

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND
WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

**INQUIRY INTO ALL ASPECTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING TO SUPPORT FUTURE
DEMAND IN AGRICULTURE AND AGRIBUSINESS IN AUSTRALIA: QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Coordinators

Question Page 54

Senator GALLACHER: Can you describe the process associated with the funding to deploy 34 regional education and jobs coordinators and what stage it is at? Is it fully functional?

Answer

- The Australian Government announced, as part of the 2011-12 Budget, funding of \$19.1 million over three years to 30 June 2014 for the Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plan initiative. The initiative supports the engagement of 34 Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Coordinators in regional communities.
- The Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plans Budget Measure came into effect on 1 July 2011 with the following funding:

Funding Type	2011-12 (\$'000)	2012-13 (\$'000)	2013-14 (\$'000)	Total (\$'000)
Administered	442	442	442	1,326
Departmental	5,893	5,935	5,972	17,800
Total	6,335	6,377	6,414	19,126

- All 34 Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Coordinators have been recruited.
- Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plans are in the early stages of being developed. Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Coordinators are currently working with local stakeholders, including Regional Development Australia (RDA) Committees, to develop a Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plan for each of the 46 RDA areas that cover non-metropolitan Australia. These Plans will complement the RDA Regional Plans and will be built from local knowledge to improve participation and outcomes in education, training and employment in regional Australia.
- Concurrently with developing these Plans, Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Coordinators are active in their regions and working on such things as community, industry and education, and training initiatives with local organisations and education and training providers.
- The Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plans will be finalised and published in early July 2012.

Trade Training Centres

Question Page 55

Senator McKENZIE: Yes, the trade training centres—how many are in the regions and the types of courses being offered specific to the areas our committee is looking at.

Answer

- The Trade Training Centres in Schools Program has committed \$2.5 billion over 10 years (2008 – 2017). The objectives of the program are:

- to provide funding for construction of new trade training centres, refurbishment of existing facilities and/or the purchase of industry standard equipment to support vocational training for students in Years 9 to 12;
 - to give all secondary school students access to greater training opportunities and to help address skills shortages; and
 - to drive systemic change in senior secondary schools that will deliver flexible integrated learning options that engage and encourage students to complete their studies while opening pathways for future employment.
- The Program is progressing well. As at 3 February 2012, more than 370 Trade Training Centre projects have been approved benefiting over 1060 schools. Of these, 281 projects have had Funding Agreements executed and 85 of these include agriculture and agri-business qualifications.
 - Of the 85 Trade Training Centres delivering agriculture/agri-business qualifications, 31 are operational. The table below indicates the geographical regions in which the 85 Trade Training Centres (or the lead school in the case of cluster projects) delivering agricultural/agribusiness courses are located, and the number of operational Trade Training Centres in each region, as at 3 February 2012.

Australian Standard Geographical Classification	TTCs with executed funding agreements and approved agriculture/agri-business courses	Operational Trade Training Centres
Major cities of Australia ASGC 0	13	4
Inner regional Australia ASGC 1	29	11
Outer regional Australia ASGC 2	32	10
Remote Australia ASGC 3	5	4
Very remote Australia ASGC 4	5	2
Total	85	31

- Attachment A lists the 85 Trade Training Centres (with their lead schools) and the agriculture and agribusiness qualifications being delivered by state/territory and geographical region

Priority Occupation List

Question Page 56

Ms White: Yes, Senator, I have found it. The National Workforce Development Fund does have a rather long list of qualifications on it. It is an occupational list and it is for recipients to put forward applications under that list. I did not bring a copy of that list with me but I can provide that to the committee. It is a public list. It is up on our website. It is based on the research from that labour market area of DEEWR and the surveys that Mr Warburton talked about before, so it is certainly based on that analysis.

Answer

- The Priority Occupations List (POL) for the National Workforce Development Fund is provided at [Attachment B](#). The POL was developed by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE) from labour market research, including analysis of advertised job vacancies and employer surveys, and input from industry via Industry Skills Councils. If an occupation is in demand locally but is not included on the list, an application for inclusion of the occupation can be made to DIISRTE.

