

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016

Outcome: Schools and Youth

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000562

Senator O'Neill, Deborah provided in writing.

Compulsory Maths and Science subjects

Question

1. When did the Department become aware of the Minister's proposal to make maths and science compulsory subjects in years 11 and 12?
2. Had the Department undertaken any preparatory work on making maths and science compulsory prior to this date?
3. When did the Department commence work on the briefing note that was presented to the Education Council Meeting on this subject?
4. Had this proposal been presented to the Minister's Ministerial Advisory Council?
5. Does the Department have any data on the current uptake of science and maths subjects in years 11 and 12? What is the rate of uptake, broken down by subject, state and gender?
6. When was this added to the Council meeting agenda?
7. What was the exact proposal that was put to the council?
8. Did the Minister propose any additional investment or co-investment from the Commonwealth to support the proposal?
9. Was there anything specific that Minister was seeking agreement on at the meeting? What action was the Minister hoping to arise from the meeting?
10. Can the Department advise which jurisdictions agreed to the Minister's proposal?

Answer

The Coalition's Policy for Schools: Students First, 2013, states the Australian Government's commitment to restoring the focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects in schools, including "with a view to increasing the extent to which they become compulsory in senior secondary years".

The department undertook work through the briefing for Education Council which was completed within the usual timeframes for an Education Council meeting. The item was added mid-April as part of a broader item on STEM.

The department is not aware of any body referred to as the 'Ministerial Advisory Council'.

The department does not collect data on the current uptake of science and maths subjects in Years 11 and 12.

The details of Education Council meetings are Council-in-Confidence.

Education ministers agreed to collaborate nationally in developing a STEM school education strategy for increasing STEM participation in schools. Senior officials will report back to ministers on the strategy later in the year.