

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2014-15

Finance Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of Finance

Outcome/Program: 1/1.1

Topic: Strengthening the Constitutional basis for Commonwealth Spending measure

Senator: Wong

Question reference number: F98

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday, 10 April 2015

Number of pages: 2

Question:

For the “Strengthening the Constitutional basis for Commonwealth spending” measure in the 2014-15 MYEFO:

1. In relation to the Health Programme Grants program, what are the general developments in the law, or the Government’s policy objectives that have necessitated adjustments and/or cessations? Can the Department describe what has been adjusted and/or what has been ceased in this program? What is the amount of savings generated from the adjustments and/or cessations to this program?
2. In relation to the National Oral Health Promotion Plan program, what are the general developments in the law, or the Government’s policy objectives that have necessitated adjustments and/or cessations? Can the Department describe what has been adjusted and/or what has been ceased in this program? What is the amount of savings generated from the adjustments and/or cessations to this program?
3. In relation to the National Urban Water and Desalination Plan program, what are the general developments in the law, or the Government’s policy objectives that have necessitated adjustments and/or cessations? Can the Department describe what has been adjusted and/or what has been ceased in this program? What is the amount of savings generated from the adjustments and/or cessations to this program?
4. Have these adjustments and/or cessations come about as a result of the second Williams case?
5. If so, how does this reconcile with Senator Brandis’ statement in the Senate on 19 June 2014 where he said that the second Williams case would have no implications for Commonwealth programs other than the School Chaplaincy Program?

Answer:

1. – 3.

The Government as part of repairing the Budget has ceased the Health Programme Grants, National Oral Health Promotion Plan, National Urban Water and Desalination Plan programmes and in doing so has also adopted a prudent approach to programme design having regard to general developments in the law. The savings resulting from changes in these programmes relate to:

- three contracts within the Health Programme Grants, providing a saving of \$8.2 million over four years from 2015-16,
- the cessation of National Oral Health Promotion Plan, providing a saving of \$5 million in 2014-15, and
- one project within the National Urban Water and Desalination Plan programme, providing a saving of up to \$7.9 million over two years.

4. All governments must keep their programmes under review. In doing so the Government takes into account developments in the background law, including the High Court's Pape and Williams decisions. The Government will continue to adjust programmes where it is prudent to do so having regard to general developments in the law and the Government's policy objectives.

5. This question should be referred to the Attorney-General's Department.