

**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.** EW0838\_12

**Senator Rhiannon asked on 20 October 2011, Hansard page 83**

**Question**

**Report - crisis about young academics**

**Senator RHIANNON:** I just want to move on to the issue of university academic appointments. There is increasing casualisation in this area. Could you tell the committee what the government is doing to arrest the alarming decrease in young academics planning to work long term in Australian universities?

**Senator Chris Evans:** In a study the other day, that was wrong.

**Ms Paul:** We monitor the staffing arrangements in universities, but we do not control them. We do not seek to constrain universities' decisions about their staffing complement and so on.

**Senator Chris Evans:** I am sure there was a recent report. It was reported in the paper in a totally misleading way that there was a crisis about young academics. I actually looked at the report and you would draw a different conclusion from that. Do we have a copy of that reference to the report?...cont on page 84

**Mr Griew:** We will take notice to find the report that the minister has referred to—

**Answer**

The Australian Government has demonstrated its support for expansion of the higher education sector providing \$35.7 billion for teaching and learning in our 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 responsible for managing their workforce needs and strategies.

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE), University of Melbourne published the report, 'The Academic Profession in Transition' on 21 September 2011. The report is available at the following address:

[http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/people/bexley\\_docs/The\\_Academic\\_Profession\\_in\\_Transition\\_Sept2011.pdf](http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/people/bexley_docs/The_Academic_Profession_in_Transition_Sept2011.pdf)

The CSHE report presents findings from a comparable study undertaken in 1999 in order to highlight changes in the academic workforce over time. The report shows that more academics are satisfied with their work, 57 per cent in 2010, in comparison with 51 per cent in 1999. Fewer academics indicated their job was stressful, falling from 56 per cent in 1999 to 45 per cent in 2010. These findings suggest that working conditions are improving in the academic workforce, although there is clearly room for further improvement.

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](http://innovation.gov.au/research/researchworkforceissues).