

## Senate Standing Committee on Economics

### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

#### Treasury Portfolio

Additional Estimates

26 February 2014

**Question:** AET 1920-1924

**Topic:** Public debt interest (APRA)

**Written:** 7 March 2014

#### Senator BUSHBY asked:

1920. According to MYEFO the net interest payments for debt held by the General Government Sector for the current financial year total \$8.8 billion, while the total interest cost is \$12.4 billion. Both figures rise to be \$12.8 billion and \$16.7 billion respectively in the final out-year.
- What would the Government be able to do with the equivalent amount of money in this portfolio if these billions were spent on programs and outcomes instead of on debt ?
1921. Does your agency ever observe connection between performance management of staff and claims of stress leave or other forms of sick leave?
1922. What is the number of staff on stress leave or psychological injury claims at any one time in your agency? How many harassment claims are there at any one time? How many of these cases are connected to performance cases? Have you observed any instances of stress claims and harassment claims being a tactic used by staff which the agency tries to performance-manage?
1923. Looking at the length of time claimed for sick leave, are you seeing longer absences for people with physical injuries or people claiming to have psychological injuries? What's the degree of difference?
1924. How much would be saved from your workforce insurance costs if you did not have the current levels of stress-related claims and other psychological injury claims?

#### Answer:

1920. Please refer to the Treasury response to AET 1705.
1921. The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) monitors stress and sick leave against performance management. Although it should be noted that workers compensation claims for 'stress' and other psychological injuries are not permitted as the definition of 'injury' does not include a disease, injury or aggravation suffered as a result of reasonable administrative action taken in a reasonable manner in respect of the employee's employment. If such a connection is observed, APRA addresses performance management issues as required under the terms and conditions set out in APRA's Policies.
1922. APRA has one ex-employee with a current workers compensation claim due to psychological injury. APRA has had one other successful claim by an employee for harassment or bullying. No cases are connected to performance management issues. APRA has observed instances of staff lodging workers compensation claims following performance management issues. None of these claims were successful.
1923. APRA notes that psychological injuries generally require extended periods of time away from the workplace and claims can extend from weeks to years. Physical injuries can require a matter of hours off and range to several weeks.
1924. This is unknown as APRA's workers compensation insurance is provided by Comcare. Comcare premiums take into account the number of claims across all organisations insured.