

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: 2

Output Group: 2.4 – Funding for Higher Education

DEST Question No. E418_06

Senator Stott Despoja provided in writing.

Question:

Looking back through previous Higher Education Triennium reports, I have noticed some differences between previous reports and last year's, noticeably:

- the absence of projections of the accumulated HECS debt;
 - the absence of figures for Indigenous representation in higher education (as a percentage of the total student population) over time;
 - the absence of a reference figure for the percentage share of the general population of some of the designated equity groups (Indigenous; students with disabilities; NESB students);
- a) Why were these omitted from the last triennium report?
 - b) Will these items be included in the new report?
 - c) If not, why not?

Answer:

Higher Education Triennium Report

- a) Updated projections of accumulated HECS debts were not included in the last Triennium Report in error. An erratum to the Report provided updated data to 2004/05.

Page 18 of the Triennium Report provided figures for Indigenous representation in higher education as a share of the total student population. The Triennium Report series provides figures for Indigenous representation in higher education (as a percentage of the total student population) over time.

Last year's Report did not include reference figures for the population share of all equity groups. The Report is designed to provide an overview of the higher education sector and therefore focuses on the percentage share of equity groups to total higher education student numbers as opposed to the general population.

- b) Projections of accumulated HECS debts and equity group representation as a share of the higher education population are included in the recently published *Higher Education Report 2004-05*. Reference figures for the population share of students from low socio-economic status backgrounds and Indigenous student groups are also included in the Report.
- c) Reference figures for the population share of students from equity groups will be taken into consideration by the Department in future publications of the Report.