

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

TOPIC: Demand Driven Higher Education – migration of students to larger universities

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Rhiannon

QUESTION No.: AI-178

1. Has there been any reported significant drop in university enrolments at particular universities such as regional universities this year, with the new student demand driven system introduced from 1 January?
2. If yes, where are those drops? At which universities and which courses?
3. Has there been any noticeable or reported migration of students from smaller and regional universities to the sandstone city universities? If yes, what are the details?
4. What strategies has the government considered to ensure rural and regional universities can provide quality education, notwithstanding regional loading funding?

ANSWER

1, 2 and 3:

Universities will begin reporting their 2012 student enrolment data to the Department in mid-2012.

The Department uses university applications and offers data as an indicator of demand. As of 22 February 2012, third round offers increased by 5.5% nationally compared to the same time in 2011.

Third round offers decreased in 13 of the 37 Table A universities in 2012, with Swinburne University of Technology experiencing the largest fall (-10.0%).

The remaining 24 Table A universities recorded an increase in third round offers in 2012, with eight universities experiencing an increase of over 10%. Victoria University recorded the largest increase (30.9%), followed by Central Queensland University (23.7%) and RMIT University (18.6%).

Data for 2012 reveals the biggest increase in university applications was for the Regional Universities Network. While applications increased nationally, regional universities had the biggest increase in applications with a rise of 5.9 per cent for a total of 15,400 applications. The rise in applications for regional universities compares to the traditional Group of Eight universities that rose 0.4 per cent.

The Regional Universities Network consists of Central Queensland University, Southern Cross University, University of Ballarat, University of New England, University of Southern Queensland and the University of the Sunshine Coast.

The Department receives submissions of applications and offers data from Tertiary Admissions Centres (TACs). The latest data analysed includes domestic undergraduate applications and third round offers up to 22 February 2012. The Department will receive further data submissions including direct applications and offers data by the end of May 2012.

4.

In addition to the regional loading for universities, the Australian Government provides funding to rural and regional universities through specific funding programs and through general programs open to all universities.

Regional Priorities Round of the Education Investment Fund

The Regional Priorities Round of the Education Investment Fund (EIF) will allocate up to \$500 million in funding to higher education institutions and vocational education and training (VET) providers to support students in regional Australia. There are two components to the Regional Priorities Round:

- \$480 million will be allocated to teaching and learning infrastructure projects that support students located in regional, rural and remote Australia and/or regional cities (such as Hobart, Darwin, Newcastle, Wollongong and Geelong) through a two-stage, competitive funding round.
 - On 7 October 2011, the Prime Minister opened the competitive Regional Priorities Round and called for Expressions of Interest. Expressions of Interest were considered by the independent EIF Advisory Board who provided advice to the Tertiary Education Minister.
 - On 27 February 2012, applicants that were successful at the Expression of Interest stage were invited to submit detailed Stage 2 applications.
- \$20 million in seed funding will be allocated for the development of a multi-partner university campus on the mid-north coast of New South Wales.
 - On 19 December 2011, Senator Evans announced that a consortium led by the University of New South Wales was the successful applicant for this funding, for the development of a health facility in Port Macquarie. This project was assessed against the EIF evaluation criteria by the independent EIF Advisory Board.

Structural Adjustment Fund

On 7 December 2011 the Australian Government announced 11 successful Structural Adjustment Fund (SAF) projects, in addition to two projects previously announced. Total funding for the 13 SAF projects is \$377 million.

SAF projects will assist universities to prepare for the new operational requirements of a demand driven funding system with new quality measures in place. The Government has recognised that these challenges are likely to be particularly acute for universities serving regional and outer metropolitan areas – and the SAF program outcomes reflect this.

Collaborative Research Networks

The Collaborative Research Networks (CRN) program is a structural adjustment package assisting eligible less research-intensive smaller and regional universities adapt to a research system driven more strongly by performance outcomes.

On 31 May 2011, Minister Carr announced twelve higher education institutions would receive a total of \$61.5 million from mid 2011 to mid 2014 under the CRN program to build research capacity through partnering with other institutions in areas of common interest.

Other support

The programs described above provide support specifically for rural and regional universities. However, most of the funding for rural and regional universities comes from general programs that support all universities such as the Commonwealth Grant Scheme, Research Block Grants, Performance Funding, the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program and past rounds of the Education Investment Fund.