

**Economics Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio  
Additional Estimates Hearing 2012-13  
13 February 2013

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

**TOPIC:** HECS increases: band 1 and 2 for agriculture students

**REFERENCE:** Written Question – Senator McKenzie

**QUESTION No.:** AI-179

Background:

[http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/article/2013/01/23/557440\\_latest-news.html](http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/article/2013/01/23/557440_latest-news.html)

Why has the Federal Government made it more expensive for agriculture students to undertake their course when it is an acknowledged area of severe skill shortage?

**ANSWER**

The Commonwealth has not increased the student contribution amounts for agriculture units of study, which continue to be classified as Band 2. In practice however, it is possible that a student enrolled in an agriculture course of study could be undertaking a number of mathematics or science units, and may be affected by changes to the treatment of these units for student contribution purposes.

As part of the 2012-13 Budget, the Government took the decision to simplify student contribution amounts for mathematics, statistics and science units at University by re-instating amounts for all students to Band 2 from 1 January 2013. This means that the total student contribution amount for a student who undertakes a full year of study in mathematics, statistics or science units in 2013 will be \$8,363. In 2012, it would have cost the same student \$4,520.

The Government took this decision because figures since 2009 indicate that lowering the student contribution amount has not been successful in encouraging significantly more students to enrol in maths and science courses and was not having the desired effect of substantially increasing the number of maths and science graduates.