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**To:** FASTS Presidents

**Subject:** With attachment: FASTS Briefing note - Growing student load in science in private higher education institutions

**Memo to  
FASTS Presidents  
FASTS Board  
FASTS CEO**

**FASTS Briefing note – Growing student load in science in private higher education institutions**

In 2007 – the most recent published student data - there was a modest increase in student load in higher education. However, part of the increase is explained by a change in counting methodology.

From 2007, all private institutions are required to report student load to DEEWR (formerly DEST) irrespective of whether their students are accessing student loans (FEE-HELP) or not. In 2005 and 2006 they were only required to report load for students who accessed loans.

In 2007, there were over 100 private higher education providers including the two private universities – Bond and Notre Dame – which collectively taught 53,000 students (34,800 EFTSU) including 1,954 EFTSU in the Natural and Physical sciences. This represents a 2.3% (and growing) share of total student load in higher education in the natural and physical sciences.

If we exclude Bond, Notre Dame, Melbourne College of Divinity and Carnegie Mellon – the institutions on Lists B and C of the Higher Education Support Act - there was 25,000 EFTSU in the private higher education provider sector in 2007. Total student load (effective full time equivalent) in some narrow discipline groups was not inconsequential including mathematical sciences (953), chemical sciences (160), biological sciences (414), information systems (791) and behavioural science (474), although the bulk of the load in any given discipline is typically concentrated in just 2 – 3 institutions.

Some of the private providers are long established – eg Marcus Oldham and Avondale College - others are higher education qualifications offered by a few TAFE providers. There is also a number are faith-based, not-for-profit institutions mainly involved in teacher education; indeed philosophy and religion is the narrow discipline group with the largest total EFTSU in the private education sector (excluding Bond and Notre Dame).

The growing teaching of science, mathematics and computing outside the public universities may be of interest to some societies in terms of accreditation of courses or graduates, quality of graduates and teaching infrastructure or even membership of organisations (eg Deans of Science).

Accordingly, I have recently purchased some data from DEEWR on student load in private institutions.

Some of you may be interested in casting your eye over the attached excel file which identifies individual higher education providers teaching subjects in science, mathematics, technology and some medical fields. The student data aggregates domestic and international students and also aggregates undergraduate and postgraduate coursework load.

The four tables in the file are:

1. Total student load (EFTSL) in private higher education providers by all narrow discipline groups (4 digit) and broad fields (2 digit) in 2007 (all tables exclude Bond, Notre Dame, MCD and Carnegie Mellon)
2. Total student load (EFTSL) by selected higher Education Provider and selected Narrow Discipline Groups, 2007
3. Total student load (EFTSL) in behavioural sciences by higher education provider, 2007.
4. Total student load (EFTSL) in mathematical sciences by higher education provider, 2007 (this table lists all providers reporting load in mathematical sciences and also provides list

of all other disciplines that those providers offer to allow cross referencing to see if the mathematics is likely to form part of a teaching qualification or other. I note for example that there appears to be no correlation between load in behavioural sciences and mathematics which may raise questions about statistics provision in private psychology programs.

I also have commencing load data for 2007 which is available on request if of interest.

Regards

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