

**Economics Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Industry Portfolio  
Additional Budget Estimates Hearing 2013-14  
27 February 2014

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**AGENCY/DEPARTMENT:** DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY

**TOPIC:** Trade Apprenticeships

**REFERENCE:** Written Question – Senator Kim Carr

**QUESTION No.:** AI-143

With regard to apprenticeships:

According to the NCVER research, after growth in the first three quarters of 2013 trade apprentice commencements have disappointingly fallen from 27 500 to 26 400.

1. What is the Government doing to address the drop in apprenticeship commencements?
2. Has the Minister or his office requested or been provided with any briefings regarding the reinstatement of kick-start or other incentive payments for apprentices?
3. Following the Ai Group's recent call for Joint Group Training's funding to be guaranteed in the upcoming Budget, has the Minister or his office requested or been provided with any briefings on Joint Group Training funding?
4. Regarding the Government's election policy to introduce student loans for apprentices, have guidelines been drawn up, how will it work, when will they commence?

**ANSWER**

1. On 3 April 2014 the Minister for Industry, the Hon Ian Macfarlane MP, chaired the inaugural meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Industry and Skills Council. Australian governments made a new commitment to ensure industry has the skilled workforce and operating environment it needs to boost productivity and international competitiveness.

One of the key priorities the Council agreed in April is to ensure that industry is involved in policy development and oversight of the performance of the vocational education and training (VET) sector and to streamline governance arrangements and committees. The Council also agreed that one of its objectives is that reform of VET should ensure that trade apprenticeships are appropriately valued and utilised as a career pathway.

The Government established the VET Reform Taskforce in November 2013. Earlier this year, the Taskforce conducted workshops with industry and the training sector to identify opportunities for reform. The Minister has noted that reforms should aim to give industry a greater voice in the vocational education system and give businesses a simple way to access training.

The Government is committed to supporting the Australian Apprenticeships system and is providing additional assistance through the introduction of the Trade Support Loans programme, which will provide eligible trade apprentices with income contingent loans of up to \$20 000 to assist with the costs of living, learning and completing an Australian Apprenticeship.

2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. The Government's Policy for Better Support of Australian Apprenticeships (<http://www.liberal.org.au/latest-news/2013/08/25/coalitions-policy-support-apprentices>) outlines the Trade Support Loans program. The program will commence in July 2014.

Implementation arrangements including guidelines will be available on the Australian Apprenticeships website (<http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/>) closer to the start of the program.