

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017**

Outcome: Higher Education Research and International

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ16-001086

Senator O'Neill, Deborah asked on 20 October 2016, Proof Hansard page 108

Higher Education reforms

Question

Senator O'NEILL: If you, Mr Learmonth, could provide on notice some detail about the nature of that secretariat staffing and how long it will be operational for I would appreciate it. The media release on 10 October, regarding modelling, states:

In addition to their consultations, the panel will have access to data and analysis on the efficient cost of delivering higher education teaching and scholarship, ensuring Australia's higher education system represents value for money.

Will this data and analysis be made public?

Senator Birmingham: I will have to take that on notice. I am not sure what assurances universities providing data have sought regarding the confidentiality of their information. Universities Australia has been very cooperative in working with us on some of that work. But it does of course go to financial modelling from individual universities and that may have some sensitivities attached to it.

Senator O'NEILL: So the chances of it being made public are pretty slim?

CHAIR: The minister has taken it on notice.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Can I ask, for the sake of transparency in this policy consideration process, that if that is the case a modified version of such analysis be available more publicly?

Senator Birmingham: We will give some consideration in the same answer.

Answer

Secretariat support to the Expert Advisory Panel is part of the broader higher education policy work being undertaken by the Department of Education and Training, with a variety of staff working on different parts of the reform process.

The data and analysis collected on the efficient cost of delivery in higher education will not be publicly available, as it is of a commercial nature and disclosure may harm competition between providers. For this reason, the department has made assurances to participating institutions that any data collected would not be released publicly. Decisions on whether to release a de-identified dataset publicly and/or to participating institutions will be made once the process has been completed.