

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace  
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Budget Estimates 2010-2011**

**Outcome 3 - Higher Education**

**DEEWR Question No.EW0037\_11**

**Senator Back provided in writing.**

**Question**

**SKILL SHORTAGE**

What labour market statistics does DEEWR use in determining areas of skills shortage? Can you please provide most current data including breakdown by occupation. The Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council Environmental Scan only references DEEWR 2009 data that indicate that there were 1180 enrolments by international students in the aircraft operation field in VET. And general increases in commencements over the 2007-2008 period. What skills categories have been identified as areas of need in the aviation industry? What are these figures for pilots? How many of the total number of enrolments access VET FEE-HELP? How many flight training providers / flying schools courses are accredited allowing students to access this? Of this number how many have applied to be accredited as VET FEE-HELP courses? What is the average cost of completing pilot training? What is the ceiling amount available under VET FEE-HELP? What are the criteria for meeting this?

**Answer**

In 2009-10, DEEWR contacted more than 9000 employers across around 150 occupations as part of its skill shortage research. More than 70 vacancies were surveyed for aircraft maintenance engineers and more than 20 vacancies for aircraft pilots. This research indicates there are shortages of aircraft maintenance engineers, which have been apparent since 2006. Several reviews of the labour market for the Avionics and Mechanical specialisations in 2009 found that employers experienced difficulty recruiting Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (AMEs) across a wide range of aircraft type. The need to hire AMEs who are qualified to work on specific aircraft types limits the number of suitable applicants and attracting candidates to regional locations is particularly difficult.

Although this research has identified that there have been some difficulties recruiting pilots over the past five years, shortages have not been widespread and unfilled vacancies generally required particular licensing.

The 2009 survey of employers also showed that in regional airlines based across the country, more than 90% of their vacancies were filled and, on average, there were more than 11 suitable applicants per vacancy. Employers generally reported filling vacancies easily and most received multiple suitable applicants. Most of the airlines contacted regularly received unsolicited applications. Many employers within the regional aviation industry commented that in mid 2008 they experienced difficulty recruiting pilots but that by late 2009 there was a surplus of qualified Pilots looking for work.

Information provided by employers suggested vacancies for Flying Instructors were more difficult to fill because of the significant additional licensing required.

DEEWR will assess the labour market for aircraft maintenance engineers again in late 2010.

In 2010, indicative student data received from the two approved VET providers that offer two aviation related courses eligible for VET FEE-HELP assistance shows that 48 students are currently enrolled in these courses.

Once a body corporate is approved as a VET provider under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA), all courses on the provider's scope of registration that meet the course requirements under clause 45 of Schedule 1A of HESA are eligible for students to access VET FEE-HELP assistance.

DEEWR does not have any data on the average cost of completing pilot training.

In 2010, the FEE-HELP limit for eligible students is \$85,062, or \$106,328 for medicine, dentistry and veterinary science courses that lead to registration as practitioners in those fields, over their lifetime. The FEE-HELP limit is indexed annually. The FEE-HELP limit is the amount of assistance available to individuals under both the VET FEE-HELP assistance and FEE-HELP assistance loan schemes.

Student entitlement to VET FEE-HELP assistance is determined by VET providers in accordance with the provisions of clause 43 of Schedule 1A of HESA.