

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: 1

Output Group: 1.3 – Assistance for quality teaching and learning

DEST Question No. E436_04

Senator Carr asked on 6 November 2003

Question:

The report make several strong comments and recommendations about the need for lower HECS charges for maths and science teachers, noting that most secondary teachers in these areas complete a 'discipline' undergraduate degree before undertaking teacher education.

e.g. page xx (sic) of the main report states:

The Committee concluded that secondary and primary teachers of science, technology and mathematics should not pay more HECS than their teaching colleagues.

- (a) What evidence did the committee obtain to support this recommendation? Please provide this evidence.
- (b) How much extra HECS will a maths and science teacher pay under the Government's new policy arrangements?
- (c) Does the Department agree with the committee's recommendation? Please provide your reasons.

Answer:

HECS for maths and science teachers

- (a) The Review Committee based its views on a number of submissions it received in response to its September 2002 *Discussion Paper: Strategies to Attract and Retain Teachers of Science, Technology and Mathematics*. Relevant submissions (copies of which are attached and also accessible online at <http://dest.gov.au/schools/teachingreview/sublist.htm>) are :

No. 19	Ms Nola Shoring
No. 22	Australian Catholic University Ltd
No. 24	Association of Independent Schools of South Australia
No. 30	Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia Incorporated
No. 31	Australian Mathematical Sciences Council
No. 39	Science Teachers' Association of Victoria
No. 41	Curtin University of Technology
No. 49	Australian Education Union
No. 55	Australian Science Teachers Association
No. 57	School of Education, University of Queensland
No. 65	Queensland Deans of Education Forum
No. 85	University of Melbourne

- No. 112 Non-Ministerial members of the Council for Knowledge, Innovation, Science and Engineering, Victoria
- No. 114 University of South Australia
- No. 119 University of Newcastle
- No. 132 National Tertiary Education Industry Union
- No. 133 Science Teachers' Association of Western Australia
- No. 141 New South Wales Department of Education and Training

(b) The Government's reforms will introduce some fee flexibility into the higher education sector. As institutions will be able to set student contributions for Commonwealth supported places in science, technology and mathematics subjects within a range from zero to a maximum set by the Commonwealth, student contribution levels for these subjects will vary between institutions. Student contribution rates for science, technology and mathematics subjects will thus vary between institutions and it is not possible at this stage say how they will vary across the sector. Under the reforms, commencing from 2005 the 'National Priorities' student contribution band will apply to teaching subjects. Contributions by students in Commonwealth supported places in these subjects will therefore not increase.

(c) The Committee's report, comments on the perception (identified through submissions) that differential HECS rates combined with non-differential teacher pay rates act as a disincentive. The Department agrees that this may be the perception and that incentives are needed to attract science, maths and technology teachers. However, it should be noted that a fundamental policy basis for differential student contribution rates is to reflect variable course costs. As it costs more to teach science, technology and mathematics subjects, students studying these are required to make a greater contribution than those undertaking education subjects.