

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2007-08 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome 3

DEEWR Question No. EW96_08

Senator Wortley asked on 20 February 2008, EEWPR Proof Hansard page 86.

Question

ABSTUDY

Senator WORTLEY—My movement will be to Outcome 3, higher education, and it is in relation to Abstudy, student financial supplements scheme, youth allowance, Austudy and fees allowance. Can you confirm that in late 1998 the department undertook a review of the effects of Abstudy changes? Was the report ever produced?

Mr Kimber—I will have to take that on notice. It is prior to my detailed involvement with the program. We will be able to provide those details to you.

Ms Paul—Are you asking if that report was published?

Senator WORTLEY—If it was released, and, if not, can a copy of it be provided.

Answer

There was no review undertaken by the department in late 1998 of the effects of these changes. On 15 December 1998 the then Government announced that ABSTUDY would be retained as a separate scheme and that changes would be implemented on 1 January 2000. The announcement about the changes to ABSTUDY followed a review which included a consultation process with Indigenous people, communities and education institutions. This was a Ministerial review undertaken as part of Cabinet considerations and remains Cabinet-in-Confidence.

In March 2004, the then Minister requested a Departmental review into the impact of ABSTUDY policy changes that came into effect in 2000 be undertaken. It involved extensive consultation through a discussion paper, visits, forums and case studies as well as intensive technical work with Department of Education, Science and Training and Centrelink administrative databases.

The Review report was published in July 2006 on the Department website along with all submissions. Hard copies of the report were distributed to participants in the review's consultations, including universities and Indigenous support centres. A copy of the report is provided for the committee.