

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2016

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 144

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Staff members

Proof Hansard page: 7-8

Senator Carol BROWN asked:

Senator Carol BROWN: How many contractors? How does that work?

Dr Steve Jefferies: I would have to take that question on notice, but I would imagine it is in excess of 30.

Senator Carol BROWN: If it is different can you provide that on notice? How many staff members have been relocated from Canberra?

Dr Steve Jefferies: There have been five staff relocated from Canberra, but we have recruited many other staff in our regional office.

Senator Carol BROWN: How many staff members are currently in Canberra?

Dr Steve Jefferies: About 53, although, if that is not correct I may need to take that on notice.

Answer:

50.3 FTE are located in Canberra.

Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) engages a number of contractors for specific corporate projects (for example the business system and process review and IT support) the number of which fluctuates over time as per operational requirements. There were 10 contractors working out of the GRDC office during the week of 31 October 2016.

GRDC undertook an operational restructure in 2015. As part of this restructure 5 staff were relocated from the Canberra office to positions in regional offices 2 to Dubbo, 1 to Adelaide, 1 to Perth and 1 to Toowoomba.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

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Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2016

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 145

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Staffing Levels

Proof Hansard page: 8

Senator Carol BROWN asked:

Senator Carol BROWN: With that recruitment, is that an increase from what your staffing level was before the relocation?

Dr Steve Jefferies: Marginally, yes. I would have to take that on notice in terms of what the difference would be.

Senator Carol BROWN: Okay, could you please take that on notice. What process was undertaken to identify which staff members would be relocated?

Dr Steve Jefferies: I have only been in this position for three months. I am not aware of the process that was undertaken to decide on what staff.

Senator Carol BROWN: Can you take that on notice?

Dr Steve Jefferies: I certainly can.

Answer:

Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) staff numbers are anticipated to be 79 FTE in 2016-17. GRDC staff numbers were 67 FTE as at 30 June 2016 and 75 FTE as at 30 June 2015.

Grains Research and Development Corporation undertook an organisational restructure in 2015. As part of this process the Board and Executive identified a range of roles that could better deliver research, development and extension outcomes to growers by being regionally located.

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Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 146

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Voluntary Redundancies

Proof Hansard page: 8

Senator CAROL BROWN asked:

Senator CAROL BROWN: Were staff members offered voluntary redundancies due to the relocation?

Dr Steve Jefferies: Again, I am not aware of the processes. That was before my time. I believe there were, but I would need to take that on notice to be absolutely accurate.

Senator CAROL BROWN: Could you please take on notice how many and the cost.

Dr Steve Jefferies: Could I clarify what you mean by 'the cost'?

Senator CAROL BROWN: The cost of the redundancies. How many staff members are located at the new locations?

Answer:

Yes. One employee due to relocation. The cost was \$73 276.

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Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 147

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Staffing locations and numbers

Proof Hansard page: 8

Senator Carol BROWN asked:

Senator Carol BROWN: The cost of the redundancies. How many staff members are located at the new locations?

Dr Steve Jefferies: We have six permanent staff in Adelaide, two in Dubbo, six in Toowoomba and eight in Perth.

Senator Carol BROWN: And you have 53 in Canberra.

Dr Steve Jefferies: I said that I would need to check that number, but I think that it is maybe 52.

Senator Carol BROWN: You can check that.

Dr Steve Jefferies: We would need to clarify that, yes. It is very close.

Answer:

In terms of FTE staff 50.3 are located in Canberra; 2 in Dubbo, NSW; 5 in Toowoomba, Qld; 7 in Adelaide, SA and 7.7 in Perth, WA. This translates to headcount of 52 located in Canberra; 2 in Dubbo, NSW; 6 in Toowoomba, Qld; 7 in Adelaide and 8 in Perth, WA.

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Question: 148

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Staffing levels

Proof Hansard page: 8

Senator Carol BROWN asked:

Senator Carol BROWN: Do you have information available here today about the cost to relocate the GRDC, including new lease arrangements, employment ads and relocation costs?

