

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing 2011-12
15 February 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

TOPIC: Demand Driven Higher Education – International Students

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Rhiannon

QUESTION No.: AI-182

1. By how much have international student enrolments dropped this study year since last year?
2. About how much revenue to universities does this represent?
3. In what way is a drop in international student revenue expected to affect universities in providing quality education to students?
4. Is any major loss of such revenue a factor in the government’s funding to universities, given the importance of ensuring our universities are able to compete on an international stage?

The Australian Government is supposed to provide consumer protection to international students through the ESOS Act and its National Code, however whilst recent legislation recognises the importance of refunds to international students for tuition fees, there seems no mechanism to ensure refunds for accommodation fees which are paid in advance to education providers:

5. How much money have international students lost where their defaulting provider has not refunded accommodation fees since 2008?

Given “providing relevant information on living in Australia” is not a mechanism for ensuring international students are provided accommodation fee refunds from defaulting providers, and given the importance of international students to the national economy.

6. Is the government and COAG investigating a mechanism to ensure this, as part of the Tertiary Protection Scheme, or a similar scheme application?

ANSWER

1. In 2011, international student enrolments in the Higher Education sector were at approximately the same level as in 2010. Within the sector, some universities have continued to experience significant growth in enrolments while others have experienced declines.

International student enrolments in Higher education

	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>
Enrolments	242,186	242,351

2. In 2010, total international student fees received by universities increased from \$3.4 billion to \$3.9 billion. This was an increase of 13.7 per cent. Data for 2011 is expected to be available later in 2012.
3. The Government expects universities to manage changes in their international student load and revenues in a manner that maintains the quality of education provision to students.
4. The Government monitors the financial health of universities through analysis of universities annual financial statements. This analysis informs discussions with individual universities, as well as broader considerations on the appropriate level of Government funding for teaching and research.
5. The Australian Government does not collect any data relating to payments made by students for accommodation fees.
6. During the debate of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Amendment Bills in the Senate on 29 February 2012, the Government gave an undertaking to review the matter of pre-paid accommodation fees and report back to the Senate by the end of 2012.