

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2014 - 2015**

Outcome: Higher Education Research and International

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000204

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing.

Commonwealth subsidies

Question

"Under the Government's proposals, what would be the subsidy per CSP paid for courses with private providers in alternative therapies such as homeopathy, acupuncture and aroma therapy?

And what would be the CSP subsidies for Economics, Law and Humanities at a public university?

Are you aware of the NHMRC Review of the Australian Government Rebate on Private Health Insurance for Natural Therapies? Did this Review examine the evidence of efficacy, cost-effectiveness, safety and quality of natural therapies?

What are the key findings of the review with regard to homeopathy?

This finding mirrors a finding of a UK House of Commons 2010 Science and Technology Select Committee. Are you aware of that finding?

Is it the case that the Committee found that "... the systematic reviews and meta-analyses conclusively demonstrate that homeopathic products perform no better than placebos"?

Yet apparently the Government is still proposing to subsidise the teaching of future practitioners in this type of therapy? How is that justified?

Does the Government have a consistent approach to Commonwealth subsidies for natural therapies? Or is the teaching of these unrelated to their practice?"

Answer

Under the Australian Government's higher education reforms, the 2016 Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) rates for an equivalent full time student load will be:

- \$6323 for complementary therapies, including homeopathy, acupuncture and aromatherapy at non-university higher education providers (\$9033 at public universities)
- \$1805 for economics and law at public universities
- \$6021 for humanities at public universities.

The Department of Health is undertaking a *Review of the Australian Government Rebate on Private Health Insurance for Natural Therapies* (the Review) to assess the clinical efficacy, cost effectiveness, safety and quality of certain complementary therapies and to determine whether they should continue to be eligible for the Australian Government rebate on private health insurance. The Department of Health is expected to consult with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) to complete a full evidence based review process in consultation with industry.

The department is aware of the UK House of Commons 2010 Science and Technology Select Committee report *Evidence Check 2: Homeopathy*, however notes that recommendation comparisons cannot be made until the Department of Health has released its report.

Courses eligible for support under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS)

For a place in a course to be subsidised under the CGS, the course must be accredited and the institution registered with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

TEQSA provides national consistency in the way higher education providers are registered, courses are accredited and the quality of the system is monitored.

TEQSA accredits courses against standards prescribed in the Higher Education Standards Framework, which requires 'the content of the course of study is drawn from a substantial, coherent and current body of knowledge and scholarship in one or more academic disciplines and includes the study of relevant theoretical frameworks and research findings'.

As with other courses such as law, philosophy and economics, complementary therapy courses are regarded by TEQSA as meeting the above standard. It is not a requirement that a higher education course must only teach something that is generally accepted as scientifically proven. This approach ensures that all higher education institutions can retain their autonomy and responsibility for designing the courses they offer, and supports TEQSA's independence as the national quality agency.