

Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2011-2012

Outcome 3 - Higher Education

DEEWR Question No.EW0194_12

Senator Nash provided in writing.

Question

Program 3.1 Structural Adjustment Fund

- The DEEWR website detailing the Structural Adjustment Fund states: 'The fund is intended to assist those universities to make changes necessary to establish longer term financial stability and to ensure that all students have access to a high quality teaching and learning experience'. - would proposals to build university infrastructure in regional areas to provide regional students with more education opportunities then be considered?
- Is the minister aware of the University of Canberra's proposal to establish a regional campus at Cooma?
- The University of Canberra proposal has the financial backing and full support of the Snowy Hydro company. The local council, local businesses and the community are also committed to raising funds. Would this be considered favourably by the government for Structural Adjustment Funding?
- Is there a definite date in which the successful applications for Stage 2 of the Structural Adjustment Fund will be announced?
- Could those unsuccessful applicants in stage 2 of the Structural Adjustment Fund apply for the \$500 million Regional Priorities Round under the Education Investment Fund that was announced in the 2011-12 budget?
- The DEEWR website states it is 'anticipated the Regional Priorities Round will open in the second half of 2011, following consultation on draft guidelines' – do you have a more definite timeline for when consultation will finish, when the details will be available and when the round will open?
- What do the consultations involve and which organisations?
- The website states the Regional Priorities Round 'will support participation and attainment, contribute to regional economic growth and development, build sustainable institutions and communities, and support skills needs' – would a proposal to build a campus in a regional area be considered given it would meet this criteria?

Answer

With respect to the Structural Adjustment Fund (SAF):

1. Under the SAF, proposals from eligible applicants to build university infrastructure in regional areas to provide regional students with more education opportunities would be considered.
2. The Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations is aware of the University of Canberra's proposal to establish a regional campus at Cooma.
3. In accordance with the SAF Program Administrative Guidelines, proposals developed through SAF Stage 2 will be assessed against the SAF evaluation criteria by the SAF assessment panel and, in the case of proposals which seek capital funding of \$10 million or more, assessed against the Education Investment Fund (EIF) evaluation criteria by the EIF Advisory Board.

The nature and status of proposed collaborations and partnerships (such as with local council, businesses and the community), including information on funding commitments, will be considered under SAF evaluation criterion 4 'Project development' and, in the case of proposals which seek capital funding of \$10 million or more, EIF evaluation criterion 7 'Extent of co-investment'.

4. The Government expects to announce successful Stage 2 applications from August/September 2011. At this time, no specific date has been set for this purpose.
5. It is anticipated that universities that have submitted SAF Stage 2 applications will be eligible to apply under the Regional Priorities Round. Applicants will need to demonstrate that any project proposed is aligned with the purpose of the Regional Priorities Round and would satisfy evaluation criteria published in the final program guidelines.

With respect to the Education Investment Fund (EIF) Regional Priorities Round:

1. Draft program Guidelines for the Regional Priorities Round of the EIF were released for consultation on 13 July 2011. The consultation period closes on 3 August 2011. Key dates for the round will be published on the Department's EIF webpage once the guidelines are finalised.
2. Interested stakeholders have been invited to submit written comments on the draft guidelines. Higher education, vocational education and training, and research stakeholders were notified of the release of the draft guidelines, along with state and territory governments. Other interested persons and organisations will also be free to submit comments.
3. The Department is unable to answer this question prior to the guidelines for the round being finalised.