



Australian Government
Department of Education, Science and Training

Our Ref :
Your Ref :

Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP
Chair
Standing Committee for Education
and Vocational Training
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Hartsuyker

On 26 May 2005 DEST appeared before the Standing Committee into Education and Vocational Training, which is inquiring into teacher education. At the conclusion of the inquiry the Committee tabled two questions. I am pleased to provide the response to these questions (see attachment A).

The Department also undertook to investigate the availability of further research on a number of matters relating to the teaching practicum, the selection process for teacher education courses, attrition rates in teacher education degrees, and an international teacher education programme. We have commissioned an internal report covering attrition rates, and this should be available for the Committee in the near future. We are continuing to investigate the availability of the additional information identified by the Committee.

I understand that the Committee has also expressed interest in receiving a copy of the recent evaluation of the Bachelor of Learning Management at Central Queensland University conducted by the Australian Council for Education Research. This report is currently under review, and when cleared by the Minister will be made available to the Committee.

I would also like to draw the Committee's attention to the recently released OECD report *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*. I have enclosed two copies of this report for your interest.

We are conscious of the great interest in the inquiry and wish the Committee well in its continual deliberations.

Yours sincerely

Bill Burmester
Deputy Secretary

July 2005
Encl.

Inquiry into teacher education – Questions on Notice for Institutional Funding

Question 1:

(a) Could you describe the path that higher education money provided by the Commonwealth takes to the school of education in each university?

(b) Who decides what proportion goes to each component of the course – for example the practicum component?

(c) What steps are required to track this?

Answer:

(a) Internal decisions, including the allocation of Commonwealth funding, are ultimately a matter for the management and governing body of each provider [subject to the answer to (b)].

(b) In the case of the teaching practicum, Funding Agreements from 2005 include a clause specifying: "The CGS funding clusters for nursing and teaching have been funded in part in recognition of the costs of the nursing clinical placements and teaching practicum. The University must utilise such funds for the purpose for which they are allocated".

(c) The Commonwealth has no power to track general funds to specific schools or departments. In relation to the practicum funding, the Minister advised Parliament that "in the interests of reducing reporting requirements on universities, and given the strong support for this additional funding from the sector, the Government will not require separate reporting of these monies. However, if the Government became aware of instances where the funds were being used for unintended purposes, it would consider appropriate ways in which this could be rectified".

Question 2:

(a) Can you describe in detail the policy funding implications of teaching, having been identified as a higher education national priority area?

(b) Can you provide us with more details about the Government's increased contribution towards the costs associated with the teaching of practicum?

(c) Can you give us a clear description of the accountability requirements on universities that are imposed by the Commonwealth and by State and Territory governments (in relation to teacher education)?

Answer:

(a) The major policy funding implications of identifying teacher education as a national priority are:

- Setting the maximum student contribution (formerly known as HECS) rate at 2004 levels (indexed) for units of study in education. In 2005 the maximum rate per EFTSL in units of study in education is \$3,847.**
- Increasing the funding rate per EFTSL for units of study in the education cluster by inclusion of the practicum rate.**
- Giving preference to places in education when allocations of new higher education places are made. When 9,100 new places were allocated in 2004 for commencement in**

2005, 1,720 (or 19 per cent) of these places went to teaching courses (growing to 4,700 by 2008).

- Enabling Commonwealth supported places to be allocated to approved private higher education providers. 150 new national priority places in teaching were allocated to private higher education providers in 2005.

(b) The increase in Commonwealth funding to assist with costs associated with the teaching practicum is around \$29.6 million in 2005 (over \$120 million for 2005 to 2008). This equates to \$657 per Equivalent Full-Time Student Load in units of study in teacher education.

(c) The Commonwealth imposes no specific accountability requirements on universities in relation to teacher education, except for requirements associated with the practicum payment. State and Territory governments can advise on requirements relating to curriculum and teaching standards for students in their jurisdictions.