

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 23-24 OCTOBER 2014 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Overflow Contract

Question reference number: HS 12

Senator: Cameron

Type of question: Hansard page 39, 24 October 2014

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 12 December 2014

Number of pages: 2

Question:

a) Senator CAMERON: Did you have an overflow contract with Telstra?

Ms Campbell: We had an overflow contract with a provider which I do not think was Telstra.

Senator CAMERON: I am interested in the Telstra contract. We have got 'projects and activities' in broad terms. If I were a union official and I saw this, I must say I would not have been alert or alarmed. A union official would have thought this was about projects for telecommunications and activities that Telstra would engage in according to their speciality. But you define this—is this correct?—as allowing DHS to contract Telstra to engage contract labour to come in and do work that is normally the work of DHS employees. Is that fair?

Ms Campbell: The proposal we are putting forward is for an overflow, surge-type capacity. In the past we have had a separate contract that was available to access overflow staff. I think that is probably the best way of doing it.

Senator CAMERON: With Telstra?

Ms Campbell: Not with Telstra.

Senator CAMERON: I am talking about Telstra.

Ms Campbell: I know, but it is the function.

Senator CAMERON: Can you provide details of the overflow contract?

Ms Campbell: We will take that on notice.

b) Senator CAMERON: I would like to see how the wording of 'projects and activities' sits against the overflow contract, which you say is specifically about overflow. Are you with me?

Ms Campbell: I—

Senator CAMERON: You have two contracts, right?

Ms Campbell: We will take it on notice.

Answer:

a) The department previously had an overflow contract with external providers. The contract operated between February 2011 and February 2014. The contract was designed to help deal with surges in demand.

- b) The overflow contract providers were Datacom Pty Ltd and Excelior Pty Ltd (which became Serco Global Services Pty). The contract with Datacom ceased in May 2013.