

## EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

### SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004-2005 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

**Outcome:** 2

**Output Group:** 2.4 – Funding for higher education.

#### **DEST Question No. E775\_05**

Senator Carr provided in writing.

#### **Question:**

What is the significance of the years 1998 and 1999 in trends in Indigenous participation and outcomes in higher education? What were the policy changes in those years, or immediately prior to them, that led to these sudden declines in participation and outcomes?

#### **Answer:**

##### *Indigenous student enrolments*

Aggregate numbers of Indigenous enrolments in higher education increased at a fairly even pace from 1996 to 1999. Between 1999 and 2000 these enrolments fell by eight per cent. This decline is concentrated in commencements which fell by 15 per cent in the same two years. After 2000, growth resumed in both commencements and total enrolments although these have not recovered to 1999 levels.

A discussion paper prepared for the review of the impact of ABSTUDY policy changes in 2000 shows that growth in commencements in sub-bachelor courses began to weaken in 1997. In enabling courses, commencements declined continuously from 1997 to 2000.

A 1998 DETYA publication *'Review of the mechanism for allocating Indigenous Support Funding'* placed a negotiable 'cap' on the proportion of Indigenous students in enabling courses for which universities could receive ISF allocations. This was part of a much wider emphasis on the need for greater focus within the sector on the academic success of Indigenous students to complement activities aimed at improving access to courses. The cap was implemented in response to concerns that several universities had very high numbers of Indigenous enabling students who were not progressing to award courses.

The ABSTUDY review discussion paper is available on the DEST website:  
[http://www.dest.gov.au/research/abstudy\\_impact\\_review/default.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/research/abstudy_impact_review/default.htm)