

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

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

TOPIC: Independent Youth Allowance

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 13 February 2013, page 86)

QUESTION No: AI-41

Senator NASH – Senator NASH: I understand that, but then how do you keep track in a policy sense of how many regional students are unable to access assistance through that mechanism to go to university? How do you keep any track of whether it is one or 1,000 or 15,000? How do you know?

Ms Sakkara: It is very challenging with the way the system records the data.

Senator NASH: You do not. So, since the change in policy where the government—in my view and others' view incredibly stupidly—put the parental income test in place, we have no idea how many regional students this has affected.

Ms Sakkara: But we do have data on how many additional regional students are receiving payment—

Senator NASH: No, I am talking about independent youth allowance. I am not talking about all of those figures the minister talks about with youth allowance. I have said that the increased thresholds are good news and a number of other things. I am talking about independent youth allowance and these kids that are stopped from going to university or further education. We have no idea how many there are since that policy change. That is just a yes or no answer, isn't it? We just have no idea.

Ms Sakkara: I think we do have data on the number of independent regional students and we can compare that over time.

Senator NASH: No, specifically from the parental income test. That is my question. Do we—

Ms Sakkara: Specifically from the parental income test, no.

Senator NASH: We do not know. Okay. I am going to have to move on. Does it bother you that we do not know? In a departmental policy sense, does it bother you? It bothers me a lot.

Ms Borthwick: The main aim of the data system is to track expenditure and to ensure that that information and the amounts spent are accurate. That is the primary concern of government in relation to the funding of that particular program.

Senator NASH: I find it extraordinary that it is not a priority that we know how many regional students are precluded under this mechanism from going on to tertiary education—particularly given, as Senator Mason so rightly raised before, the fact that we have this target of 40,000. We do not even know—no-one could even tell me—if we break it down to metropolitan and regional when it comes to the 40 per cent. Are we happy with 100 per cent of the increase coming from the cities? Is that okay?

Ms Borthwick: I think what we are attempting to do is to find the answer to that question before we rise tonight.

ANSWER

Please refer to response AI-37.