

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018**

Outcome: Higher Education Research and International

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000661

Senator Collins, Jacinta asked on 31 May 2017, Proof Hansard page 128

Enabling course completion rates

Question

Senator O'NEILL: The government has argued that 62 per cent of students in fee-paying enabling courses completed them—well, only 52 per cent of the students in free courses, like Newcastle's enabling courses, completed their studies. There has been a counterargument put by Professor Fagan saying that the figures are unfair because they only compared completion rates for 340 fee-paying students against 12,000 in free courses across Australia, including the University of Newcastle. Do you want to comment on that?

Mr Learmonth: I will take it on notice.

Answer

The data collected by the Department of Education and Training on enabling students demonstrates that a higher proportion of fee paying enabling students who commenced an enabling course continued study the following year, as compared to non-fee paying students. This data informed the policy measure on enabling courses and is supported by previous research. The Review of the Demand Driven Funding System indicated that some enabling students were disengaged from their course. The Review Panel suggested that “the lack of student contribution could be one reason why attrition from enabling courses is often very high, with rates of 40 or 50 per cent not uncommon.” (p.61)

Under the new arrangements, Commonwealth supported enabling students will not be charged at the full fee rate, eligible students will not have to pay anything upfront, as they can defer their contribution until their income reaches the Higher Education Loan Program repayment threshold.