

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. E820_05

Senator Stott Despoja provided in writing.

Question:

- a) Will the Department ensure that universities do not charge nursing and teaching students more than the National Priorities HECS band amount for any unit that is a compulsory unit in their course?
- b) If not, why not?
- c) What monitoring of compliance with the HECS contribution clusters is the Department performing?
- d) What plans are there to reassess the disciplines included in the National Priorities category? and
- e) What plans are there to assess the effectiveness of the current number of National Priority Places in meeting the shortages in their professions?

Answer:

National Priority Places

- a) No.
- b) It has always been the case that student contributions are calculated on a unit of study basis and in accordance with the fields of education in which the units are classified. Students in nursing or teaching courses may undertake units from other fields of education and, as such, pay a student contribution that may be higher than that prescribed for nursing and education units. It would be inequitable if students enrolled in a nursing or teaching degree were charged a different amount for the same unit than students enrolled in other courses of study.
- c) Higher education providers are responsible for classifying units of study into the correct student contribution band in accordance with the Commonwealth Grant Scheme Guidelines. The *Higher Education Support Act 2003* does not provide for the Department to audit providers.
- d) The Commonwealth will monitor National Priorities on an ongoing basis.
- e) An evaluation of *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* will be undertaken by 2009.