

## Senate Committee: Education and Employment

### QUESTION ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017

**Outcome: Agency: ASQA**

**Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000003**

Senator Cameron, Doug asked on 01 March 2017, Proof Hansard page 6

#### ***ASQA - File notes and emails regarding complaints***

##### **Question**

Senator CAMERON: Did you raise this verbally or was there correspondence?

Prof. Lavarch: ASQA obviously has a strong working relationship with the department. We meet with departmental officers regularly. My recollection is that matters were raised in the context of meetings with departmental officers and then there would have been email exchanges and the like which followed from that.

Senator CAMERON: Could you, on notice, provide details of any file notes and emails in relation to the engagement with the department on the issue of the complaints?

Prof. Lavarch: I will make efforts to do that, yes.

Senator CAMERON: Would there be any reason why you could not?

Prof. Lavarch: No, I do not believe so.

##### **Answer**

*The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) has provided the following response*

ASQA has provided - in response to a Question on Notice from the Education and Employment Legislation Committee - a table that details the formal briefs that were provided to Ministers and meetings that were had with either Ministers or the Department of Education and Training about concerns with the VET FEE-HELP scheme . The QoN response is available at:

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Education\\_and\\_Employment/VETStudentLoans/Additional\\_Documents](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_and_Employment/VETStudentLoans/Additional_Documents)

There was also additional material provided by ASQA to the Department of Industry or Department of Education and Training in relation to complaints about individual VET FEE-HELP approved providers.

In addition, the National Training Complaints Hotline (NTCH) has been in operation since early 2015. The NTCH receives complaints about training providers and determines which agency/ies is/are most appropriate to respond to the allegations. For instance, where complaints relate both to the quality of training and assessment as well as VET FEE-HELP debt remittance, the NTCH provides both ASQA and the Department of Education and Training with the complaint.

It is noted that, from 18 September 2013 to 23 December 2014, responsibility for ASQA fell within the portfolio of the Minister for Industry and the Department of Industry. Following machinery of Government changes in December 2014, ASQA fell within the portfolio of the Minister for Education and Training / Minister for Vocational Education and Skills and the Department of Education and Training.

Responsibility for the VET FEE-HELP scheme since September 2013 has remained in the Department of Education / Department of Education and Training. During this period, the Australian Government announced a number of amendments to the VET FEE-HELP scheme to strengthen the protection of students and, in October 2016, announced that the scheme would be replaced by the VET Student Loan scheme. These announcements can be found at:

- New laws to strengthen VET standards (25 February 2015) - <https://ministers.education.gov.au/birmingham/new-laws-strengthen-vet-standards>
- Government's stronger training laws pass Parliament (17 March 2015) - <https://ministers.education.gov.au/birmingham/governments-stronger-training-laws-pass-parliament>
- Reforms to protect VET students pass the Parliament (3 December 2015) - <https://ministers.education.gov.au/hartsuyker/reforms-protect-vet-students-pass-parliament>
- Stronger protections for VET students commence (1 January 2016) - <https://ministers.education.gov.au/hartsuyker/stronger-protections-vet-students-commence>
- Stronger vocational education system delivered (1 December 2016) - <https://ministers.education.gov.au/birmingham/stronger-vocational-education-system-delivered>
- New vocational education loan program commences (1 January 2017) - <https://ministers.education.gov.au/birmingham/new-vocational-education-loan-program-commences>