

**Senate Committee: Education and Employment**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016**

**Outcome: Skills and Training**

**Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000752**

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing.

***VET FEE-HELP debts***

**Question**

How many VET FEE-HELP debts have been remitted or forgiven under the current arrangements by the Department of Finance?

How many loans has the Department cancelled? How many students have withdrawn from a course and consequently a VFH loan before census date?

**Answer**

The Department of Finance has provided the following response: No VET FEE-HELP debts have been waived between 1 January 2008 and 5 November 2015.

Under the legislation passed by the previous Government, the Department of Education and Training has no provision under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* to direct a VET FEE-HELP provider to re-credit a person's FEE-HELP balance and remit their VET FEE-HELP debt.

Each VET FEE-HELP provider must have in place a process for students to request their FEE-HELP balance to be re-credited due to special circumstances and to have the decision reviewed if the request is unsuccessful. If the student is unsatisfied with the review outcome they can apply to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to have the matter heard.

A provider has the discretion to remit or delete a student's VET FEE-HELP debt. Between 2009 and 2014, 6881 students have had their debt remitted or deleted to the value of \$166 million.

The Higher Education Support Amendment (VET FEE-HELP Reform) Bill 2015 broadens the circumstances in which a student can seek a re-credit of their FEE-HELP balance and remission of their VET FEE-HELP debt to include circumstances where a VET FEE-HELP provider has engaged in unacceptable conduct during the recruitment of a student and the student accessing VET FEE-HELP.

The department does not require or collect data on student withdrawals before a census date.