

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates February 2017

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications and the Arts

Question No: 2

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: Page 8, 28/02/2017

Topic: Removal of arts courses

Senator Kakoschke-Moore, Skye asked:

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: My questions are on an entirely different subject. They follow on from some changes made by the government to vocational education and training last year, in particular the removal of some—not all, but some—courses in the arts, in particular the performing arts. Was there any formal consultation between the education department and the arts department in the development of the bill that went through last year?

Dr Smith: I believe there was. Our arts colleagues are not here for this session this morning, but we can certainly take that on notice. I know we were talking with the department at that time.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: I would appreciate it if you could provide some comments in relation to the nature of the consultation and the type of feedback the department provided.

Dr Smith: Certainly.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: How does the department characterise its role in the intersection between the arts and our education sector in Australia.

Mr Eccles: I can talk about that only at a very general level. Arts is listed for, I think, 4:30 today, so the real experts on that are not here. Given I have only been in my role for about eight weeks, I can only discuss the issue at a very high level. We are acutely aware of the importance of working with the education department in relation to the role of the arts, creativity and innovation throughout the education system. We do support and work closely with a number of educational institutes that are focused on arts and creativity. For example, we have a very strong relationship with the film and television school. But I can get a little bit more detail on notice if that suits the senator.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: That would be great. Thank you. Just following on from that, has the department undertaken any research to determine whether any skills gaps will emerge in our arts sector, particularly following on from the changes that were made to vocational education and training?

Mr Eccles: I am not aware of any research, but I will take that on notice.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: If no research has been conducted I would also like to know whether the department plans to conduct that research.

Mr Eccles: Understood.

Answer:

Representations were made by officers from the department to officers from the Department of Education, and directly from Minister Fifield to Minister Birmingham, regarding the impact that the changes would have on two of the national elite arts training organisations.

The Arts Division and several peak arts organisations are monitoring the implementation of the VET reforms. As courses are still being considered for inclusion on the Eligible Course List a full picture is not yet available.

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The Department of Education is undertaking a review of the Eligible Course List and Loans Cap and submissions are sought from providers, students and governments. The arts training providers will have an opportunity to present a case to add their courses.

Officers from the department are in contact with the Department of Education to monitor the changes as any issues arise.

The department has no plans to undertake research on the VET reforms.