

Senate Economics Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates

2014 - 2015

Department/Agency: ABS

Question: SBT591-595

Topic: Fee for services

Reference: Written - 30 October 2014

Senator: Ludwig, Joe

Question:

Since September 7, 2013:

591. Have any existing services provided by the department / agency moved from being free to a user-pay service? Have any additional fees been placed on existing services? If yes please provide a list and include:
- Name of the fee and a short description of what it covers.
 - How much is the fee (and is it a flat fee or a percentage of the service).
 - The date the fee came into place.
592. Were any reviews requested, commenced or complemented into the benefits and drawbacks of attaching the fee to the service? If yes, please detail and provide a copy of the review.
593. What consultation was carried out before the fee was put into place?
594. How was the fee put into place (e.g. through legislation, regulation changes etc)?
595. What justification is there for the fee?

Answer:

591 Since September 7, 2013 no existing ABS services have moved from being a free service to a user pays service. The structure of one user pays service, a fee to access detailed ABS data, changed on the 1st of July 2014 from being a one-off payment to an annual subscription.

a) The fee is known as the “Microdata Subscription”. It is charged to access detailed information that is beyond what can feasibly be presented for free on the ABS website. Users of detailed ABS data have two methods of access. Most users simply need to create new tables of information drawn from the detailed data: for these users there is the TableBuilder method. Some users require access to the underlying detailed data to perform complex analysis: for these users there is the Remote Access Data Laboratory method.

b) The following table sets out the new fee structure for the two methods based on whether the subject is the Census or any other subject. Payment is on a subject by subject basis. All figures quoted are inclusive of GST.

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Method	Subject	Annual charge for an individual Per subject	Annual Charge for a small-to-medium organisation with 2-200 employees Per subject	Annual Charge for a large organisation with over 200 employees Per subject
TableBuilder	A frequently used subset of Census data	Free	Free	Free
TableBuilder	Full set of Census data	\$520.00	\$2,200	\$3,900
TableBuilder	All other non-Census subjects	\$260.00	\$1,100	\$1,950
Remote Access Data Laboratory	All subjects	\$290.00	\$1,320.00	\$2,320.00

c) The fee structure change came into place on the 1st of July 2014.

592. No formal review of the fee structure change was requested or undertaken.

593. Before the fee structure changed consultation took place with ABS senior management, ABS officers out-posted to key Federal Government Departments and areas in the ABS responsible for State and Territory Government liaison.

594. The fee structure change was implemented through a change to the terms and conditions of the licences for TableBuilder and the Remote Access Data Laboratory methods.

595. The justification for the fee structure change was to:

- Fully recover costs and prevent cross subsidisation
- Provide a responsive and well informed user help service
- Ensure that detailed data access methods are well maintained and can grow (or shrink) based on user demand