Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016

Outcome: Higher Education Research and International

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000657

Senator Reynolds, Linda asked on 21 October 2015, Proof Hansard page 64

HECS write off for STEM Students

Question

Senator REYNOLDS: That is interesting. Based on the numbers you have just quoted, how many students would be able to have the full cost of their degrees funded from $45 million?
Ms Reardon: I think the $45 million in the Labor policy was the fiscal balance—
Ms Borthwick: I do not think our mental arithmetic is quite up to the task.
Senator REYNOLDS: That is all right. I have those figures there, so I will go and get a calculator. I will be able to work that one out myself, I think. I then have the same question for the $453 million. Is that also possible to calculate? Or is it possible for me to calculate that from the figures you have just given me?
Ms Borthwick: We can take that on notice.
Senator REYNOLDS: If you could take those on notice that would be terrific. Do you know how many students are currently studying degrees in science, maths, engineering and IT? Do you have the total numbers on hand?

Answer

The department is not able to verify the basis of the costings that were released by the Opposition.

The average cost of a student contribution amounts to $8768 per year for a three year degree. If the Government provided funding to pay the full cost of the upfront contributions for science, maths, engineering and IT students, rather than these students deferring these costs through HELP, then $45 million would enable around 1700 students to have the full cost of their degree funded.

Therefore, the costing figure provided by the opposition on 15 May 2015, $353 million would enable around 13,000 students to have the full cost of their degree funded.

In 2014 a total of 163,565 domestic students were enrolled in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) courses.