Primary Industries Education Foundation

Question Page 58

Senator McKENZIE: I have a question on the Primary Industries Education Foundation. On page 2 of your submission you say it was established in 2008 and brings together the education and training sector, some industry and some government bodies to try and pull together, at the primary and secondary school level, this conversation that we are trying to have. We know what it is and you have stated what it is. Can you flesh out that paragraph a bit more for us in terms of the department's perspective on it?

Ms White: I am not personally familiar with the organisation but I thought their submission was interesting so I did ask for a bit of information about what the organisation is. It did look like an organisation that is a foundation and has a number of industry partners. I notice that the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture is one of their stakeholders and also Meat and Livestock Australia and so on. It appeared to me when I read their submission that it looked like they may have originally have had some Commonwealth funding, perhaps through the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

CHAIR: That is correct.

Ms White: As far as I am aware it is not funded from vocational education and training, nor higher ed by the sounds of it.

Mr Warburton: No.

Ms White: Whether it does receive some funding from our schools area, I am not sure. Do you want us to see if we can find that out?

Senator McKENZIE: It would be fantastic if you could find that out.

Answer

- The Schools and Youth Cluster within the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) has not provided any funding to the Primary Industries Education Foundation.

Question Page 58

CHAIR: It seemed to me that there was a tremendous opportunity for synergy between these 34 regional education skills and jobs coordinators and this Primary Industries Education Foundation, which is obviously very thin on the ground.

Ms White: We will find out when we talk to that regional area whether there is some link between those two programs if you like.

Senator McKENZIE: And the RDCs, because I know they have got some RDCs involved and it would seem that a variety of RDCs have identified industry skills shortages for their own industry and are taking a variety of approaches on how to address that.

Answer

- The Primary Industries Education Foundation is a small not-for-profit organisation announced by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in 2009. It is a partnership between government, industry and educators that seeks to encourage school students to learn about agriculture and the range of training and career opportunities in the sector.
- There is no formal link between Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Coordinators, Research and Development Corporations and the Foundation. In the development of Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plans, however, it is expected that some regional communities may identify primary industry skills and career needs as a local priority. Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Coordinators will draw from the range of locally available organisations, programs and initiatives in developing strategies that respond to local priorities.
- Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Coordinators are working with local stakeholders, including RDA Committees to develop Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plans.
- Collaboration and synergies are being established with RDA Committees. Meetings have taken place with each local RDA Committee in the 46 RDA areas that cover non-metropolitan Australia. The Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plans and the strategies contained in them will complement the RDA Regional Plans and will be consistent with these in terms of strategic priorities for education, skills and employment.

Education Investment Fund

Question Page 53

Senator GALLACHER: On page 138, paragraph 5, it says the government has committed \$690 million to regional higher education, training and research infrastructure through the Education Investment Fund, which provides support for regional students. Can you describe the outcomes there and in particular has there been any improvement in Indigenous participation in that commitment?

CHAIR: In that same vein and on that \$690 million, could you indicate in the information that you provide back to the committee, Mr Warburton, whether any of that \$690 million was actually earmarked for regional higher education in agriculturally related areas or whether it was \$690 million for higher education training and research in regions generally.

CHAIR: Secondly, for those that you are able to tell us about that have or are to be funded, could you give us some indication as to any of those that actually have been approved to provide that in the agriculturally related disciplines.

Answer

At the time of the original submission \$690 million (or 17%) of the \$4 billion of allocated EIF funding was for universities, VET providers and research organisations located in regional areas of Australia.

Since this figure was provided, another \$160 million of EIF funding has been allocated to regional areas through the Structural Adjustment Fund and \$174 million under the Clean Energy Initiative. In addition to this, \$500 million in EIF funding will be allocated to regional tertiary education providers through the Regional Priorities Round, which is currently underway. This will bring the total investment from the EIF in regional areas to over \$1.5 billion or nearly 40% of all EIF funding.

As many projects are still in progress, it is not possible to evaluate the outcomes of the funding from the Education Investment Fund.

To date, funding through the Education Investment Fund has been open to all disciplines.

While only one project funded through the EIF has directly addressed training in the agricultural sector, a number of others have direct relevance to the agriculture industry.

