

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE – QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2005-2006 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 2

Output Group: 2.4 – Funding for higher education.

DEST Question No. E024_06

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

Indigenous participation in higher education (*National Report on Indigenous Education and Training 2003*, ch.5)

Indigenous student commencements fell by 3.2% in 2003 – and male commencements by 6.1%. Not only that, but the “access rate” – the proportion of commencing students who are Indigenous – has fallen slightly on 2002, but quite significantly on 1999 figures: down from 1.75% in 1999 to 1.52% in 2003. To achieve access parity with domestic students as a whole, Indigenous students would have to constitute 2.5% of the total.

- (a) What has contributed to this decline? The Report says you conducted “informal conversations” with representatives of those institutions where the fall has been greatest.
- (b) Since then, has DEST undertaken any more systemic or scientific research? What did it find? Can you provide any reports produced?

Answer:

Indigenous participation in higher education

- (a) Access rates for Indigenous higher education students were 1.75% in 1997 and 1.52% in 2003. Some of the contributing factors identified in discussion with institutions have been reported at pages 85 and 86 of the *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training 2003*.
- (b) DEST will analyse the 2004 commencing data when preparing the next annual report to Parliament. Research is being conducted for the review into the impact of the 2000 ABSTUDY policy changes will be presented in a final report of that review.

In addition, the Indigenous Higher Education Council (IHEAC) was established to provide policy advice to the Australian Government aimed at producing successful outcomes for Indigenous students and staff in relation to their participation, progression, and retention in both study and employment in higher education. IHEAC has established working groups to assist it develop advice on: institutional responsibility for students and staff research; identifying strategies for improving students outcomes and curriculum; and an Indigenous higher education conference to gather feedback across a range of perspectives.