

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

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

Outcome: 2

Output Group: 2.5 Assistance with post school students including those with special needs

DEST Question No. E691_04

Senator Stott Despoja asked on 17 November 2003

Question:

1. Centrelink has told a number of students they will not be able to receive the scheme next year, despite the fact that this Bill has not yet been debated in the Senate. Can you clarify why Centrelink gave out this information in the circumstances?
2. There has been speculation in the media that the Government will close the scheme at the end of the year, even if the Senate opposes this Bill. Can you confirm whether or not this is the case?
3. Is the Government considering shutting down the scheme administratively if the Senate opposes the Bill?
4. Will the Government introduce the Bill to the Senate this year?

Answer:

Student Financial Supplement Scheme (SFSS)

The Department of Family and Community Services has provided the following response:

1. The Hon Larry Anthony MP, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, announced the closure of the Student Financial Supplement Scheme on 24 April 2003. The announcement was made as early as possible to give students time to make alternative arrangements if they were planning to study in 2004.
2. On 9 December 2003, Minister Anthony advised that the Australian Government Solicitor has provided advice that closing the scheme administratively is lawful and so the Government will act in the best interests of Australian students and taxpayers.
3. As Minister Anthony announced on 9 December 2003, the scheme will be closed administratively on 31 December 2003. New loans will not be issued from 1 January 2004.
4. The Bill was introduced in the Senate on 26 November 2003. The debate was adjourned until Parliament resumes next year.