These projects include:

- Tocal College awarded funding in EIF Round 2 of \$5.5 million to refurbish and adaptively re-use decades-old training infrastructure at the Paterson and Yanco campuses of Tocal College in NSW. The refurbishment included establishment of a ruminant field laboratory, an all weather training facility, the upgrade of IT infrastructure and improvement of residential facilities. This infrastructure will aid Tocal College to deliver specialist VET courses in primary industries for school groups, isolated and Indigenous students and provide improved VET agricultural training linked to higher education.
- The University of Queensland's World-class veterinary science facilities at the School of Veterinary Science, Gatton Campus were awarded EIF funding of \$47.2 million in EIF Round 1. The facility is dedicated to protecting the health and welfare of animals, to enhancing the productivity of the Australian livestock industries and to improving the nation's biosecurity.
- Charles Sturt University's National Life Sciences Hub awarded funding of \$34 million in EIF Round 2 to meet the global challenges of food security, biosecurity and climate change which are driving national priorities in agricultural-animal research. As part of this project the university has already completed work on the largest Rhizolysimeter in the Southern Hemisphere which will enhance Australia's capacity in research into sub-soil plant growth.
- The Super Science Initiative includes projects that have the potential to generate benefits for regional Australia and agribusinesses. For example, the Australian Plant Phenomics Facility project (with nodes in Adelaide and Canberra) is receiving \$10.0 million to extend its ability to analyse plant growth and function by using world-leading robotics, imaging and computing technology.

Total funding for projects relating to agriculture is \$96.7 million.

Student enrolments, commencements and completions

Question Page 54

Senator McKENZIE: We have some lists for completion rates for domestic students for 10 years around ag and enviro et cetera. I am just wondering about the number of international students who are studying those, both at the undergraduate and postgraduate level, given that our higher education system over the last 10 years has now swung heavily to demand-driven and the importance of international students on the decision-making processes of universities in terms of the dollars they bring in.

Senator McKENZIE: Is it possible, on notice if required, to have that broken down from postgrads, such as doctoral students? As I am out on the ground, I am hearing that there are a lot of doctoral international students in ag and enviro, and I am just wanting to see some information about that.

Senator McKENZIE: I would like domestic and international.

Answer

The Department collects data on a range of characteristics of students enrolled in higher education in Australia, including award course completion numbers. This information is publicly available at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Publications/HEStatistics/Publications/Pages/Home.aspx>

Below are three tables of data showing commencements, enrolments and completions in Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies in Australia.

Table 1 provides a summary of all students enrolled in Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies in Australia in 2010. There were a total of 18,464 students in 2010. Of these, 15,556 (84.3%) were domestic students and 2,908 (15.7%) were international students. Over 56 per cent (1649) of all international students who enrolled in Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies were post-graduate students, including 25 per cent (735) Doctorate students.

Enrolments for international students grew by 183.2 per cent between 2001 and 2010 while enrolments for domestic students fell by 10.9 per cent over the same period (Table 1).

Similarly, in the same period, commencements and completions for international students increased by 156.1% and 147.2% respectively, while commencements (down 8.7%) and completions (down 15.5%) fell for domestic students.

Table 1: Student Enrolment: all Students enrolled in Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies (a) by citizenship status and course level, 2001-2010

Course level	Domestic										
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	% Change 2001-10
Doctorate student	1297	1251	1289	1310	1421	1445	1427	1500	1485	1547	19.3%
Other Postgraduate	1956	2259	2442	2554	2516	2338	2390	2644	2881	3063	56.6%
Undergraduate	14125	13783	13427	13144	11838	10962	10420	10254	10633	10940	-22.5%
TOTAL (b)	17457	17366	17244	17062	15840	14936	14483	14519	15032	15556	-10.9%
Course level	International										
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	% Change 2001-10
Doctorate student	263	267	295	321	341	372	442	565	639	735	179.5%
Other Postgraduate	545	600	628	678	651	641	663	729	822	914	67.7%
Undergraduate	219	299	326	373	416	430	490	703	948	1259	474.9%
TOTAL (b)	1027	1166	1249	1372	1408	1443	1597	1997	2409	2908	183.2%

(a) The data takes into account the coding of Combined Courses to two fields of education.

