

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

Question No: 138
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Environment Quality Division
Topic: FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR UNFUNDED RECYCLING
Hansard Page: 95
Question Date: 20 October 2014
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Urquhart asked:

Senator URQUHART: Was there any Commonwealth financial support for the scheme to support organisations like Aspitech?

Dr Wright: No direct Commonwealth financial support.

Senator URQUHART: Has there been in the past?

Dr Wright: No environment department support. However, Mr Edwards can give you some other details of Commonwealth support.

Mr Edwards: Through the Social Services portfolio, assisted workers are supported in Aspitech. Essentially, the Commonwealth funds the support worker to work alongside people with disability. That funding was refreshed last year, in 2013

Senator URQUHART: What happened to that support?

Mr Edwards: That is ongoing support and there was also some transitional support provided to Aspitech when they were growing their business. We provided that in 2013 and it was around \$300,000 of additional support, but I would have to pull out the exact figure.

Senator URQUHART: Maybe you could provide that on notice. So that support is still there and is still funded?

Mr Edwards: That is right, those positions are still funded. It covers 75 positions, I believe, at Aspitech.

Senator URQUHART: Do you know if that is in the forward estimates?

Mr Edwards: I am not sure. I would have to take that on notice.

Senator URQUHART: Do you know, Senator Birmingham?

Senator Birmingham: Noting that it is also funding out of the Social Services portfolio, we can use best endeavours to come up with answers for you, but it is not this portfolio or department in this instance. I do know that Senator Fifield and the minister had some extensive discussions and both were engaged in discussions with Aspitech. It was not just an Environment portfolio intervention as such. They are to provide assistance to social services.

Senator URQUHART: Are you able to take that on notice and provide that information back—whether it is another department?

Senator Birmingham: We can certainly clarify the information as best we can. But if it comes to future funding for something that is outside of this portfolio, then that might require questions—

Mr Edwards: I can clarify one part of that question. There was \$380,000 provided in some transitional support, and that is above and beyond the amount that is provided to support the 75 employees. As the senator mentioned, we can take that part on notice.

Answer:

- The Department of the Environment (the Department) does not fund or regulate Australian Disability Enterprises such as Aspitech (or its parent body SA Group Enterprises).
- The Department of Social Services (DSS) funds Australian Disability Enterprises under the Disability Employment Assistance programme. Any questions on current or forward year funding for these programmes should be directed to DSS.
- Through the Government's Disability Employment Assistance programme, DSS funds 75 supported employment places in four Australian Disability Enterprises operated by SA Group Enterprises.
- In 2013, DSS gave \$380,000 in Temporary Viability Support (in addition to its normal ongoing funding) to SA Group Enterprises to assist with costs associated with the relocation of two of its recycling businesses, Wire Ware and Aspitech, with a view to grow the e-waste recycling side of the SA Group Enterprise.