

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 104
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 4
Programme: Water Reform Division
Topic: STAFFING LEVELS - WATER PROGRAMMES
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Question Type: Spoken

Senator Pratt asked:

Senator PRATT: They will be in the average staffing outcomes across the programs as well as within this particular outcome, being water. They will be reflected within both sets of figures, and the staffing reduction is reflected in this as well. And then there is the change from the policy phase into the program phase for water. So what is the change? Do you know what the staffing reduction is associated with that change from policy to implementation?

Mr Parker: I would have to take the specifics of that on notice. There are literally dozens of programs here ranging from water recovery, urban programs and so forth. The question you have asked is actually a very complicated question to provide an answer to. If you like, we are happy to take that on notice and make an estimate for you.

Senator PRATT: I am just trying to get a view of which programs have lost staff thanks to operational requirement changes versus those that have been reduced. Clearly you try and match up the operational requirements with the efficiencies et cetera. But really the layering of both of those—

Ms Carlos: It is very difficult to try to break that down because we manage our departmental budget on a holistic basis. Whilst we have notional allocation to each of the outcomes within this document, as I said, that includes the corporate staffing components as well. But we also manage our departmental expenses quite holistically and each budget year we may have to move our resources around depending on the priorities of the government. So we can give you information around the organisational unit from one year to the next, other than when we are changing structures, but to do anything more detailed than that is quite difficult because we do not manage our budget on the basis that this efficiency belongs to this person. It is managed as a total departmental budget.

Answer:

With the finalisation of the Basin Plan in late 2012, the adoption by all Murray-Darling Basin states of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Implementing Water Reform in the Murray-Darling Basin, the subsequent release of the Commonwealth's Water Recover Strategy and significant work to date in developing water recovery projects with state jurisdictions, fewer Departmental staff are required for policy development work on Murray-Darling Basin reform issues and for water buyback activities.