

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2017

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question Number: 18

Division/Agency: Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

Topic: 15% vacancy rate

Proof Hansard Page: 7 (25.05.2017)

Senator CARR asked:

Senator KIM CARR: That is the normal practice in the Public Service, I agree. How long have you had 15 per cent of positions vacant?

Ms Janiec: I would have to take that on notice. I don't have the details of the retention.

Answer:

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority does not record historical vacancy information.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

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Budget Estimates May 2017

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question Number: 19

Division/Agency: Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

Topic: List of applications currently overdue

Proof Hansard Page: 9 (25.05.2017)

Senator CARR asked:

Senator KIM CARR: Can you provide the committee with a list of applications that are currently overdue and can you provide descriptions outlining the intended use of those products?

Mr Norden: Yes, we can do that on notice.

Answer:

As at 31 May 2017, there were 219 overdue applications out of the total of 678 applications in progress for new products or variations to existing registrations where the intended use is as an agricultural chemical product.

As at 31 May 2017, there were 94 overdue applications out of the total of 359 applications in progress for new products or variations to existing registrations where the intended use is as a veterinary chemical product.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

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Budget Estimates May 2017

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question Number: 20

Division/Agency: Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

Topic: Cohort of regulatory scientists

Proof Hansard Page: 19 (25.05.2017)

Senator RICE asked:

Senator RICE: The usual cohort is around 100 scientists, and I think we just heard that there are currently 82 regulatory scientists, so you are down about 20 per cent on your usual workforce. Is that correct?

Mr Norden: I would have to check those numbers

Answer:

At 30 April 2017 the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority had 100 regulatory scientist positions and 82 regulatory scientists employed.

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Agriculture and Water Resources

Question Number: 21

Division/Agency: Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

Topic: External Providers

Proof Hansard Page: 23 (25.05.2017)

Senator RICE asked:

Senator RICE: Has the use of external providers in those areas increased over time?

Dr Lutze: It fluctuates. For instance, with the health assessment team, traditionally most of those assessments were undertaken by the Department of Health. Over the last couple of years, the Department of Health has ceased to do assessments for us. We have taken some of those assessments in-house and we have also increased the number of assessments that are done externally.

Senator RICE: Can you provide on notice the trends in each of those areas, in terms of what is being done in-house and what is being done externally?

Dr Lutze: We can do that on notice

Senator RICE: Is there a greater cost for the external provision of these services than if you were doing them in-house?

Dr Lutze: That is very difficult for me to say. It depends on the sort of assessment that we might do inside and the sort of assessment we would put outside.

Senator RICE: Yes, but in general. You say it is difficult to say, but you must have some idea in terms of your budgeting. If an assessment is being done externally compared with internally, what are the extra costs?

Dr Lutze: It depends on the experience of the external assessment and the external assessor. It can vary.

Senator RICE: It can vary. Can you give me—

Dr Lutze: I will provide some of that advice on notice, with the trends.

Senator RICE: Thank you.

Question Number: 21 (continued)

Answer:

Human health risk assessments (%)	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17 (YTD 31 May 2017)
APVMA	3%	5%	72%
Private sector reviewer	3%	22%	28%
Department of Health	94%	73%	0%*

* The Department of Health ceased providing assessment services at the end of 2015-16.

Environmental risk assessments (%)	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17 (YTD 31 May 2017)
APVMA	2%	23%	33%
Private sector reviewer	61%	55%	54%
Department of the Environment and Energy	37%	22%	13%

The majority of efficacy assessments are undertaken by private sector reviewers. Residues assessments are undertaken by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).

The APVMA does not collect data to allow a comparison between the costs of assessments performed internally and externally.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Question Number: 22

Division/Agency: Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

Topic: APVMA Relocation Advisory Committee ToR

Proof Hansard Page: 25 (25.05.2017)

Senator BROWN asked:

Senator CAROL BROWN: When was that established?

Ms Janiec: That was established at the end of last year, coming off the back of the approval of our relocation strategy approach. We had the first meeting in January this year. We have had four meetings to date.

Senator CAROL BROWN: When were the other meetings?

