Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2014-15

Finance Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of Finance
Outcome/Program: 1/1.1
Topic: University fee deregulation

Senator: Wong
Question reference number: F84
Type of question: Written
Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday, 10 April 2015

Number of pages: 1

Question:

1. Has the Department conducted any analysis, or is the Department aware of any analysis, of the effect of increased HELP debts on women, in particular their ability to pay off their HELP debts?
2. Is there any assumption in the modelling that shows that women, on average, would pay off their HELP debts over a longer period if the total amount of HELP debts were higher?
3. If so, can the Department advise how much longer, compared to men, will women take to pay off their HELP debts on the basis there was an increase in the amount of HELP debt?
4. Has the Department performed any costing / analysis / modelling of the five-year pause in the indexation of HELP debts for carers of young children?
5. If so, can the Department advise on what the cost of this pause would be, over the forward estimates and over the medium term?

Answer:

1. Finance has not conducted analysis on the effect of increased HELP debts on women, or their ability to pay off HELP debts. However, Finance is aware of analysis in the public domain, such as the Grattan Institute report titled *Doubtful debt: The rising cost of student loans*.
2. No. Finance's HELP repayment modelling is based on whole-of-population averages rather than disaggregation by sex.
3. N/A.
4. Finance worked with the Department of Education and Training to estimate the cost of pausing indexation on HELP debts for people who earn below the minimum HELP repayment threshold and have primary care of a child under five years of age.
5. The agreed costs, in fiscal balance terms, are in the table below:

2014-15 ($m)	2015-16 ($m)	2016-17 ($m)	2017-18 ($m)
-25.7	-37.3	-49.0	-60.3