Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment - Education

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014-2015

Outcome 3 - Higher Education, Reform & Support

Department of Education Question No. ED0721_15

Senator Carr asked on 14 November 2014 , Hansard page 62

Question

What is the department doing to notify relevant stakeholders of proposed changes to the HECS-HELP Benefit?

Ms Birmingham: The maximum per annum HECS-HELP benefit is $1,761 for maths and science education, nursing and midwifery. For early childhood education, it is $1,878. Senator KIM CARR: The point is that it is still a benefit of $1,800 or $1,700 per person. What has the department done to explain these changes to those individuals? Ms Borthwick: I would have to take it on notice, but I think when we put up the information around the announcement of the budget, we had questions and answers around this issue on our website.

Answer

Information on the proposed changes to the HECS-HELP Benefit was published on both the Department of Education and the *Study Assist* websites on the evening of the 2014-15 Budget announcement. At the same time the department's call centre contractors were briefed on the proposed changes and provided with information material to enable them to answer related questions on this issue. Similar information was also published on the Australian Taxation Offices' (ATO) website.

During August and September 2014, representatives of the department attended university open days to provide new and existing students with information on the proposed changes in the higher education system, including the proposed changes to the HECS-HELP Benefit.

In addition, the department has included information on these proposed changes in printed student information products including the 2015 HECS-HELP Commonwealth supported places student information booklet.

The department continues to work closely with the relevant area of the Australian Taxation Office to develop a range of targeted communications to affected individuals if required.

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