

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018

Outcome: Cross Portfolio

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000657

Senator Xenophon, Nick provided in writing.

Waste

Question

1. Is there a departmental definition on the meaning of 'waste', and if so, what is that definition?
2. What are the Department's arrangements for monitoring and managing waste?
3. Is there a central Departmental mechanism (e.g. phone number, email address, web site) for public servants or contractors to report Departmental waste?
4. How much waste was identified by the Department in FY 13/14, FY 14/15 and FY 15/16?
5. Can Departmental officers or contractors report waste anonymously? Are they afforded a protection if they do so?

Answers

1. The Department of Education and Training accepts the definition of waste provided in this context: 'public money and resources used or expended carelessly, extravagantly, or to no purpose'.
2. The department complies with the obligations of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. The department manages public spending in an efficient and effective means, through the following mechanisms:
 - the Secretary's Instructions
 - financial delegations
 - fraud and risk frameworks
 - program compliance and assurance frameworks.
3. Yes, the department has a central mechanism for staff and the public to report any suspected mismanagement of public resources. In addition, the department maintains a fraud tip-off email address and utilises the Australian Government fraud tip-off hotline.
4. The department does not quantify 'waste' (as described above) as a total figure. As identified in the response to question 2, the department has a range of mechanisms to monitor compliance and conducts periodic reviews to ensure public accountability. For example, credit card misuse (refer to response to question 7 for SQ17-000866).
5. Information collected through the tip-off avenues outlined in the response to question 3 can be reported anonymously. Protection is provided by law, including the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988*.