged backgrounds.

The panel will have access to a data collection and analysis process initiated by the Department of Education and Training on the relative and reasonable cost of delivery of higher education.

Conduct

The panel will engage with stakeholders and take into account stakeholder submissions from the consultation process completed in August 2016 as part of the provision of advice to the Department of Education and Training and the Minister for Education and Training.

Timing

The panel will work with the Department of Education and Training and the Minister for Education and Training up until December 2016.

Constitution

The expert panel will comprise four panel members.