



Australian Government

Department of Social Services

SENATE

FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the Commonwealth funding of Indigenous Tasmanians

Submission by the Department of Social Services

November 2016

Introduction

The Department of Social Services (DSS) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Commonwealth funding of Indigenous Tasmanians.

DSS undertakes a broad range of activities to improve the lifetime wellbeing of people and families in Australia. Within this context, DSS has responsibility for the ABSTUDY scheme, which aims to encourage Indigenous Australians to take full advantage of available educational opportunities and improve their employment opportunities.

The ABSTUDY scheme

The ABSTUDY scheme provides a means-tested living allowance and a range of supplementary benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander full-time students and Australian Apprentices. Some supplementary benefits are available to part-time students.

ABSTUDY policy is a portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Social Services. DSS provides advice on the application of the ABSTUDY policy and the Department of Human Services administers and delivers ABSTUDY on behalf of DSS.

Eligibility for ABSTUDY assistance

The basic conditions of eligibility for ABSTUDY require that a person be:

- of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent according to the ABSTUDY definition of Aboriginality, and
- studying an approved course at an approved education institution, or
- undertaking a full-time Australian Apprenticeship, and
- not receiving other government assistance for study, and
- an Australian citizen and normally living in Australia.

An Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person for ABSTUDY purposes is one who:

- is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent; and
- identifies as an Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person; and
- is accepted as such by the community in which s/he lives or has lived.

A claimant's declaration during the ABSTUDY application process is usually sufficient evidence of their Aboriginality or Torres Strait Islander status. Additional evidence is not required unless there is uncertainty about the claimant's Aboriginality or Torres Strait Islander status.

ABSTUDY assistance is available to eligible students undertaking studies at secondary and tertiary levels (and in limited circumstances for primary school studies) up to and including doctorate level studies. ABSTUDY is also available to trainees and apprentices undertaking an Australian Apprenticeship.

ABSTUDY expenditure

In 2015-16, expenditure for ABSTUDY Secondary was \$145.25 million and ABSTUDY Tertiary was \$114.22 million. Expenditure is not broken down by state.

ABSTUDY payment rates are listed at [Attachment A](#).

ABSTUDY recipients with a home address in Tasmania

ABSTUDY is a national program and as such, it has no provisions that are specific to any Australian state or territory.

The following table shows the number of people receiving ABSTUDY assistance at the end of June in each year since 2009. The table indicates that on average around 2.4 per cent of ABSTUDY recipients had their home address in Tasmania (the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates around 3.6 per cent of Australia's Indigenous population were living in Tasmania in 2011¹).

ABSTUDY Recipients: Sector by Number and Percentage of Recipients with Home State in Tasmania - Time Series

Sector		Jun-09	Jun-10	Jun-11	Jun-12	Jun-13	Jun-14	Jun-15	Jun-16
Schools	Total Recipients	25883	27588	27578	25909	24117	21681	22869	22864
	Recipients With Home State in Tasmania	723	794	807	747	629	471	567	464
	Percentage With Home State in Tasmania	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.1	1.8	1.5	1.7	1.4
Higher Education	Total Recipients	3109	3486	4257	4711	4725	5219	5318	5878
	Recipients With Home State in Tasmania	76	86	110	126	126	150	144	163
	Percentage With Home State in Tasmania	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.5
VET and Apprentices	Total Recipients	5571	5181	5225	5203	5155	5476	5201	5216
	Recipients With Home State in Tasmania	48	30	46	40	74	142	102	108
	Percentage With Home State in Tasmania	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3
Not Specified	Total Recipients	49	53	47	119	188	83	95	95
	Recipients With Home State in Tasmania	0	0	1	2	1	2	1	0
	Percentage With Home State in Tasmania	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	Total Recipients	34612	36308	37107	35942	34185	32459	33483	34053
	Recipients With Home State in Tasmania	847	910	964	915	830	765	814	735
	Percentage With Home State in Tasmania	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.2

Data Descriptions

- Includes recipients of ABSTUDY who are determined to be current (i.e. entitled to be paid) on the Centrelink payment system for the relevant period.
- Source: Department of Human Services administrative data (DSS Blue Book dataset).
- Report produced on 26/10/2016.

