

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 2
Output Group: 2.4 – Funding for higher education

DEST Question No. E917_04

Senator Carr provided in writing

Question:

Are you aware of a discussion paper produced by the University of Western Sydney, titled The UWS Undergraduate Academic Program: Proposed actions and future directions?

It contains plans to be implemented from next year to:

- Charge full fees for all graduate-entry Law studies;
- Scrap Arts courses at two campuses; and
- Do away with scores of subjects.

One course to be scrapped is Mathematics and Information Technology; another is a Secondary Teaching course, Early Childhood education and Health Sciences from two campuses.

- a) How do these decisions accord with national priorities for student places?
- b) Are you aware that the University says in the report that the cause of these cutbacks is the Federal Government's new funding system, which will reduce funding available to UWS?
- c) From now on, there would be a policy generally of offering courses on only one campus. What does all this mean for access to higher education in western Sydney?

Answer:

University of Western Sydney

- a) National priorities were identified by the Australian Government in the areas of teaching and nursing, to ensure an adequate supply of high quality graduates to work in Australia's schools and health care sector.

The decision by UWS or other higher education providers on how and where courses are best provided is largely a matter for the institution. We understand UWS is consolidating provision of nursing which has been offered at four campuses and teaching which has been at three campuses, but that this will not reduce the load in these disciplines.

- b) The UWS media release (18/02/2004) says that, 'the new federal funding arrangements have made it even more important for the University to speed up the review and to significantly streamline the academic programs'. This is a long held plan to achieve consolidation of a unified university and the efficient use of its resources. Under the higher education reform package, the Australian Government has stated that no university will be worse off as a result of the reforms. Transitional funding for UWS will ensure that it is not adversely impacted by the reform process.

- c) The university is pursuing rationalisation as part of a long-term plan that started with its foundation in 1989 as a federated university with seven campuses. It is making choices to allow for the enhancement of the quality of course offerings.