

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-204

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: RURAL UNDERGRADUATE SUPPORT AND COORDINATION SCHEME
(RUSC)

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fiona Nash asked:

- a) Please provide the annual budget allocation for the Rural Undergraduate Support and Coordination Scheme (RUSC) for each of the last ten years.
- b) Please provide the total funding allocation to each participating higher education institution (HEI) under the RUSC for each of the last ten years.
- c) Please set out the performance targets, reporting requirements and provisions relating to non-performance or breach of contract specified for each HEI in the contract under the RUSC (NOTE: If the performance targets and reporting requirements were common for each HEI this can be specified as a single item.)
- d) Please provide the target number of medical students from RRMA 3 and RRMA 4 and 7 (in separate columns) that each HEI was expected to enroll under the RUSC (i.e. 25% of students of rural origin with specified proportions for RRMA 3 and RRMA 4 and 7), based on the total domestic student commencements for each participating HEI in each given year, and the actual number of commencements advised to the department by each HEI in each given year.
- e) Please note for each HEI, whether they met or did not meet the performance targets and/or reporting requirements specified in the contract between the Commonwealth Government and the HEI. Please advise the actions taken by the Department in relation to instances of non-performance.

Answer:

a) The funding allocation for the RUSC program for the period 2001-02 to 2010-11:

Year	Budget Allocation (\$m)
2001-02	\$2.2
2002-03	\$2.2
2003-04	\$3.1
2004-05	\$3.3
2005-06	\$3.5
2006-07	\$3.5
2007-08	\$3.9
2008-09	\$5.3
2009-10	\$5.3
2010-11	\$5.3

b)

RUSC FUNDING BY UNIVERSITY 2001-2 TO 2010-11

UNIVERSITY	2001-2	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5	2005-6	2006-7	2007-8	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11
Australian National University				\$198,079	\$198,078	\$198,078	\$198,079	\$206,514	\$206,514	\$206,514
Deakin University								\$274,314	\$274,314	\$274,314
Flinders University	\$113,979	\$141,402	\$179,662	\$196,433	\$230,808	\$230,808	\$230,808	\$242,109	\$242,109	\$242,109
James Cook University	\$115,784	\$105,938	\$184,985	\$175,107	\$208,378	\$208,378	\$208,378	\$343,706	\$343,706	\$343,706
Monash University	\$228,200	\$244,546	\$325,433	\$279,979	\$293,805	\$293,806	\$293,805	\$462,555	\$462,555	\$462,555
University of Adelaide	\$92,955	\$253,027	\$266,875	\$267,874	\$267,946	\$267,946	\$267,945	\$302,292	\$302,292	\$302,292
University of Melbourne	\$279,473	\$280,059	\$313,228	\$319,819	\$334,356	\$334,356	\$334,356	\$422,775	\$422,775	\$422,775
University of New South Wales	\$117,657	\$218,505	\$334,813	\$305,131	\$313,514	\$313,514	\$313,514	\$398,136	\$398,136	\$398,136
University of Newcastle	\$264,535	\$145,578	\$174,756	\$188,347	\$226,018	\$226,016	\$226,019	\$335,385	\$335,385	\$335,385
University of Notre Dame Sydney								\$206,514	\$206,514	\$206,514
University of Notre Dame Fremantle							\$198,078	\$206,514	\$206,514	\$206,514
University of Queensland	\$340,017	\$226,998	\$433,193	\$412,531	\$412,530	\$412,530	\$412,530	\$543,500	\$543,500	\$543,500
University of Sydney	\$229,244	\$254,840	\$339,714	\$325,987	\$329,366	\$329,366	\$329,365	\$423,999	\$423,999	\$423,999
University of Tasmania	\$136,868	\$171,872	\$189,678	\$198,079	\$198,080	\$220,364	\$242,646	\$252,982	\$252,982	\$252,982
University of Western Australia	\$258,491	\$196,022	\$390,947	\$391,868	\$457,180	\$457,180	\$457,180	\$476,652	\$476,652	\$476,652
University of Wollongong							\$198,078	\$206,514	\$206,514	\$206,514
Total	\$2,177,203	\$2,238,787	\$3,133,284	\$3,259,234	\$3,470,059	\$3,492,342	\$3,910,781	\$5,304,461	\$5,304,461	\$5,304,461

c) The performance targets and reporting requirements under RUSC are common to each university.

