

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2007-08 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome 3

DEEWR Question No. EW77_08

Senator Wortley provided in writing.

Question

ABSTUDY and the decline in Indigenous higher education enrolments

Can you confirm that problems in data connection were given as the reason behind the apparent decline in Indigenous higher education enrolments in 2001-2005?

Were there any other reasons that you discerned, or suspected, for the decline? What were they?

Answer

There are no apparent problems in 'data collection' for Indigenous Higher Education enrolments during 2001 – 2005. An increase in employment opportunities and access to alternative education pathways through VET may have resulted in a deferment of higher education studies.

For example, between 2004 and 2005 the number of Indigenous students undertaking VET courses at the AQF Certificate IV level increased by 375 (8%) while the number undertaking AQF Certificate III courses increased by 1,098 students or 8% - a total increase of 1,473 students¹.

A review of changes made to ABSTUDY has been undertaken, with the report being published in 2006. It analyses administrative data on ABSTUDY and student enrolments over the decade around 2000, outlines changes in ABSTUDY policy and practices, analyses views of stakeholders on likely influences on enrolments, and identifies a number of emerging themes for future policy attention. The review concluded that changes to ABSTUDY were not a major contributor to changes in higher education enrolments in 2000 or later².

¹ National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training 2005, page 116.

² Review into the impact of ABSTUDY policy changes was published in 2006 and is available on the Department's website at www.dest.gov.au/abstudy_changes.htm.