Dr Jefferies: Yes.

Senator Carol BROWN: You do?

Dr Jefferies: Could I clarify that? They were relocation expenditure and—

Senator Carol BROWN: Recruitment ads, relocation costs, even though you have said that it was only five that have been relocated from Canberra. Where did those five go?

Dr Steve Jefferies: One to Adelaide, one to Dubbo, two to Toowoomba and one to Perth.

Senator Carol BROWN: What level are they?

Dr Steve Jefferies: This was done before my time. I would need to take that on notice.

Answer:

Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) undertook an operational restructure in 2015. As part of this restructure 5 staff were relocated from the Canberra office to positions in regional offices 2 to Dubbo, 1 to Adelaide, 1 to Perth and 1 to Toowoomba.

GRDC does not have APS classification levels. The positions were General Manager Level for Adelaide, Toowoomba and Perth. Regional Manager and Contracts Administration Level to Dubbo.

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Question: 149

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Levy Payers' money

Proof Hansard page: 8-9

Senator Glenn STERLE asked:

Senator Glenn STERLE: That is all funded out of levy payers' money?

Dr Steve Jefferies: Levy payers and federal government money, that is correct.

Senator Glenn STERLE: Could you just tell us what the split was?

Dr Steve Jefferies: I would have to take that on notice in terms of the split, but it is approximately one-third to two-thirds—with two-thirds levy payers

Answer:

The cost for establishing Grains Research and Development Corporation's regional offices is \$210 953. This comprises of \$141 176 for capitalised expenditure, coming from our reserves, and the remaining \$69 777 for operation costs, split as follows:

- \$34 888.50 (50 per cent) from Levy income;
- \$22 328.64 (32 per cent) from Commonwealth Matching income;
- \$5 582.16 (8 per cent) from other income; and
- \$6 977.70 (10 per cent) from reserves.

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Question: 150

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Outgoing costs

Proof Hansard page: 9

Senator Carol BROWN asked:

Senator Carol BROWN: What do those outgoing costs include?

Dr Steve Jefferies: That would be lease and outgoings, I would assume. However, I would need to take that on notice to be perfectly accurate

Senator Carol BROWN: So, Mr Jefferies, you are going to check the ongoing costs?

Dr Steve Jefferies: Just the details of the breakdown and what is included in the ongoing costs.

Answer:

Ongoing costs include lease costs and outgoings. Outgoings for each regional office are dependent on the commercial lease agreement negotiated and typically include electricity, rates, water and sewerage. Outgoings are included in the lease costs for the Toowoomba office and excluded for Adelaide, Perth and Dubbo offices.

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Question: 151

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Measures the success of the relocations

Proof Hansard page: 10

Senator Carol BROWN asked:

Senator Carol BROWN: Do you have any measures in place to measure the success of the relocations? How are you going to know if that is working as intended?

Dr Steve Jefferies: The strategy behind the relocation was discussed and decided before my time, so I would need to take on notice what performance measures, if any, have been agreed

Answer:

No, however Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) surveys 1200 growers annually collecting KPI data to monitor grower attitude towards the Corporation, satisfaction levels and awareness of GRDC in the regions. The 2016 Grower Survey results show 85 per cent of growers' rate performance of the GRDC fairly high to very high. Feedback to date is that the increased regional presence is having a positive impact in terms of grower engagement, research management and delivery to growers.

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Question: 152

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Performance Measures

Proof Hansard page: 10

Senator BACK asked:

Senator BACK: Dr Jefferies, thanks for that advice, particularly in terms of the eight people now based in WA. As you know, we produce between 14 million and 18 million tonnes of wheat a year. Hopefully this year it will be closer to 18. There has always been a complaint from Western Australian producers that they never see GRDC people. Further to Senator Brown's question, which I completely agree with, what has been your experience to date in terms of this move and the response by Western Australian growers? How, again, are we actually going to objectively measure that?

