

## 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. E831\_05

Senator Carr provided in writing.

#### Question:

- a) Is the Department aware of recent and prospective course closures in both Osteopathy and Podiatry courses?
- b) Is it the case that one of only three Osteopathy courses has closed (UWS) and that two of only six Podiatry courses (UWS and Curtin) have closed in the last 12 months or so?
- c) What action has the Department taken over these imminent closures?
- d) Is it the case that there are skill shortages in these professions?
- e) If so, please provide details of the shortages, including state and regional variations if available?
- f) Can you provide us with details of the commencing enrolments and course completions prior to the course closures?
- g) How will these numbers change with the closure of the UWS and Curtin courses?

#### Answer:

##### *Course Closures - Osteopathy and Podiatry*

- a) The Department is aware of the University of Western Sydney's recent decision to suspend course offerings in both osteopathy and podiatry.
- b) The University of Western Sydney informed the Department of its intention to suspend intakes to the Bachelor of Applied Science (Podiatry) and Bachelor of Applied Science (Osteopathic Studies) in December 2004. Curtin University of Technology ceased to offer entry to its undergraduate podiatry course from 2004. Consequently, in 2005 there were first year intakes to undergraduate podiatry courses at Queensland University of Technology, Charles Sturt University, La Trobe University and the University of South Australia and there were first year intakes to undergraduate osteopathy courses at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Victoria University of Technology.
- c) The Minister wrote to the University of Western Sydney expressing his concern about the suspension of the podiatry and osteopathy courses. The Minister has also indicated that 2006 Funding Agreements will include an additional condition of grant that specifies that closures of specialist courses of national importance must be negotiated and agreed with the Commonwealth.
- d) Podiatry is listed as an occupation in national shortage according to the National and State Skill Shortage List based on labour market intelligence undertaken by the

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations in late 2003 and early 2004. Osteopathy is not currently listed as an occupation in national shortage.

- e) The assessment of skill shortages in podiatry made by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations was national in focus and did not include separate state/territory ratings. Shortages are considered to be widespread, and podiatry is considered to be in national shortage.

- f) Commencing Enrolments and Course Completions – Osteopathy 2003  
(Note – The most recent published data available is for 2003)

Institution	Commencing Osteopathy	Completing Osteopathy
University of Western Sydney	57	51
Victoria University of Technology	99	77
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology	132*	77*
Total	288*	205*

\* Due to the fields used to capture data chiropractic courses are also included in this figure.

Commencing Enrolments and Course Completions – Podiatry 2003

Institution	Commencing Podiatry	Completing Podiatry
Curtin University of Technology	41	32
University of Western Sydney	47	24
Charles Sturt University	43	0*
La Trobe University	72	36
University of South Australia	24	19
Queensland University of Technology	53	25
Total	280	136

\* Charles Sturt University commenced offering podiatry in 2000 and their first student intake graduated in 2004.

- g) The University of Western Sydney has informed the Department that intakes to osteopathy and podiatry have been suspended in 2005, and possibly 2006, and that the University will be conducting a review of the feasibility of continuing to offer the courses. If the University of Western Sydney decides to permanently close the osteopathy and podiatry courses, the Minister will consider moving the 85 Commonwealth supported osteopathy places and the 122 Commonwealth supported podiatry places to another institution willing to offer them.

The impact of the closure of Curtin University of Technology's podiatry course will be substantially offset by the allocation of 30 Commonwealth supported places in podiatry to the University of Western Australia. These places have been warehoused this year and the program is expected to commence in 2006.

Another university has expressed interest in converting occupational therapy places to podiatry places in 2006 and this will be pursued in the 2006 Funding Agreement negotiations.