

Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012**

Outcome 3 - Tertiary, Skills, International and Indigenous Strategy

DEEWR Question No. EW0658_12

Senator Rhiannon provided in writing.

Question

Career pathways in Academia

What is the Government doing to offset inevitable staff shortages which will arise as a consequence of the rapidly aging profile of established academic staff in Australian universities?

Answer

The Australian Government has demonstrated its support for expansion of the higher education sector providing \$35.7 billion for teaching and learning in universities over the next four years. Initiatives including an increased rate of indexation, performance funding and funding to support low socioeconomic students will put universities in a strong position to invest in their academic workforce.

The Australian Government has commissioned research into the academic workforce leading to the publication of two reports, The Australian Academic Profession in Transition published by the Centre for Study of Higher Education and, Regenerating the Academic Workforce: The careers, intentions and motivations of higher degree research students in Australia published on the Department's website. These reports will assist universities to better understand the concerns and needs of their academic workforce. Universities as autonomous, independent institutions are of course responsible for managing their workforce needs and strategies.

This research found that the vast majority of research students, 83 per cent, have at some time seriously considered an academic career and 54 per cent intend to pursue such work in the medium to long term. In addition, in comparison to other career options, an academic career is viewed favourably on a number of key factors such as the development of new knowledge interest and challenge and job satisfaction. Further, compared with mid and late career academics, early career academics are much more likely to indicate that they have a good work/life balance; less likely to find their work stressful; more likely to be generally satisfied with their work and more likely to find their work rewarding.

The Government through the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE) also produced "Research Skills for an Innovative Future – A Research Workforce Strategy to Cover the Decade to 2020 and Beyond"

in 2011. Detail on the implementation of this strategy is available at innovation.gov.au/research/researchworkforceissues.