

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017

Outcome: Agency: ASQA

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000016

Senator Cameron, Doug asked on 01 March 2017, Proof Hansard page 9

Also refer to previous hearing Question No. SQ16-001084

ASQA - Compliance activity

Question

Senator CAMERON: Can you then provide on notice what other activity you were undertaking and, on notice, explain—regarding the answer that you gave us earlier—why time spent on compliance activity in days for the financial year 2014-15 dropped by 8.8 per cent? If you could take that on notice, I would be interested to know why that happened.

Senator Birmingham: Just to be clear, you want to know why compliance audit numbers dropped by a certain percentage, which HESA has reported in there and what other compliance activities or other activities overall ASQA was undertaking at the time?

Senator CAMERON: Yes. Minister, I am a bit concerned that the figures I got said that it was going down by 8.8 per cent and now we find that there were other activities. If they were compliance activities, I am not sure why they were not included in the calculation. I am interested in knowing exactly what was happening and why I was given the figure of an 8.8 per cent drop.

Answer

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

While there was an 8.8 per cent decrease in audit activity reported in the response to question 3 in SQ16-001084, it is important to recognise that audit activity is only one of the regulatory tools available to ASQA in regulating the VET sector. Other regulatory activities undertaken by ASQA include investigating complaints and taking enforcement action (e.g. formal investigations, issuing infringement notices etc). As indicated below, ASQA also devotes regulatory resources to the provision of educative programs.

Matters directly contributing to the decrease in audit activity were:

- a 20.2 per cent decrease in the number of applications received by ASQA from the 13/14 to the 14/15 financial year. This decrease, which is outside of ASQA's control, had a material effect on audit numbers; it is worth noting that the decrease in applications corresponds with a decrease in changes to national training packages.
- ASQA committing substantial resources to closing complaints in the 14/15 financial year. This is demonstrated by the fact that ASQA managed to decrease the time it took to close complaints between the 13/14 and 14/15 financial years by 27.7 per cent despite there being an 8.2 per cent increase in the number complaints received between these two periods.

- ASQA diverting regulatory resources in support of the introduction of the new *Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015* in the 14/15 financial year. This involved:
 - the development of detailed guidance material
 - the development of a dedicated website
 - ASQA hosting 31 full day information sessions right across Australia
 - the provision of a dedicated “Compliance Education Auditor” to provide advice to providers (seconded to ASQA Communications / Info Line teams from ASQA’s Regulatory Operations team).

Further, it should be noted that there were significant increases in ASQA’s audit activity either side of the decrease (i.e. a 13 per cent increase from the 12/13 to the 13/14 financial year and a 21.9 per cent increase from the 14/15 to the 15/16 financial year).