



THE SENATE
SENATE FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Gender segregation in the workplace
Public Hearing – Wednesday 26 April 2017
Questions Taken on Notice – NCVER

1. HANSARD, Pages 32-33

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: This question is to Dr Fowler and Ms Circelli: the government recently made some changes to the VET Student Loans scheme. I am referring specifically to the removal of certain courses from the list for which you could obtain a VET Student Loan. From my memory, a lot of those courses centred around some of the care sectors, including disability care. I just want to hear your thoughts on whether or not you think that those changes have had a disproportionate effect on women and girls in terms of the courses they might be able to access through student loans.

Dr Fowler: I think I had best take that question on notice. I am not absolutely familiar with the detail of the course changes and would be very pleased to provide that response in writing as quickly as the company can.

VET Student Loans commenced on 1 January 2017, replacing the VET FEE-HELP scheme, which ceased on 31 December 2016. As with the VET FEE-HELP scheme, loans are only available for higher level VET qualifications from diploma through to graduate diploma. The Commonwealth Department of Education and Training 2015 VET FEE-HELP Statistical Report highlighted that females were more likely to have an income contingent loan than males, with 65% of VET FEE-HELP students being female.

The courses that are currently on the federal government's VET Student Loan course eligibility list encompass those that are of a high national priority, meet industry needs, contribute to addressing skills shortages and align with strong employment outcomes. Courses related to science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) or required for licensing are included in the eligibility lists.

While the removal of various courses from the VET Student Loans course eligibility list does not preclude women or men from undertaking the qualification, many of the courses that have been removed from the eligibility list are in the female-predominate fields of education such as management and commerce, society and culture, and health. These changes could have an unintended adverse impact on the proportion of females accessing income contingent loans through the VET Student Loans scheme. In some cases though, similar courses may be offered at higher education institutions, possibly offering access to alternative loan schemes.