

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 2

Output Group: 2.4 – Funding for higher education

DEST Question No. E271_04

Senator Stephens asked on 5 June 2003

Question:

Did the Regional Policy Development Program, which, among other things, provides policy advice about universities and their role in regional development, provide advice for the budget announcement of additional funding for regional universities to meet the social and economic development of their communities?

Answer:

Regional Development Policy Unit (DOTARS) advice on regional universities and communities

The Department and Regional Services (DOTARS) made a submission to the Higher Education Review on 5 July 2002 in response to the overview paper, *Higher Education at the Crossroads*. The submission was coordinated by the Regional Policy Development Unit at DOTARS and DEST consulted extensively with staff from this unit throughout the review process.

The DOTARS submission stressed the importance of universities in the future growth of Australia's regions and argued that:

- Lifelong learning is linked to growth in the new knowledge economy. Knowledge is the key to the transformation of regional economies and communities in leading their own development.
- A new role for new universities be adopted – to actively partner with communities to ensure access to the opportunities that might be created from university-based knowledge and learning.

One of the proposals coming out of the higher education review is the establishment of a Collaboration and Structural Reform Fund to provide competitive funds which will foster collaboration and structural reform in the higher education sector. Key areas for collaboration will be identified for each round of the programme. Initial areas will include initiatives which involve collaboration between universities and their communities, particularly regional communities.

A total of \$36.6 million will be allocated to the Collaboration and Structural Reform Fund between 2005 and 2007. This combines \$16.6 million of existing Higher Education Innovation Programme funds with new funds of \$20 million.