

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016**

Outcome: Schools and Youth

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000425

Senator Wright, Penny provided in writing

Making STEM compulsory in Years 11 and 12

Question

1. Did the department recommend to the government that the STEM proposal taken to the ministerial council include a call for consideration be given to make those subjects compulsory in Year 11 and 12?
2. When, if ever, were these subjects compulsory in Year 11 and year 12 in all secondary schools in Australia?
3. Which Australian educators or experts are calling for compulsory STEM teaching in year 11 and 12?
4. Can you tell us how significant the shortages of maths and science teachers are at present in secondary schools? Are you aware the government's industry innovation and competitiveness agenda report said 40 per cent of year 7 to 10 maths classes are taught without a qualified maths teacher?

Answer

1. Under its *Students First* policy for schools, the Australian Government committed to restoring the focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects in primary and secondary schools, including "a view to increasing the extent to which they become compulsory in senior secondary years".
2. State and territory governments are responsible for decisions regarding the compulsory status of secondary school subjects. The department does not maintain records on compulsory secondary subjects in states and territories.
3. The department is aware that some Australian educators and education experts have shown support for compulsory STEM studies in Years 11 and 12.
4. Teacher workforce research over at least the last decade consistently reports mathematics and science teacher shortages; however, a lack of consistent, reliable data makes it very difficult to quantify these shortages. The department is aware of the findings reported in the Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda: An Action Plan for a Stronger Australia.