

**Question Taken on Notice 1:** Charles Sturt University Legal Advice re: Procession of Efficiency Dividend Without Legislative Change.

CSU is aware that there are differing views as to whether the Commonwealth has the discretion to impose the Efficiency Dividend in the absence of legislative change. We have previously relied on information published by the former Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIICSRTE) to the effect that implementation of the Efficiency Dividend and its application to HESA grants requires changes to legislation, disallowable instruments and legislative guidelines. We have recently been informed by the Department that the Efficiency Dividend can still be applied to amounts payable to higher education providers across all 'other grants' programmes administered under Part 2-3 of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (other than the Higher Education Disability Support Programme) over the 2014 to 2017 calendar years, notwithstanding the disallowance on 14 July 2014 of the Minister's *Higher Education Support (Maximum Amounts for Other Grants) Determination 2013* related to those programmes. In view of this question on notice CSU is now seeking formal advice.

**Question Taken on Notice 2:** Cost of Full-Fee Bachelor of Veterinary Biology/Bachelor of Veterinary Science Degree.

Charles Sturt University (CSU) currently offers its Bachelor of Veterinary Biology/Bachelor of Veterinary Science Degree to fee paying international students.

To graduate from CSU with a Bachelor of Veterinary Biology/Bachelor of Veterinary Science requires 6 years full-time study, comprising 48 separate 8-point courses, for a total point load of 384 points.

For 2014, the cost of the Bachelor of Veterinary Biology/Bachelor of Veterinary Science Degree for fee paying international students is \$6000 per 8-point course. This equates to a yearly cost of \$48,000, and \$288,000 over the 6-year period of the degree.

This pricing is due to change in 2015. Each 8-point course will cost \$6300, with a yearly cost of \$50,400, and \$302,400 over the 6-year period of the degree.

**Question Taken on Notice 3: Charles Sturt University View on Level of Regional Structural Adjustment Package.**

During the committee hearing, CSU greatly appreciated being provided with the opportunity to address the issue of a regional support package that may be included as part of a total higher education reform package, and welcomes the opportunity to expand on this in replying to this question on notice.

Given the Government is yet to indicate its support for, or development of, any concrete proposals regarding support for regional areas as part of the broader reform package, CSU looks forward to supporting a sector-wide negotiated policy solution, enjoying broad support from all universities and other stakeholders in the sector. While exact figures on such a position are obviously not known, CSU anticipates that such a policy position would be in the realm of \$500 million over the forward estimates period.

As noted in our submission, and testimony to the inquiry, CSU strongly argues that the final regional package needs to be part of an integrated policy approach, designed to address the unique challenges and issues faced by rurally based regional universities, as well as support their activities in areas such as research. The main argument for the reform package has been to allow universities to compete on the global stage. The general expectation is that metropolitan universities, having relatively more advantaged students and with expectations of higher salaries, will be able to charge higher fees. There is therefore a clear risk that universities who enrol a much higher proportion of low SES students will be relatively disadvantaged by the reform package. CSU argues that if the aim is to create an effective market, this is likely to be a market imperfection which will have unintended consequences. CSU is therefore strongly advocating that any package reflect the vital role played by rurally based regional universities in their communities, and in regional development. CSU is proud to serve our communities, as we offer numerous degrees that have been specifically designed to address critical needs in regional and rural areas, including required skills as communicated by industry, and in severe shortages of professionals in areas such as primary and allied healthcare. This important role needs to be acknowledged in the final policy and support package, and supported so that it may continue, with the resulting benefits to communities also continuing.

Additionally, CSU believes that any policy and support approach must carefully address the underlying inequalities in the higher education market, and require identifiable and measurable goals and targets by universities, rather than a blank cheque approach. This would ensure that rurally based regional universities are able to compete in the long-term, continuing to offer a high quality and comprehensive tertiary education to a varied body of students who traditionally have significantly lower access to higher education, rather than simply facing the same structural issues following the cessation of any government support package.

As stated in evidence presented at the public hearing, CSU has commissioned work from the Regional Australia Institute (RAI) to assist us in this area. At this point, RAI's work remains in initial draft stage and is not ready to be made public. Nonetheless, we will be happy to make available this work upon its completion to help inform sector-wide negotiations and package development.