

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017

Outcome: Skills and Training

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000292

Senator Cameron, Doug provided in writing

Grandfathered VET FEE HELP students

Question

How many students were contacted about being grandfathered? How many have not replied? As part of this process - has the Department been contacted by any students who were not aware they were enrolled or had a debt until they were sent a notice by the Department? How many? What were their debts, providers etc.? How many investigations are underway into phantom students? Do you have an estimated number of phantom students? Has the Department identified any non-genuine students at all, or other breaches of requirements, as part of this process?

Answer

- As at 10 March 2017, 636,950 invitations had been sent to students to opt-in to be grandfathered for VET FEE-HELP in 2017. These invitations provided students the option to grandfather their study arrangements; however students are not required to reply to the department unless they wish to take up this offer.
- Between 7 December 2016 and 16 March 2017, the Department of Education and Training's Complaints Handling Unit (CHU) received approximately 749 complaints as a result of the grandfathering notices sent to students. The department will progressively examine these complaints and analyse the issues raised in accordance with complaints procedures to determine appropriate responses. This will include analysis of any complaints that involve claims that a student was not aware they were enrolled or had a debt until after receiving a notice. The department audits VET FEE-HELP providers to determine the veracity of their reported enrolments. Twenty eight VET FEE-HELP providers were audited in 2016; two further VET FEE-HELP providers are currently undergoing audits in 2017, with further audits of VET FEE-HELP providers are expected over the next six months. The department is undertaking one investigation into potential criminal matters, but the department does not comment on ongoing investigations.
- As at 27 April 2017, as a result of the work of the CHU in response to student complaints, providers have agreed to remit almost \$20 million in VET FEE-HELP debts for around 2000 students.