

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES - 4 JUNE 2013 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Public Service Efficiencies

Question reference number: HS 44

Senator: Smith

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) Please provide details of the amended operational efficiencies your agency will make as per 2013-14 Budget Measure 'Public Service efficiencies' (see 2013-14 Budget Paper No 2 p108).

In addition, please provide the following detail:

- b) Can you quantify the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates for savings achieved by implementing more efficient management structures, through a reduction in expenditure on staff across the Executive Level (EL) 1 and 2, and Senior Executive Service (SES) levels?
- c) Can you quantify the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates for savings achieved by revising down the occupational density target for all new leases, buildings and major fit-outs undertaken by agencies from 16 square metres per occupied workpoint down to 14 square metres?
- d) Has there been a reduction in business flights? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
- e) Has there been a reduction in the use of external consultants and contractors? Has this impacted on the Department/agency, and how? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
- f) Provide an update of moving recruitment advertising online. Is any recruitment still in printed materials, and if yes, why? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
- g) Has the department/agency reduced its printing costs? If no, why not? Have printing costs increased, and if yes why and how much? Has the five per cent savings target been achieved – if yes, how, or if it will not, why not? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?

Answer:

- a) The Department has not yet been advised of its allocation of the 2013-14 Budget Measure 'Public Service efficiencies'.

- b) See the Department of Finance and Deregulation's response to question F10 from the Finance and Public Administration Committee's hearing of 29 May 2013.
- c) No. The Department is still awaiting advice from the Department of Finance and Deregulation.
- d) Yes. There has been a 42 per cent reduction in air travel expenditure for the period 1 July 2012 to 31 May 2013 compared to the same period in 2011-12.
- e) Yes, the Department has reduced its use of external consultants and contractors to minimum levels feasible to maintain efficient and effective delivery of services. The reduction in the Department's use of consultants and contractors has required some staff to broaden their responsibilities into roles that might otherwise have been undertaken by consultants or contractors. Any resulting impact on those staff's other duties has been managed through the normal ongoing process of rationalising and streamlining the Department's business processes, so as to ensure there is no impact on customer servicing.

The Department does not forecast administrative expenses in the forward estimates at a granular level to be able to quantify savings from contractors and consultants. However, the Department will continue to have tight control over these expenses in line with the Government's efficiency measures.

- f) The Department of Human Services has embedded the Non-campaign Advertising policy into its recruitment processes and has moved from print media advertising of vacancies to advertising online in an effort to achieve value for money. This practice is applied to all non-campaign recruitment advertisements, including specific and general job vacancies such as graduate opportunities.

There are some exceptional circumstances where print media is still required to ensure attraction of some specialised skills, for example medical advisors and advertising in medical newsletters, or to ensure visibility of vacancies in rural communities. The circumstances of the use of print media are in line with the Non-campaign Advertising policy for advertising specialist roles and in Indigenous, local, regional and rural print media. Tight controls are in place for the use of print media with the approval required from the Secretary or the Deputy Secretary Enabling Services.

The Department does not forecast administrative expenses going forward. However, it will continue to have tight control over those expenses relating to printed materials. It is expected that approximately \$180,000 will be saved annually.

- g) As printing, including documents, is not conducted centrally, the Department is not able to provide printing costs. It would require a significant diversion of resources to provide this information.

The Department will achieve a reduction in printing costs by pursuing the following strategies:

- effective and competitive procurement practices using a panel of print providers;
- increased use of online channels, including online claiming, transactions and communication;
- print rationalisation, which focusses on reducing the number of customer products printed and warehoused;
- implementing the ICT 'follow me' initiative, which aims to reduce printing by Departmental staff; and
- letter and form reduction.

The Department does not forecast administrative expenses in the forward estimates at a granular level to be able to quantify savings from printing.