

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2006-2007 SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 1

Output Group: 1.2 – Indigenous and Transitions Group

DEST Question No. E705_07

Senator Evans provided in writing.

Question:

How does your department explain the decline in higher education and VET Indigenous commencements?

Answer:

Decline in Higher Education and VET Indigenous Commencements

Between 2004 and 2005 there was a small decline in Indigenous higher education commencements. The decline in numbers was largely confined to enrolments in lower level courses. During the same period there was a significant increase of 10.7% (6,065 students) in Indigenous Vocational and Technical Education enrolment numbers, including a substantial increase in the number of students undertaking higher level courses.

Between 2004 and 2005 there was a 2.9% increase in the number of commencing Indigenous students at the bachelor level in higher education; and between 2001 and 2005 the increase at the bachelor level was 9.0%. Corresponding changes for domestic students were 6.3% and 1.3%, respectively. Between 2001 and 2005, the gap in participation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students at the bachelor level has closed.

Between 2001 and 2005 there have also been increases in commencing Indigenous student numbers at the higher degree level (30.8%) and total postgraduate level (22.3%). Corresponding increases for domestic students were 17.0% and 12.1%. The gap in participation has also closed at these levels.

It is possible that some students have taken up the alternative education route into VTE. Between 2004 and 2005 the number of Indigenous students undertaking AQF Certificate IV and above courses increased by 194 students while the number undertaking AQF Certificate III and above courses increased by 1,359 students.