1. maintain or enhance measures to increase the number of rural origin students selected for entry into the medical degree to at least 25% of Commonwealth-supported places (CSPs). (A rural origin student is defined as one who has spent at least 5 years in an area with a Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas (RRMA) Classification of RRMA 3 to RRMA 7 since beginning primary school.) Medical school staff with a background in rural medicine must contribute to the selection process;
2. provide a rurally focussed curriculum that promotes rural practice, with delivery commencing early in the medical course. The curriculum must highlight the rural context by focusing on rural health, the rural social environment, cultural and gender issues in rural medicine, clinical skills and decision making appropriate to rural practice;
3. maintain a central point of contact at the main campus to help integrate rural medical programs and initiatives with all other medical school activities;
4. coordinate development and support for rural medical educators in partnership with Rural Clinical Schools, University Departments of Rural Health and regional vocational medical education training providers;
5. within the medical school curriculum, provide a safe, culturally appropriate, high quality experience of rural medicine for all Australian Commonwealth-supported medical students by facilitating one or more structured residential rural placement/s of at least 4 weeks' duration in total, preferably in the early years of a students' course. Placements should only be provided in RRMA 3-7 areas.
 - RUSC Program placements may also be conducted in the Northern Territory, through the designated provider of RUSC Program services in this area.
 - The University must take reasonable action to ensure that students undertaking training at rural locations do not suffer financial hardship as a result and are adequately and safely accommodated.
 - In exceptional circumstances, the Dean of the Medical Faculty (or equivalent) may exempt individuals from undertaking a placement on the basis of financial hardship or demonstrated health concerns;
6. in regard to Indigenous health:
 - maintain or enhance measures to increase the selection of Indigenous Australian students (of rural or urban origin) into the Medical degree (which may include the introduction of selection targets);
 - support Indigenous applicants during the selection process and while completing their degree;
 - ensure that the medical curriculum enhances the understanding of, and commitment to improving, the health status of Indigenous Australians (with reference to the Medical Deans Australia New Zealand Indigenous Health Curriculum Framework);
 - ensure that all medical students and relevant staff undertake appropriate cultural awareness and safety training;
 - consider the appointment of Indigenous academic staff to assist in achieving these goals; and

7. maintain a multi-disciplinary rural health club for students as a means of encouraging interest in a rural career. The activities of the rural health club must be carried out in accordance with the most current edition of the *Framework for Funding Rural Health Clubs* (detailed at Attachment A to Schedule 6) and should also be consistent with the principles and practices of the National Rural Health Students' Network (NRHSN). The University is responsible for the management of Commonwealth funds provided to the rural health club and must ensure that funds are expended in support of the broad outcomes of the RUSC Program as detailed above.

The University must provide the following Reports:

- an Annual Report, due by 31 March each year of the Project period, addressing achievements and actions taken against RUSC parameters during the previous calendar year (or part thereof);
- a 6-monthly report, due by 31 August each year, addressing achievements and actions taken against RUSC parameters during the previous 6 month period (Jan-Jun);
- an audited financial statement, due 31 March each year of the Project period, for the previous calendar year or part thereof; and
- a Final Report, due 30 September at the end of the Project period.

A clause in the Header Agreement contained the following provisions:

SUSPENSION AND TERMINATION

If:

- (a) the Department is reasonably satisfied that the terms and conditions of this Agreement have not been complied with by the University; or
- (b) the Department is reasonably satisfied that the University is unable or unwilling to satisfy the terms of this Agreement; or
- (c) the Department, by notice in writing, requests the University to take action to meet a timeframe or perform an activity in accordance with this Agreement and, after 14 days (or such longer period as is specified in the notice) from the date of the notice, the University has failed to take such action; or
- (d) the Department is reasonably satisfied that any statement made by the University is incorrect or incomplete in a way which would have affected the original decision to approve the Funds for a Project; or
- (e) the Department is not reasonably satisfied that the purposes and activities of the University remain compatible with the objectives of:
 - (i) a Project; or
 - (ii) the Program; or
- (f) the Department is reasonably satisfied that a Report given by the University is not complete or accurate; or
- (g) the University:
 - (i) becomes bankrupt or insolvent or is wound-up; or

- (ii) makes an assignment of its estate for the benefit of creditors or enters into any arrangement or composition with its creditors or has a receiver, manager or administrator appointed on behalf of debenture holders or creditors; or
- (iii) goes into liquidation or passes a resolution to go into liquidation, otherwise than for the purpose of reconstruction, or becomes subject to any petition or proceedings in a court for its compulsory winding-up or becomes subject to the supervision of a court either voluntarily or otherwise; or
- (iv) suffers any execution against its assets having adverse effect on its ability to perform the Agreement; or
- (h) the University, by notice in writing given to the Department, withdraws from this Agreement or one of the Projects; or
- (i) the Department considers it appropriate for any other reason;

the Department may, by written notice to the University:

- (j) terminate the relevant Project or Projects or this Agreement; or
- (k) cease all payments to the University in relation to one or more of the Projects and require the University to immediately suspend dealings with any Funds already held in relation to such Project(s).

d) The RUSC program parameter with regards to the enrolment of students from RRMA 3-7 states that universities are to maintain or enhance measures to increase the number of rural origin students selected for entry into the medical degree to at least 25% of Commonwealth-supported places (CSPs).

Universities are required to report numbers and percentages by RRMA 3 -7. There is no requirement for a breakdown of students information into RRMA3, 4 and 7, so the Department does not hold this information.

