

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: 2
Output Group: 2.4 – Higher Education Funding

DEST Question No. E470_04

Senator Carr asked on 6 November 2003

Question:

Refers to DEST Question No. E045_04

Commonwealth funds for teaching purposes: private institutions and national priorities.

- (a) Can you confirm that the Government plans to fund selected courses in private institutions (providing access to HECS-related places) in identified priority areas? It won't fund courses across the board?

In answer E045_04, about the decision to fund medical school places at Notre Dame University, the Department acknowledges that the two priority areas identified are Teaching and Nursing.

Then the answer goes on to say that "the Government intends to set national priorities as required."

- (b) What does that mean? "As required" on what basis?
- (c) How will national priorities for this purpose be determined?
- What process will be followed?
 - Who will be consulted?
- (d) Will the process be transparent?
- (e) Has the process been transparent with respect to the decision to fund medical places at Notre Dame?
- (f) Who was consulted?
- (g) Has the Government released a report on its decision?
- (h) Can the Committee see this report?

Answer:

National Priorities

- (a) The Government plans to fund selected courses in private higher education institutions in identified national priority areas. It will not fund private provider courses across the board.
- (b) The two initial national priority areas for the sector, teaching and nursing, are a response to national reviews of teaching and nursing. In future, the Government may designate particular outcomes as national priorities that flow from similar reviews or from other sources of identified need.

(c) There is no process yet determined for the future designation of national priorities. The identification of these priorities may arise from reviews and reports or from new Government programmes that indicate the importance of achieving particular outcomes in courses, in regions or in particular groups of students.

(d) See answer above.

(e),(f),(g),(h) The Department of Health and Ageing is the Department responsible for deciding which universities will be given medical places each year and how many they will get. The Department of Education, Science and Training funds the universities for these medical places once the decision has been made.