

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: 2/2.3

Topic: HELP debts/waiver of debt

Senator: Wong

Question reference number: F95

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday, 10 April 2015

Number of pages: 2

Question:

1. How many times in the past year has a student or graduate of an accredited course run by a private VET or higher education provider, where that course has subsequently been de-accredited or the provider has subsequently been deregistered by the Commonwealth, applied to the Minister to have their debt waived?
2. Does the Department have statistics for this over the last five years? If so, could these be provided?
3. What process has been adopted by the Minister in considering these cases? Has the Minister sought advice from the Minister for Education and Training or the Department of Education and Training?
4. On how many occasions in the past year has the student applicant been successful in getting their HELP debt waived?
5. Does the Department have statistics for this over the last five years? If so, could these be provided?

Answer:

1. For the 12 month period ending 31 January 2015, the Department did not receive any applications from students or graduates who have stated that they were enrolled in an accredited course run by a private VET or higher education provider, where that course has subsequently been de-accredited or the provider has subsequently been deregistered by the Commonwealth.
2. In relation to the circumstances outlined in Question 1, the Department identified two waiver of debt requests that are recorded as having been received in the five year period ending 31 January 2015.
3. The process applied in respect of the cases referred to in Question 1 and Question 2 is the same process that is applied to waiver of debt requests in general. The case is managed in accordance with procedural fairness and submitted to a decision maker for final determination. The waiver of debt mechanism is the responsibility of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance.

4. For the 12 months up to 31 January 2015, four applicants were successful in having their tertiary debts, comprising Higher Education Loan Program debts, Higher Education Contribution Scheme debts and Student Financial Supplement Scheme debts, waived. These approvals included cases where only the indexation amount was waived.
5. The Department holds records of waiver of debt requests received over the past five years up to 31 January 2015. During that period, the Department identified 35 occasions where requests for waiver of debt were successful in relation to tertiary debts, including Higher Education Loan Program debts, Higher Education Contribution Scheme debts and Student Financial Supplement Scheme debts, waived. This figure includes full waivers, partial waivers, and waiver of the indexation amount.