

## Senate Committee: Education and Employment

### QUESTION ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018

#### Outcome: Skills and Training

#### Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-001010

Senator Cameron, Doug provided in writing

*Also refer to previous hearing Question No. SQ17-000292*

#### **VSL - Genuine students (Transition)**

#### Question

In the transition process to VET Student Loans, did the Department discover any students who did not know they had a debt or were enrolled with a provider?

If there are phantom students - How many? Which providers? Has their debt been cancelled? How much debt is the Commonwealth seeking to recover?

#### Answer

- As at 8 June 2017, 642,633 invitations had been sent to students to opt-in to be grandfathered for VET FEE-HELP in 2017. These invitations provided students the option to grandfather their study arrangements; however students are not required to reply to the department unless they wish to take up this offer.
- Between 7 December 2016 and 31 May 2017 the Department of Education and Training's Complaints Handling Unit (CHU) received approximately 1389 complaints as a result of the grandfathering notices sent to students. The department progressively examines these complaints and analyses the issues raised in accordance with complaints procedures to determine appropriate responses. This will include analysis of any complaints that involve claims that a student was not aware they were enrolled or had a debt until after receiving a notice.
- The department audits VET FEE-HELP providers to determine the veracity of their reported enrolments. Twenty eight VET FEE-HELP providers were audited in 2016. Four further VET FEE-HELP providers are currently undergoing audits in 2017 with further audits of VET FEE-HELP providers expected. The department is undertaking one investigation into potential criminal matters, but the department does not comment on ongoing investigations.
- As at 1 June 2017, as a result of the work of the CHU in response to student complaints, providers have agreed to remit over \$21 million in VET FEE-HELP debts for over 2000 students.