The following table shows the rural background (RRMA3-7) student intake numbers as a percentage of CSP students.

d) RUSC Program – Rural Student Intake (RRMA3-7) as a Percentage of CSP

University		2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
ANU	Rural Intake	No RUSC program		17	18	13	21	18	16	13	15
	Total CSP			80	84	79	82	77	91	91	92
	%			21.3	21.4	16.5	25.6	23.4	17.6	14.3	16.3%
Deakin	Rural Intake	No RUSC program						32	33	32	32
	Total CSP							115	132	131	132
	%							27.8	25.0	24.4	24.2
Flinders	Rural Intake	28	20	21	37	26	19	30	34	29	37
	Total CSP	67	69	81	80	81	86	95	115	111	111
	%	41	29.0	25.9	46.3	32.1	22.1	31.6	29.6	26.1	33.3
JCU	Rural Intake	43	71	62	68	51	53	77	57	74	82
	Total CSP	47	76	82	95	81	97	159	163	181	179
	%	91.5	93.4	75.6	71.6	63.0	54.6	48.4	35.0	40.9	45.8
Monash	Rural Intake	30	40	39	50	40	53	57	79	49	72
	Total CSP	154	159	161	175	166	199	232	313	253	248
	%	19.5	25.2	24.2	28.6	24.1	26.6	24.6	25.2	19.4	29.0
Uni of Adelaide	Rural Intake	9	7	12	5	8	8	16	0	16	15

	Total CSP	106	105	102	94	136	147	151	137	185	175	
	%	8.5	6.7	11.8	5.3	5.9	5.4	10.6	0.0	8.6	8.6	
Uni of Melbourne	Rural Intake	34	27	9	15	18	49	30	18	No new student intake	29	
	Total CSP	187	169	127	125	159	159	203	79		256	
	%	18.2	16.0	7.1	12.0	11.3	30.8	14.8	22.8		11.0	
Uni of Notre Dame (Fremantle)	Rural Intake	No RUSC program				14	16	30	26	27	21	25
	Total CSP	No RUSC program				50	50	65	75	100	100	100
	%	No RUSC program				28.0	32.0	46.2	34.7	27.0	21.0	25.0
Notre Dame (Sydney)	Rural Intake	No RUSC program						18	21	21	14	
	Total CSP	No RUSC program						80	80	80	60	
	%	No RUSC program						22.5	26.3	26.3	23.3	
Uni of Newcastle	Rural Intake	15	21	20	4	5	27	55	62	50	64	
	Total CSP	93	76	72	96	85	87	157	170	218	218	
	%	16.1	27.6	27.8	4.17	5.9	31.0	35.0	36.5	22.9	29.4	
UNSW	Rural Intake	39	44	39	45	47	49	51	52	54	61	
	Total CSP	177	175	166	187	186	198	189	200	202	202	
	%	22.0	25.1	23.5	24.1	25.3	24.7	27.0	26.0	26.7	30.2%	

UQ	Rural Intake	18	22	58	57	64	68	70	29	24	35
	Total CSP	232	242	276	250	240	277	282	251	316	316
	%	7.8	9.1	21.0	22.8	26.7	24.5	24.8	11.6	7.6	11.5
Uni of Sydney	Rural Intake	Not available	Not available	27	Not available	34	35	33	43	28	38
	Total CSP			257		214	202	192	242	222	261
	%	17.9	14.1	10	10	15.9	17.3	17.2	17.8	12.6	14.5
UTas	Rural Intake	21	14	25	12	14	33	37	23	37	63
	Total CSP	55	65	87	52	55	99	106	91	126	120
	%	38.2	21.5	28.7	23.1	25.5	33.3	34.9	25.3	29.4	52.5
UWA	Rural Intake	18	21	38	35	32	29	43	40	37	37
	Total CSP	140	140	189	148	131	114	175	149	145	122
	%	12.9	15.0	20.1	23.6	24.4	25.4	24.6	26.8	25.5	30.3
UOW	Rural Intake	No RUSC program					32	27	22	23	46
	Total CSP						68	72	74	74	79
	%						47.1	37.5	29.7	31.1	58.2

e) Please refer to the table at question d) for information on universities that met or did not fully meet the performance targets for RUSC parameter 1. All other requirements were broadly met.

Regarding actions taken by the Department in relation to performance under RUSC for parameter 1, the 25% intake of Commonwealth supported places from rural origin was a target, with the focus on encouraging universities to undertake measures and establish processes to increase the intake of rural origin students in the long term.

Where universities did not meet the target under the Program parameter, the Department acted to ensure that the university:

- (1) was committed to the program;
- (2) satisfied all the other requirements of the Program; and
- (3) was making a genuine effort to satisfy all the requirements of the Program.

If the university was making a genuine effort to satisfy all the requirements of the Program, the Department took the view that the Program's long-term outcomes were more likely to be achieved by offering encouragement and assistance to the universities, rather than imposing penalties and sanctions.