¹ ABS 3238.0.55.001 - Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001>

Attachment A

ABSTUDY Basic rates (at 20 September 2016)

Living Allowance (means-tested)	Under 16 years	16–17 years	18–21 years	22+ years
	Fortnight			
<i>Dependent</i>				
At home		\$237.10	\$285.20	\$528.70
Tertiary	\$32.70			
In state care and Foster Care Allowance paid	\$237.10	\$237.10	\$285.20	
In state care and no Foster Care Allowance paid	\$433.20	\$433.20	\$433.20	
Away from home	\$237.10	\$433.20	\$433.20	\$528.70
<i>Single, Independent</i>				
No dependent children	\$433.20	\$433.20	\$433.20	\$528.70
No dependent children, 60 years and over				\$571.90
With dependent children	\$567.60	\$567.60	\$567.60	\$571.90
<i>Member of a couple, Independent</i>				
No dependent children	\$433.20	\$433.20	\$433.20	\$477.40
With dependent children	\$475.70	\$475.70	\$475.70	\$477.40
<i>Single, Accommodated Independent (living at home)</i>				
No dependent children	\$237.10	\$237.10	\$285.20	
<i>Masters and Doctorate students</i>				
All ages	\$1,005.60			

Supplementary assistance

ABSTUDY Assistance	Rate
Remote Area Allowance	fortnight
Single	\$18.20
Partnered	\$15.60
Plus for each dependent	\$7.30
Pharmaceutical Allowance may be paid	fortnight
Single	\$6.20
Partnered	\$3.10

ABSTUDY Assistance		Rate
Pension Supplement may be paid if Living Allowance recipient has reached age pension age		fortnight
Single		\$65.10
Couple, combined rate		\$98.20
School Term Allowance		annual, in instalments
Maximum annual total		\$540.80
Instalment	Entitlement Period	
1	1 January – 31 March	\$187.20
2	1 April – 30 June	\$83.20
3	1 July – 30 September	\$187.20
4	1 October – 31 December	\$83.20
School Fees Allowance (at home)		Annual
Turning 16 before 1 July in school year		\$78.00
Aged under 16 at 30 June in school year		\$156.00
School Fees Allowance (boarding)		Annual
Maximum rate (\$1533 subject to income test)		\$9,548.00
Basic rate (no income test)		\$8,015.00
Incidentals Allowance		Annual
Less than 12 week course		\$83.80
12 to 16 week course		\$146.80
17 to 23 week course		\$292.00
24 week to one year course		\$593.40
Additional Incidentals Allowance		Annual
Essential course costs in excess of the following amounts:		
Less than 12 week course		\$144.20
12 to 16 week course		\$285.50
17 to 23 week course		\$570.80
24 week to one year course		\$1,143.40
Maximum in a year		\$2,080.00
ABSTUDY Pensioner Education Supplement		Fortnight
Pensioner Education Supplement full rate		\$62.40
Pensioner Education Supplement part rate		\$31.20

ABSTUDY Assistance	Rate
Fares Allowance (students only)	actual costs
Away-from-base assistance	actual costs
Lawful Custody Allowance	essential course costs
Aged under 16 years Boarding Supplement	Semester
Boarding Supplement	\$2,563.30
Residential Costs Option	Fortnight
Reduced rate of Living Allowance plus residential costs	\$41.60 plus actual costs
Additional Assistance may be paid to Living Allowance recipients in exceptional circumstances	actual costs
Administrative and audit costs (Away from Base)	Annual
Maximum amount claimable by education provider	\$4,714
Masters and Doctorate Relocation Allowance (one off payment)	up to \$1,520.00
Adult	\$530.00
Child	\$260.00
Masters and Doctorate Away from base assistance	Annual
Actual cost up to	\$2,080.00
Masters and Doctorate Thesis Allowance (one off payment)	actual cost up to
Masters	\$420.00
Doctorate	\$840.00
Masters and Doctorate Compulsory course fees or Student Contribution Amounts (previously known as HECS)	actual costs