

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing 2012-13
17 October 2012

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

TOPIC: Regional education

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator McKenzie

QUESTION No.: SI-68

1. Has or would the department consider reprioritising HEPP to incorporate a regional focus? Why or why not?
2. Does the department have any targets for rural and regional student participation in higher education?
3. How does the department's work on regional education link with the work undertaken by Regional Development Australia and the RDA committees?

ANSWER

1. The Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program was established to provide funding to universities to improve access and participation in higher education of people from low socio-economic backgrounds and support the Australian Government's ambition of 20 per cent of domestic undergraduate students coming from low SES backgrounds by 2020. Any decision to re-focus the program would be for government not the department. People from low socio-economic backgrounds that live in regional areas will benefit from the additional funding.
2. In 2012, universities will receive Reward Funding for achieving performance targets to raise participation of other underrepresented groups. Ten out of 37 universities chose to nominate improving participation of regional and/or remote students as their other underrepresented group performance target.
3. Regional Development Australia and the RDA committees link with the department's work on regional education in a range of ways.

Each RDA committee has developed a Regional Plan. The majority of these Regional Plans provide coverage of regional education issues, including higher education issues. Some RDA committees engage with the department directly. Many RDA committees also directly engage with tertiary education institutions in their region.

The Regional Education Skills and Jobs (RESJ) Coordinators have also consulted with RDA committees in the development of Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plans. These plans have been developed of each of the 46 RDA areas that cover non-metropolitan Australia and are published on the www.deewr.gov.au and www.myregion.gov.au websites.

The Regional Education Skills and Jobs (RESJ) Plans and the strategies contained in them complement the RDA Regional Plans and are consistent with these in terms of strategic priorities for education, skills and employment.

Although employed by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), RESJ Coordinators work across the full range of education, skills and jobs issues, including higher education and skills.

Strategies in RESJ Plans to achieve tertiary education objectives include:

- promotion of Skills Connect programs such as the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL);
- identifying and promoting Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses that lead to higher education courses;
- working with Higher Education Participation and Partnerships (HEPP) program partners to increase participation by lower socioeconomic groups;
- promotion of programs and funding available to higher education institutions and students, including youth allowance; and
- facilitating linkages between industry and tertiary education institutions.

Recent examples of RESJ Coordinator activity in the education and training field include:

- in July 2012 the Grampians, Victoria RESJ Coordinator contributed to a Career and Employment Expo organised to encourage recruitment and up-skilling of the existing workforce in Ararat;
- the Far South Coast, NSW RESJ Coordinator addressed the need for upgrading business and environmental management skills amongst caravan park small business operators by facilitating eight managers' access to training in Certificate III in Holiday Parks and Resorts; and
- the Goldfields-Esperance, WA RESJ Coordinator worked with the local RDA and DIISRTE in running a Skills Connect Workshop in Kalgoorlie in June 2012.