Dr Steve Jefferies: Thank you for the question. I have been here for three months and I have had very little experience in feedback from it, other than my recent tour with the Western Panel of the northern Wheatbelt of Western Australia, in which over a three-day period we toured and visited a number of the leading grower groups. We were very pleased with their very positive feedback on the much greater access of staff to them so they can raise issues, discuss constraints, monitor outcomes and capture outcomes from research in a locally engaged way, so it is very specific to their environment.

What measures? Again, that is a similar question to Senator Brown's question. What performance measures we have, if any, I would have to take on notice.

Answer:

Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) surveys 1200 growers annually collecting KPI data to monitor grower attitude towards the Corporation, satisfaction levels and awareness of GRDC in the regions. The 2016 Grower Survey results show 85 per cent of Australian growers rate performance of the GRDC fairly high to very high and in Western Australia 93 per cent rate the credibility of GRDC information fairly high to very high; 74 per cent rate GRDC engagement with growers fairly high to very high; 85 per cent are aware of the GRDC western panel with 45 per cent having had direct engagement with them.

Feedback to date is that the increased regional presence is having a positive impact in terms of grower engagement, research management and delivery to growers.

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Question: 153

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Awareness of the *Primary Industries Levies and Charges Collection Amendment Bill*

Proof Hansard page: 11

Senator David LEYONHJELM asked:

Senator David LEYONHJELM: Are you aware of the *Primary Industries Levies and Charges Collection Amendment Bill*?

Dr Steve Jefferies: Yes, to some extent I am aware of it.

Senator David LEYONHJELM: Do you know its purpose and what it is intended to do?

Dr Steve Jefferies: Again, I am only three months into this job—my awareness is very superficial. So, no, I would need to take that on notice.

Answer:

Yes. The Bill makes provision for the development of levy payer databases for agricultural industries, including grain growers.

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Question: 154

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Regional Model

Proof Hansard page: 12

Senator Janet RICE asked:

Senator Janet RICE: Was the regional model something that the GRDC had been looking at for a while, or was it something that has been implemented because of the government policy being imposed upon you?

Dr Steve Jefferies: Again, I was not around. I have been here for three months, so I am not really aware of the details of our strategy and what the drivers behind the strategy were initially.

Senator Janet RICE: Could you take that on notice and get back to me on that—whether there had been any consideration of the regionalisation prior to the government's policy change?

Dr Steve Jefferies: Yes.

Answer:

The Grains Research and Development Corporation Board had been strategically considering how to strengthen regional engagement and delivery including increased staff in regional areas.

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Question: 155

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Hub-and-Spoke Model

Proof Hansard page: 12

Senator RICE asked:

Senator RICE: Have you had staff leave because of the change to your hub-and-spoke model?

Dr Steve Jefferies: I am certainly not aware of that, but I would need to take that on notice to be absolutely certain.

Senator RICE: Have any staff been made redundant because their positions have shifted to a regional area and they have not gone?

Dr Steve Jefferies: Not to my knowledge, but I would need to take that on notice.

Answer:

One staff member was made redundant.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

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Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 156

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Cost-Benefit Analysis

Proof Hansard page: 12

Senator RICE asked:

Senator RICE: Was there a cost-benefit analysis undertaken about the move prior to the move occurring?

Dr Steve Jefferies: Again, not to my knowledge, but I would need to take that on notice to be perfectly accurate.

Senator RICE: If that cost-benefit analysis was undertaken, is that a public document now?

Dr Steve Jefferies: Again, I would need to take that on notice. I am not aware.

Answer:

No.

Not applicable.

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Question: 157

Division/Agency: Grains Research and Development Corporation

Topic: Overall Costs at the Canberra Office

Proof Hansard page: 13

Senator RICE asked:

Senator RICE: One last question in terms of the overall costs: have your costs at your Canberra office decreased with the reduction in staff?

Dr Steve Jefferies: Could I clarify? Have the costs of—

Senator RICE: You outlined the extra costs of establishing your new regional offices, so I was interested in the costs of your Canberra office. Has there been any reduction in costs in the running of your Canberra office?

Dr Steve Jefferies: I would need to take that on notice. I do not know the details of that.

Answer:

Yes.