Ms Janiec: They were each month, so February, March and April. We have just concluded the last one.

Senator CAROL BROWN: Obviously if I ask for any documentation from—

Ms Janiec: For the terms of reference and the membership?

Senator CAROL BROWN: Yes.

Ms Janiec: We can take that on notice.

Answer:

The Terms of Reference for the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) Relocation Advisory Committee, which includes membership information is located on the APVMA website www.apvma.gov.au/node/26466.

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Agriculture and Water Resources

Question Number: 23

Division/Agency: Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

Topic: Post graduate regulatory science qualification

Proof Hansard Page: 26 (25.05.2017)

Senator RICE asked:

Senator RICE: But, if you are talking about a graduate—say a graduate from the University of New England—who has done a science degree but has not got any background in regulatory science, what would you employ them at?

Ms Janiec: Using your example, we would look to employ them on our graduate program. We are designing a graduate program to encourage newly completed graduates to start at our base level. We would then put them through our graduate program or through our accredited program to enable them to have the skills, the on-the-job training, the face-to-face training, with experienced subject matter experts doing some course work—so a whole complete program.

Senator RICE: So essentially it is an in-house program of training that they would be doing.

Ms Janiec: That is right. It is unique to our agency.

Senator RICE: And that is what the 12 months that you are expecting—

Ms Janiec: It could take up to 12 months. We are looking at a program that could commence very soon. For some people, they could complete it in eight months.

Senator RICE: And that would bring them in at APS4 or APS5. In comparison, where is the postgrad regulatory science qualification currently offered?

Ms Janiec: In terms of the broader question, I would probably have to take that on notice. The one that I am directly aware of, and that is only because of my role here around the University of New England, is where our Chief Scientist has been assisting and supporting them in that program.

Answer:

The postgraduate regulatory science program is offered by the University of New England (UNE).

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Question Number: 24

Division/Agency: Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

Topic: Staffing structure of regulatory scientists

Proof Hansard Page: 27 (25.05.2017)

Senator RICE asked:

Senator RICE: In terms of your staffing structure of your regulatory scientists, your approximately 100 full-time staff, I have seen previous statistics, but how many do you have at APS4 or APS5 and how many at higher levels?

CHAIR: Senator Rice, I am going to have to take my shoes and socks off in a minute to keep count of your 'one question'. Labor had the call.

Ms Janiec: Sorry; I thought I had that here.

Senator McKENZIE: While you are getting that, isn't that the purpose of setting up the centre of excellence? We do not have that type of training here in Australia, and the APVMA is not the only organisation or agency across our nation that uses regulatory scientists. By setting up in Armidale and having a specific course and a centre of excellence, we will not just be training future APVMA employees but, indeed, for regulatory agencies across the Commonwealth. Can someone flesh that out for me, please?

Ms Janiec: Sorry; I was concentrating on trying to find my numbers.

CHAIR: Yes; one thing at a time.

Senator McKENZIE: Somebody else can answer my question while you find the numbers.

CHAIR: Stand by. We will do one thing at a time. Ms Janiec, concentrate on Senator Rice's question and then we will go to other senators.

Ms Janiec: I do not appear to have that breakdown of classification structures for regulatory scientists on me, but I can take that on notice.

Question Number: 24 (continued)

Answer:

Current Regulatory Scientist Positions

APS LEVEL	Total
SES	3
EL2	11
EL1	30
APS 6	33
APS 5	3
APS 4	2
TOTAL	82

Vacant Regulatory Scientist Positions

APS LEVEL	Total
EL2	2
EL1	6
APS 6	10
TOTAL	18

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Agriculture and Water Resources

Question Number: 25

Division/Agency: Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

Topic: Recruitment and scientist

Proof Hansard Page: written

Senator STERLE asked:

What are the Department's intentions regarding the shortfall in staffing recruitment?

Will the Department consider hiring scientists from overseas to fill this shortfall?

Answer:

Recruitment decisions are a matter for the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). The APVMA is advertising for regulatory scientists and other positions online, and while overseas applicants are not specifically targeted they are able to apply. Any applications from suitably qualified regulatory scientists will be considered as they arise.