

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

TREASURY

Australian Taxation Office

(Budget Estimates 29 May 2007)

Question **BET 108**
Topic: **Staffing numbers in Tasmania**
Hansard Page: **E85**

Senator **Ronaldson** asked:

Perhaps we should talk about Tasmania while we are there.

Senator SHERRY—Did you want to do something on Tasmania?

CHAIR—I would like to go through these figures looking at the ATO staff numbers, which indicate that there has been an increase in Hobart from 421 to 518. Is that right?

Ms Granger—Yes, it is. Would you like me to talk about the activities?

.....
CHAIR—Tasmania as a whole has gone from 595 to 577. Is that correct?

Senator Colbeck—I would be interested to hear what is in Burnie.

.....
Ms Granger—I am sure that we can get you those figures. There are two cautions about this data. It is head count as opposed to full-time equivalents, so the mix of ongoing and permanent staff I do not have in here. I cannot tell you, although I do know, that some of this growth is not what we call non-ongoing, so it is not permanent. A couple of observations about analysing ATO staffing numbers is that there are ons and offs each year as new policy comes in obviously and as the commissioner mentioned earlier, also with pay rises, whilst the budget may stay steady the numbers do decrease. The observation that I would make overall about Hobart compared to ATO overall is, with the exception of the June 2006 year, the expansion was higher than ATO at the general level. You will see underneath the numbers we have given you proportions of increase.

CHAIR—Was the head count criterion the same in 2007 as it was in 2004?

Ms Granger—It will vary year to year. For example, if we have particular marketing campaigns we may engage more call centre people on an ongoing basis to be able to handle that, so the levels are not entirely predictable. There is not a call centre in Hobart. I am just using that as a generalised example; it could be other things that require more seasonal work. The comparative picture to the rest of the ATO is quite healthy. This does not address the questions that you were asking around the composition of work. This is just simply raw numbers and we will come back to you with the composition of work.

Senator SHERRY—You may not be aware but I do not reside in Hobart; I reside in Devonport. So what I have picked up, and I am sure the parliamentary secretary will pick this up, is that despite on the face of it the impressive figures of increase in staff numbers in Tasmania, at 30 June 2004 there were 74 ATO staff members outside Hobart but unfortunately as of 3 April 2007 that had declined to 59. Do you have any explanation for that?

Ms Granger—No. As I said, these are just raw numbers. We can come back to you with a breakdown generally.

(At E45 Mr D'Ascenzo—I have asked our people to get the staffing level for Tasmania over the last three years just to indicate whether or not there is a diminution in terms of ATO opportunities there or an increase.

CHAIR—I think Tasmania has been overserved by the ATO.

Mr D'Ascenzo—That might help to see whether there is a diminution of our level of opportunities in Tasmania over the last three years.

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Answer:

The table below shows that the number of staff in Tasmania outside Hobart rose from 74 at 30 June 2004 to 84 at 31 May 2007 (an increase of 10 staff or 14%). This increase was entirely due to a rise in the number of call centre staff in Burnie, while the number of staff in Launceston declined by 2 (or 7%) over this period.

The number of staff in Hobart rose from 421 at 30 June 2004 to 446 at 31 May 2007 (an increase of 25 or 6%). The work undertaken in the Hobart office changed over this period, making it difficult to exactly assess the nature of this increase. The numbers of staff engaged in Excise, GST, Operations (including Client Contact, Debt and Client Account Services), and Small and Medium Enterprises work have declined. In contrast the number of staff in Law, Tax Practitioner and Lodgement Support, ATO Relations, People and Place, Micro Enterprises and Individuals, and Superannuation (in particular) has risen.

Tax Office staff numbers (headcount)	30 June 2004	30 June 2005	30 June 2006	30 April 2007	31 May 2007
Burnie	47	50	69	60	59
Hobart	421	478	455	447	446
Launceston	27	22	20	25	25
All	495	550	544	532	530