(b) The total including Non-Awarding and Enabling course

Table 2: Commencing Students enrolled in Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies (a) by citizenship status and course level, 2001-2010

Course level	Domestic										
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	% Change 2001-10
Doctorate student	241	259	269	252	279	254	238	286	245	293	21.6%
Other Postgraduate	888	1148	1178	1149	1108	991	1180	1335	1383	1358	52.9%
Undergraduate	4940	4777	4717	4734	3697	3438	3397	3563	3813	3959	-19.9%
TOTAL (b)	6147	6244	6233	6170	5147	4873	5061	5275	5473	5615	-8.7%
Course level	International										
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	% Change 2001-10
Doctorate student	62	62	89	97	80	82	144	178	183	205	230.6%
Other Postgraduate	340	373	348	425	341	357	384	414	487	527	55.0%
Undergraduate	97	140	126	164	182	175	206	407	470	546	462.9%
TOTAL (b)	499	575	563	686	603	614	736	999	1140	1278	156.1%

(a) The data takes into account the coding of Combined Courses to two fields of education.

(b) The total including Non-Awarding and Enabling course

Table 3: Award course completions in Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies (a) by citizenship status and course level, 2001-2010

Course level	Domestic										
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	% Change 2001-10
Doctorate student	177	175	209	185	169	197	223	175	202	223	26.0%
Other Postgraduate	538	523	596	683	715	659	634	681	729	828	53.9%
Undergraduate	2846	2775	2913	2625	2413	2261	2081	2005	2037	1958	-31.2%
TOTAL	3561	3473	3718	3493	3297	3117	2938	2861	2968	3009	-15.5%
Course level	International										
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	% Change 2001-10
Doctorate student	50	47	49	69	63	59	92	80	77	95	90.0%
Other Postgraduate	225	316	293	460	323	307	279	336	404	432	92.0%
Undergraduate	34	62	59	64	87	98	118	118	128	237	597.1%
TOTAL	309	425	401	593	473	464	489	534	609	764	147.2%

(a) The data takes into account the coding of Combined Courses to two fields of education.

Source: Selected Higher Education Student Statistics, 2001 to 2010.

What is working overseas to attract students to agricultural and environmental science?

Question Page 55

Senator McKENZIE: I was wondering whether we had looked overseas at what is working over there in terms of attracting young people to agricultural science and environmental science.

Answer

The Department is not aware of overseas activities to attract young people to agricultural and environmental science. However, the Australian government is involved in more general international work on skills needs.

Australia is actively participating in an OECD project aimed at preparing a Skills Strategy. The purpose of the Skills Strategy is to foster a cross-government, peer-learning approach towards improving the supply of, anticipating the demand for, and optimising the use of skills in the workforce to promote economic growth and social inclusion. The OECD will investigate such issues as:

- the value of occupation-specific versus basic and generic skills
- the extent and impact of a mismatch between available skills and those needed in the labour market
- the need to improve skills among the unemployed.

The OECD will also work to identify and develop a set of good practices for financing skills development programs and formulating sound, inclusive and effective skills policies. All of this will feed into a comprehensive *Skills Strategy* publication to guide countries in developing better skills policies. The *OECD Skills Strategy* is scheduled to be launched in early 2013 with the intention that it become a regular OECD publication.

Commonwealth funding and student contributions by discipline cluster

Question Page 56

Mr Warburton: That is correct. All of these rates are in equivalent full-time student terms, so using 'full-time student' is good. The direct government subsidy is worth \$19,542. That is what we pay the university. That student would have a maximum student contribution amount. As for the student contribution amount, it is up to the university to charge whatever they choose between zero and the maximum. Most tend to charge at the maximum. The maximum is \$7,756.

CHAIR: Would there be on a web page somewhere that equivalent figure for different university courses? If it is available we do not need to be asking you to provide it, but I would just be interested to know what the fee is for a student studying law or accounting or arts or veterinary science or whatever.

Answer

Higher education providers receive base funding of an amount that is calculated according to the number of full-time equivalent Commonwealth supported students enrolled in units of study. Units of study are classified under one of eight funding clusters and students are charged under one of four student contribution bands.

Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding clusters and maximum student contributions for an equivalent full-time student load, 2012

Funding cluster	Part of funding cluster	Maximum student contribution amounts (\$)	Australian Government contribution (\$)	Total resourcing (\$)
Funding cluster 1 Law, accounting, commerce, economics, administration		9,425	1,861	11,286
Funding cluster 2 Humanities		5,648	5,168	11,816
Funding cluster 3 Mathematics, statistics, behavioural science, social studies, computing, built environment, other health	Mathematics, statistics	4,520	12,641 ^a	17,161
	Computing, built environment or other health	8,050	9,142	17,192
	Behavioural science or social studies	5,648		14,790
Funding cluster 4 Education		5,648	9,512	15,160
Funding cluster 5 Clinical psychology, allied health, foreign languages, visual and performing arts	Clinical psychology, foreign languages, or visual and performing arts	5,648	11,243	16,891
	Allied health	8,050		19,293
Funding cluster 6 Nursing		5,648	12,552	18,200
Funding cluster 7 Engineering, science, surveying	Science	4,520	19,482 ^a	24,002
	Engineering or surveying	8,050	15,983	24,033
Funding cluster 8 Dentistry, medicine, veterinary science, agriculture	Dentistry, medicine or veterinary science	9,425	20,284	29,709
	Agriculture	8,050		28,334

a Includes Transitional Loading amount for units of study in mathematics, statistics and science.

Note: Amounts assume all grandfathering arrangements are complete.

Source: DEEWR data.

Rural Tertiary Hardship Fund

Question Page 56

CHAIR: The bottom of page 2 of the submission says that the 2010-11 budget had a provision of \$20 million under the Rural Tertiary Hardship Fund. Are you able to tell us or take on notice whether or not that sum of \$20 million was actually taken up, and can you tell us what the application number was? In other words, were there many more applicants than there were funds available? I would be most interested in knowing the extent to which those funds did provide assistance to the students in the target group. If you could do that, I would appreciate it.

Answer

The Rural Tertiary Hardship Fund (the Fund) operated from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011.

In 2011, 1852 students applied for a one-off \$3000 grant under the Fund. 1159 first time university students from regional and remote areas were awarded a grant, a total expenditure of over \$3.47 million.

All applicants who qualified for assistance under the Program Guidelines and legislation were awarded a grant.

Although the \$20 million fund was appropriated in the 2010-11 Budget, the Fund was to operate over three financial years, with unspent funds re-phased into the next year depending on need. On 14 September 2011, following consideration of the Review of Student Income Support Reforms, the Government announced a package of reforms to student income support, including cessation of the Rural Tertiary Hardship Fund, effective 1 January 2012. The package provides additional support for tertiary students from regional areas who need to move away from home to study, while maintaining an emphasis on assisting students from low socio economic backgrounds.

As reported in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) \$16.3 million was redirected from the Rural Tertiary Hardship Fund in response to the Review of Student Income Support Reforms.

Why PICSE is not active in Victoria

Question Page 56

Senator McKENZIE: On industry collaboration, we have heard a lot today about PICSE. Enid Blyton references aside, I was interested, as a Victorian senator who is passionate about regional areas, that Victoria is actually not one of the places in our Commonwealth where PICSE is active. It obviously collaborates with universities, regional communities and local primary industries to do exactly what we want, which is to attract people to tertiary science. We have seen in my home state a retraction in the number of ag colleges et cetera over time. Is there some way to flesh out the whys and the wherefores of that fact that I do not know about?

Answer

- \$3.6 million in funding has been provided to establish the Primary Industry Centre for Science Education (PICSE) through the Diversity and Structural Adjustment Fund over 2009-2011. Funding support for PISCE has been fully acquitted.
- The University of Tasmania is the lead partner for PICSE. Additional financial and in-kind support is also provided from industry partners, and across the Centre's seven partner universities – the

University of Western Australia, Curtin University, Charles Darwin University, Flinders University, Charles Sturt University, the University of New England and the University of Ballarat.

- PICSE is a regionally-focussed strategy of collaboration between universities, government, the broader education sector, businesses and local communities. The Centre's activities are aimed at attracting students into tertiary science and increasing the number of skilled professionals in science-based primary industries.
- PISCE delivers science class activities, teachers' professional development, teaching resources, student camps and student industry placement programs, all building strong and sustainable relationships with local scientists in primary industries.
- While the Commonwealth has provided funding for the establishment of PISCE, the States and communities with which the Centre engages are at the discretion of the Centre itself.