

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

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

TOPIC: Metropolitan and regional students

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 13 February 2013, page 75)

QUESTION No.: AI-37

Senator MASON: As you know, the Bradley target by 2025 is 40 per cent. What sort of percentage are we up to at the moment roughly?

Mr de Carvalho: We are ahead of schedule, Senator.

Dr Taylor: It is 36.8 per cent.

Senator MASON: Yes, I was told 37 per cent but 36.8 is more precise than I had.

Mr de Carvalho: One decimal point better.

Senator NASH: Do you have a breakdown of those figures for metropolitan and regional students, or could you take it on notice for me if you do not have it?

Dr Taylor: I have it by state here.

Senator NASH: I will come back to that if there is time. I am conscious that it is Senator Mason's time.

Mr de Carvalho: What we certainly do have is a breakdown by gender. Women—you will be pleased to know, Senator Nash—are already at the target, approximately 13 years ahead of schedule. Men still have a considerable way to go, and it may take men considerably longer, in fact past the target, to get to 40 per cent, but we are relying on women to bring the population as a whole to the target a couple of years ahead of schedule if we keep on track at the moment.

Senator NASH: Terrific. Could you perhaps take on notice then, in the breakdown in the regional areas, the numbers of men and women.

Dr Taylor: We use the ABS education and work survey. I am not sure if they break it down that way. They break it down by state and by gender.

Senator NASH: Could you take it on notice and have a look?

Dr Taylor: I would just qualify that we can only do that if they do the survey.

Senator NASH: I hope they do.

ANSWER

The department uses the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Survey of Education and Work (SEW) to track progress towards the Government's target that 40 per cent of all 25 -34 year olds will hold a qualification at bachelor level or above by 2025. The SEW provides a range of key indicators of educational participation and attainment of persons aged 15–74 years. The department uses the SEW because it was the benchmark series used in the Bradley Review and the annual time series allows for ongoing monitoring of progress to the 40 per cent attainment target. In 2012 the SEW reported that 36.8 per cent of people aged 25 to 34 years attained a bachelor degree or higher, up by 1.8 percentage points from 35 per cent in 2011. The SEW does not provide a breakdown of educational attainment by metropolitan and regional background.

Data on people with non-school qualifications is also available from the Census of Population and Housing, which provides a breakdown of data by region. According to the 2011 Census, the proportion of people aged 25 to 34 years with a bachelor degree or higher was 31.7 per cent, up by 5.4 percentage points from 26.3 per cent in 2006.

According to the 2011 Census, 36.1 per cent of 25 to 34 year olds from metropolitan areas have attained a bachelor degree or above, compared with 17.4 per cent for those from regional areas and 15.4 per cent for those from remote areas. The 2011 Census reported that 36.7 per cent of females and 26.7 per cent of males aged 25 to 34 years had attained a bachelor degree or above. The 2011 SEW found that females had already reached the attainment target (40.3 per cent) while the corresponding proportion for males was 29.8 per cent.

The differences between the Census and SEW figures can be attributed to the different scope, coverage and collection methods of the two data sources. In particular, the SEW collects information using trained interviewers, either face-to-face or by telephone interviews. This allows for clarification of concepts and more accurate responses to questions.