

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2005-2006 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 2

Output Group: 2.4 – Funding for Higher Education

DEST Question No. E1026_06

Senator Wong provided in writing.

Question:

Is DEST aware of an online organisation called 'Australian International University' purporting to operate as a university in Australia?

Is this an approved higher education provider?

If not, what action has DEST taken in relation to this organisation?

Answer:

Australian International University (AIU)

In August 2005 DEST was alerted to two instances of bodies referring to themselves as the 'Australian International University.' There was no connection between the two. Neither was an approved higher education provider.

The first was a spoof website (www.aiu.name) which purported to be located in Alice Springs. The second (www.aiuni.org) was a company registered in the State of California that claimed to be a non-profit virtual university offering qualifications in Project Management.

The Commonwealth is responsible for legislation governing the use of university title in company names, and for accreditation of higher education institutions in the external territories. State and Territory governments are responsible for the accreditation of higher education institutions operating in their jurisdictions. All instances of unaccredited higher education providers which are drawn to the Department's attention are referred to the relevant State or Territory for their investigation and action as appropriate.

With regard to the first instance, DEST contacted the NT Department of Employment, Education and Training to draw their attention to the www.aiu.name site. With regard to the second instance, DEST wrote to the 'interim President' of AIU seeking clarification on the nature of AIU's activities and alerting him to the requirements for legal use of the term 'university' under the Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001.

DEST also cooperated with the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) in its investigation, which was completed in October 2005. The AIU's website ceased to be accessible soon after it was contacted by DEST and NSWDET. The institution in question made assurances that it would not trade under the name of Australian International University in either Australia or overseas and had no intention of re-mounting the same web site again.