

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing 2011-12
15 February 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

TOPIC: Skill Shortages

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator McKenzie

QUESTION No.: AI-43

What programs, if any, do you run that encourage tertiary students to choose a particular pathway, for example, to address particular skill shortages?

ANSWER

The Department administers a number of initiatives that provide incentives for tertiary students to choose education pathways and work in particular occupations. These initiatives provide financial incentives and additional support to students who decide to work in particular fields, especially those experiencing skill shortages.

HECS-HELP Benefits

The Government currently provides HECS-HELP Benefits for maths and science graduates; early childhood education teachers; and education and nursing/midwifery graduates who go on to work in related employment areas.

HECS-HELP Benefits generally reduce the compulsory HELP repayment (with a matching reduction in HELP debt) for graduates who meet the eligibility criteria. In 2011-12, the Benefit for maths and science graduates and education and nursing/midwifery graduates is up to a total of \$8178 over five years and the Benefit for early childhood teachers is up to a total of \$8724 over five years.

Australian Apprenticeships Incentive Program

Under the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program, a range of financial incentives are available to employers to encourage them to offer employment related opportunities that will encourage people to acquire and expand their working skills and, as a result, set themselves towards worthwhile careers. The Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program also contains a range of special and additional incentives, many of which are targeted at those in traditional trades identified as experiencing a national skills shortage.

Australian Apprenticeships Mentoring Package

The Mentoring Package comprises two grant programs – the Australian Apprenticeships Mentoring Program and the Australian Apprenticeships Advisers Program. The overarching aim of the Mentoring Package is to increase the retention rates of Australian Apprentices,

particularly in the first 12 months of training, in order to improve completion rates and support the supply of skilled workers in sectors and occupations where there is a current or emerging skills need.

Mentoring Program

Under the Mentoring Program, funding will support targeted mentoring to help Australian Apprentices successfully progress through their Apprenticeships. Mentoring may also involve support to their employers or supervisors to encourage a positive employment relationship and better support for Australian Apprentices.

Advisers Program

The Advisers Program will fund the provision of industry information that helps apprentice candidates make informed decisions about pursuing an Australian Apprenticeship in an industry or occupation.