

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 2

Output Group: 2.5 – Assistance for post school students including those with special needs

DEST Question No. E082_04

Senator Carr asked on 5 June 2003

Question:

“The package proposes limitations on the number of years a student would be eligible for a Commonwealth-subsidised place and access to HECS – a limit of five years.

- a) Who will decide about these things [eligibility for additional learning entitlement]?
- b) Will this be a matter for universities to administer and adjudicate on?
- c) What about students who exceed the five year limit because of genuine hardship such as illness or disability?
- d) Who will hear appeals against decisions about this?
- e) Will the Commonwealth establish and maintain an appeals structure?”

Answer:

- a)b) The Minister will issue guidelines for higher education providers to follow in assessing student eligibility for, and approving extension of Learning Entitlement.
- c) The Learning Entitlement provides students with a Commonwealth supported place for the equivalent of five years of full time study. The Learning Entitlement will not disadvantage these students. It is structured to automatically enable students to be Commonwealth supported for longer than five calendar years where they have intervals in their study or choose to undertake part time study. For example, a student who chooses to study at half the pace of a full time student has the same Learning Entitlement as a full time student (equivalent of five years of full time) however may study for 10 years as a Commonwealth supported student without disadvantage.

A student's Learning Entitlement is only consumed at the individual student's rate of study and they are therefore not disadvantaged.

- d)e) An appeals process will exist for students who have consumed Learning Entitlement and wish to apply to have it re-credited where special circumstances have prevented them from continuing their study.