

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

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

Outcome: Higher Education Research and International

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000470

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing.

Increase in low-SES background students

Question

The PBS indicates that the numbers of low-SES background students will grow by about a third over the forward estimates – from 120,000 to almost 160,000.

(a) On what basis is this prediction made?

(b) Are you assuming that Kemp and Norton, in the Review of the Demand-Driven System, was right in predicting that access to degrees at TAFEs would benefit primarily – or disproportionately - low-SES students?

(c) What evidence was presented to back this prediction?

(d) Are you aware of a study by Trevor Gale and others from Deakin University that indicates that the opposite is true? The report, Student Preferences for Bachelor Degrees at TAFE, provides details of a study of student preferences in Victoria and South Australia over the years 2009 to 2014. This found that, of students applying for a degree place in TAFE, a very high proportion 0 47% - were from high-SES backgrounds; and only a small proportion (15%) were from low-SES backgrounds.

(e) What does this imply about the Kemp-Norton assumption about this – that low-SES students would predominantly benefit from the facilitation of these pathways?

Answer

(a) PBS estimates of the number of students from a low SES background are based on the following assumptions:

- i. Forward estimates of the number of domestic full-time equivalent undergraduate enrolments, which are based primarily on estimates provided by universities – see answer to SQ15-000409
- ii. Estimates of the number of domestic undergraduate students are assumed in fixed ratio to the estimates in i)
- iii. Estimates of the number of onshore domestic undergraduate students are assumed in fixed ratio to the estimates in ii)
- iv. In recent history, growth in the number of domestic undergraduate low SES students has been consistent with achievement of the 20 per cent low SES target, and it is assumed this trend continues.

(b), (c), (d) and (e) From 1 January 2016, the Government is extending demand driven funding to all accredited higher education diploma, advanced diploma, associate degree and bachelor courses (excluding medicine) at higher education institutions registered by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). PBS estimates of the number of students from a low SES background make no explicit assumption about the proportion of students from a low SES background enrolling in bachelor degrees at TAFE institutes.