

Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2010-2011**

Outcome 3 – Higher Education

DEEWR Question No. EW0909_11

Senator Nash provided in writing.

Question:

VET FEE-HELP

1. How many people have claimed VET FEE-HELP assistance in the last financial year?
2. How many organisations are eligible for their students to claim VET FEE-HELP or FEE-HELP?
3. Given the Higher Education Support Amendment (No. 1) Bill 2011 before the parliament currently, how does the Department envisage this Bill increasing the number of approved institutions?
4. How many more people could we expect to be assisted through VET FEE-HELP or FEE-HELP as a result?

Answer:

1. In the 2009-10 financial year, 20,244 students claimed VET FEE-HELP Assistance.
2. There are 126 higher education providers eligible to offer FEE-HELP to eligible students. There are 82 providers approved to offer VET FEE-HELP to eligible students. Of these 82 providers, 24 are also higher education providers that offer FEE-HELP to eligible students.
3. The Higher Education Support Amendment (No. 1) Bill 2011 is intended to increase the number of quality Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) that can apply for and be approved as a VET provider under the Act by:
 - providing greater flexibility for the principal purpose requirements, this aims to increase the number of eligible organisations who can apply for VET FEE-HELP; and
 - enabling the programs to be administered consistently with other Commonwealth regulatory frameworks which will simplify administrative requirements delivering efficiencies for RTOs, and streamline the application and approval processes.

The number of approved higher education providers is not expected to increase significantly as a consequence of this Bill.

4. Both FEE-HELP and VET FEE-HELP are demand driven and it is not possible to predict the number of students who will access the programs. However, the Bill is intended to provide increased opportunities for eligible students to access program assistance by increasing the number of available providers offering assistance. This will also afford students a greater choice of provider.