

Question on notice no. 7

Portfolio question number: SQ24-001416

2024-25 Supplementary budget estimates

Education and Employment Committee, Education Portfolio

Senator Mehreen Faruqi: asked the Department of Education on 7 November 2024

Senator FARUQI: ... Turning to the department, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney has recently said that the department's published estimate of 17,247 new international students at Sydney University in 2024—which was provided to the parliament last month—overstated its new overseas student starts by more than 3,000. Is that correct?

Mr Cook: Thank you for the question. I believe that was provided in June, not last month. It was based at the time on an order for the production of documents. Based on the data that we had in June, that was our projection. Every month that number would change because every month we have new data. Sydney university is talking about a June dataset. We used our projections based on the inflow of international students in semester 1 this year. That inflow, we believe, has slowed in semester 2 this year. If the question was asked now, we would have a different number because we'd have more data to actually make that—

Senator FARUQI: What is that different number?

Mr Cook: I don't know what the different number is, I'm sorry.

Mr Rimmer: We have agreed with Sydney university that if we were doing the forecast now—it was clearly labelled as a preliminary estimate in the material produced to the Senate—the number would be 3,000 students fewer. That reflects, as the secretary has said, changing patterns of growth in student numbers between 2023 and 2024. It's very relevant, I think, to the question you're asking that the 2024 preliminary estimates that the Senate requested and that we provided, as required, had no impact at all on Sydney university's international student profile limit.

Senator FARUQI: Or the caps either, even though it was off by 25 per cent?

Mr Rimmer: No, it wasn't off by 25 per cent, sorry, just to correct you. It was off by—

Senator FARUQI: You said 35 per cent growth year on year, when the actual growth is less than 10 per cent.

Mr Rimmer: I misunderstood your line of reasoning. The number was 3,000, which was a fall from 17,247 to 13,563, which is not 25 per cent, which was where we got confused, I think. That number is not part of the methodology used to calculate Sydney university's international student profile for 2025—it's not, at the current time; obviously, it depends on the passage of the legislation.

Senator FARUQI: But the whole premise of this policy is based on reducing international student numbers. The international student numbers that you predicted were off anyway. They were much lower than you had predicted. Is that the case for other universities as well, and have you looked at it?

Mr Rimmer: Senator, the premise of the policy is not simply to reduce international student numbers.

Senator FARUQI: That is what the minister said to me three or four times at least.

Mr Rimmer: I believe I heard the minister talking about the sustainability of the international student sector over the medium term. The premise of the policy is about sustainability over time. It is true that for some but not all universities, if we were doing a 2024 estimate now, it would be a little bit lower; for a couple of universities, including Sydney, it would be quite a lot lower. Other universities are a little bit up on the estimate that we did in 2024. That's the nature of a forecast. If you do a forecast of a full year of activity in June, you are by definition going to be a little bit inaccurate; if you do it in August, you'll be a bit more accurate; if you do it in October, you'll be a bit more accurate again.

Senator FARUQI: Could you provide details of those universities you said were a lot higher than you had predicted in June?

Answer —

Please see PDF attachment.

Standing Committees on Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE Supplementary Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

Outcome: Higher Education Research and International

Department of Education Question No. SQ24-001416

Senator Mehreen Faruqi on 07 November 2024, Proof Hansard page 92-93

International university student allocation

Question

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Answer

The following universities had higher estimates of 2024 Higher Education Net Overseas Student Commencements (NOSCs) based on October 2024 data than the estimates based on June 2024 data.

Provider Name	2024 higher education NOSC estimate (June 2024)	2024 higher education NOSC estimate (October 2024)
Central Queensland University	2,315	2,424
Charles Darwin University	1,038	1,212
Southern Cross University	695	698
The University of New South Wales	17,359	17,525