

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2005-2006 SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 2

Output Group: 2.4 – Funding for Higher Education

DEST Question No. E693_06

Senator Wong asked on 2 November 2005, EWRE Hansard page 101.

Question:

Are you able to point me to any other analysis you have done on the effect of staff-student ratios on the quality of education, other than crossroads, because if you can I would be very happy to receive it?

Answer:

Staff-student ratios

Comprehensive analysis of the effect of staff/student ratios was undertaken as part of the 2002 Crossroads Review of Higher Education. The review led to the *Our Universities – Backing Australia's Future* package of reforms. These reforms, which provided for additional public investment and HECS revenues, have resulted in growth of teaching staff numbers.

The trend of increasing staff/student ratios in Australia's universities has been reversed with the Australian Vice Chancellor 's Committee announcing that the average staff/student ratio in Australia's universities has decreased from 19.7 students to each member of staff to 19.4 in 2004.

Even so, staff-student ratios are not strong indicators of quality of education given the availability and use of new technologies, online delivery techniques and the adoption of sophisticated new approaches to teaching by Australia's institutions:

- Many institutions have built on their existing expertise in distance education to offer either fully online courses or courses based on more traditional distance education offerings supplemented with online delivery of education or student support; and
- Many units taught in Australian universities now contain online components, and the number of fully online courses is increasing.