

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment - Education

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2014-2015**

Outcome 3 - Higher Education, Research & International

Department of Education Question No. ED0383_15

Senator Carr asked on 5 June 2014 , Hansard page 102

Question

HELP special categories for visa holders

Senator KIM CARR: Can I ask about the eligibility for HECS payments and New Zealanders. I understand that there has been an announcement concerning eligibility requirements for the Higher Education Loan Program for special categories of visa holders. Ms Paul: Yes, that is right. Senator KIM CARR: What is that about? Mr Griew: This is a subgroup of New Zealanders who have lived in Australia for most of their lives since they were children. There is a specific class of New Zealanders as well who, because they have permanent resident status, would not normally be eligible for HELP. They have been made eligible for HELP as a result of a government decision, which required a special exemption from the normal exclusion of permanent residents from the HELP scheme. They are not large in number, but they are essentially people who hold New Zealand nationality—I think a lot of them are Pacific Islanders in ethnic origin—and have essentially grown up since they were children in Australia. For all intents and purposes, they regard themselves as being Australians, but they are not citizens. Senator KIM CARR: I understand the point you are making. You say that it is not a large number of people, but what is the effect on the budget? Mr Griew: My recollection is that there was about a \$12 million cost, but Mr Warburton will find it. I think this was a MYEFO measure, which maybe be why we are not immediately pulling it up in these papers. I could be wrong about that. I can take it on notice.

Answer

The costs associated with the measure which extends access to HELP to certain categories of New Zealand special category visa holders were outlined in the Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2013-14 on pages 16 and 20. The total expense over the four years to 2016-17 is estimated to be \$12.5 million.