



**Australian Government**

**Department of Veterans' Affairs**

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
PRESIDENT REPATRIATION COMMISSION

EC19-001581

Ms Lyn Beverley  
Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Beverley

I write to correct evidence that I presented at the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing for the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade held on 23 October 2019 about the reduction in headcount between the end of the financial year 2017-18 and the end of financial year 2018-19.

I incorrectly advised (at the top of page 116 of the proof *Hansard*) that between the end of the financial year 2017-18 and the end of the financial year 2018-19 there has been a reduction in headcount of 108 positions. This reduction in fact was 204.

I would be grateful if you could provide this correction to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

**Liz Cosson AM CSC**  
Secretary

25 November 2019

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*Saluting Their Service*

*actually 204.*

**Ms Cosson:** In our annual report we do actually have the breakdown on page 208. Our current staffing headcount—if I can use headcount—totals 1,681. That is a reduction of 108 positions since last financial year.

**Senator AYRES:** Is that since 2017-18?

**Ms Cosson:** From 2017-18, our total headcount was 1,885. At the end of 2018-19, our total headcount was 1,681.

**Senator AYRES:** What's projected for—

**Ms Cosson:** For 2019-20, our cap will be 1,615. That's for APS. That doesn't count where we have contractors or labour hire. If we look at that, then we're sitting over—

**Senator AYRES:** I'll come to contractors and labour hire in a minute. Is that 1,615 cap—

**Ms Cosson:** APS

**Senator AYRES:** Is that what you have budgeted for?

**Ms Cosson:** That's the average staffing level that we have in our budget for 2019-20—that's correct.

**Senator AYRES:** Are they full-time equivalents?

**Ms Cosson:** APS is a little bit different. It's the average staffing level over the year rather than full-time equivalent.

**Senator AYRES:** Okay. Did you say how many less that was? I could do the maths myself I suppose—1,681 and 1,615.

**Ms Cosson:** That's correct.

**Senator AYRES:** So they're round figures. Were the individuals who lost their job in the last year, 2017-18 to 2018-19, made redundant or redeployed?

**Ms Cosson:** There was a mix. I did provide an answer on notice to this earlier—that is, we do have voluntary redundancies, where staff actually seek a voluntary redundancy, and I think that was around just over 40 in the last financial year. But there are also staff who want to be redeployed, and we will always try and do that, particularly when we've been going through significant transformation. Some staff have preferred to leave, but that is normal management. So it's been pretty steady over the last financial years.

**Senator AYRES:** So 40 voluntary redundancies—

**Ms Cosson:** It was 43. We answered that in question on notice No. 63. From 1 July 2018 to 17 April 2019, there were 43 staff who wanted a voluntary redundancy.

**Senator AYRES:** And how many redeployed?

**Ms Cosson:** I don't have that number. I'll take that on notice.

**Senator AYRES:** Thank you. And then, I assume, the balance are forced redundancies?

**Ms Cosson:** We don't have forced redundancies.

**Senator AYRES:** You don't have any forced redundancies at all?

**Ms Cosson:** No, it would be natural attrition—people that retired.

**Senator AYRES:** So it's either voluntary redundancy or redeployment?

**Ms Cosson:** Voluntary redundancy, redeployment or natural attrition, where someone has retired or taken a job elsewhere and we have elected not to fill that position.

**Senator AYRES:** I'm conscious that you have provided answers on notice before to some of these questions, but what was the total cost of the redundancies?

**Ms Cosson:** For those 43 staff, it was a cost of \$4.8 million.

**Senator AYRES:** Have you got a budget for the number of redundancies from 2018-19 to 2019-20?

**Ms Cosson:** We would put funding aside in the departmental budget to cover redundancies. I don't want to guess, so I'll take on notice what the budget was for the last financial year.

**Senator AYRES:** It's an obvious question, isn't it? If the number of staff is being reduced, doesn't that mean less support for veterans?

**Ms Cosson:** I don't agree with that. Even though we have reduced our APS numbers, we do have the opportunity to bring in contractors, labour hire, to actually support the work we are doing in progressing, particularly in our claims area. Our headcount is still up there—over 2,000 staff to deliver support to our veterans. I can give you that number if you like; the total headcount as at 30 September this year is 1,646 APS staff and