

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: Outcome 2: Indigenous
Topic: STEM Scholarship Fund

Senator: McAllister

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Question:

Senator McALLISTER: Does the girls STEM academy exist already, or is it going to be a new institution as well?

Ms Hefren-Webb: It is new.

Senator McALLISTER: Is it going to be an actual teaching institution—what is it going to do?

Ms Hefren-Webb: Essentially, it will be designed to provide scholarships and other forms of support to encourage young Aboriginal girls and women to pursue careers in the STEM sector.

Senator McALLISTER: I would love to explore that further. If there was any further information you could provide to us about the STEM scholarship fund, we would appreciate it.

Answer:

In 2015, Indigenous students represented only 0.5 per cent of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) students at university. The \$25 million STEM fund announced by the Government on 24 May 2017 aims to address this underrepresentation.

The fund is to leverage partnerships between governments, businesses, industry and philanthropic organisations to offer scholarships to First Australians to study in STEM fields.

\$15 million is to be allocated from the fund to contribute towards the development of a STEM academy (or academies) for girls to inspire a future generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women into STEM jobs.

\$10 million will represent the Commonwealth contribution to scholarships and other forms of support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women to take up and succeed in studies in STEM fields. Scholarships are not expected to be available until the 2018 academic year.

The Government plans to consult with business, industry groups, philanthropic organisations and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations before finalising the details of the STEM fund and girls STEM academy. Universities and education authorities are also expected to be consulted.