

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES – 1 JUNE 2017 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: AAT Matters

Question reference number: HS 20 (SQ17-000101)

Senator: Pratt

Type of question: Hansard page 127

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 21 July 2017

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) Senator PRATT: What is the average cost to the department of defending internal decisions like debt matters to the AAT? How much do you expect to spend on AAT hearings this year?

Ms Musolino: I am sorry; what was the second question?

- b) Senator PRATT: How much do you expect to spend—average cost—on AAT hearings this year?

Ms Campbell: So when you say 'spend on the hearings' is that like preparing paperwork to go to the hearings?

Senator PRATT: Yes.

Ms Campbell: That is what we would do.

Senator PRATT: Once the process of a review is triggered—I know there are internal reviews and then there is the external review—what is the cost once that external review process is triggered?

Ms Musolino: For AAT tier 1 or AAT tier 2 or both?

Senator PRATT: Both.

Ms Musolino: We will have to take that on notice.

- c) Senator PRATT: Are you able to advise how many staff are allocated to AAT hearings?

Ms Musolino: We can take that on notice.

Answer:

- a) & b) In the 2015-16 financial year there were 11,198 review applications to the AAT tier 1; and 2,259 review applications to AAT tier 2.

To answer these questions would require the department to individually review all matters in AAT tier 1 and tier 2 to determine the matters that involve issues relating to debt. Unlike an accounting or law firm the Department does not measure time spent on individual matters in minutes.

Providing a reliable estimate of internal and external costs would involve an unreasonable diversion of resources.

c) Departmental staff are not fully allocated only to preparing for or attending AAT hearings in tier 1 or tier 2. Staff involved in the preparation for and/or attendance at hearings also perform other functions.