

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

31 May – 2 June 2011

Question No: BET 129

Topic: ATO – Social Media

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Bushby asked:

1. Has the department instituted any changes to policies or protocols since last estimates that restrict or deny staff the use of Youtube; online social media, such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter; and access to online discussions forums and blogs?
2. If yes, please explain what changes have been put in place. Why were these changes put in place?
3. Are staff utilising these sites during work hours? If yes, how many hours are spent on these sites? What time these sites are most accessed?
4. Will measures be introduced to restrict access to these sites?

Answer:

1. No, but the ATO continues to maintain the following policies to restrict staff use of social media:
 - Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) Circular 2009/6: Protocols for online media participation
 - APS Values and Codes of Conduct
 - ATO Proper use of IT facilities Corporate Management Practice Statement (internal guidelines for ATO staff)
 - ATO Social media guidelines
 - ATO Digital media corporate management practice statement and corporate management procedure and instructions - under development and will replace existing Social media guidelines, and
 - ATO Online forum and blog guidelines covering official and unofficial use- under development.

2. Not applicable. Existing policies cover access restrictions to social media sites from ATO IT facilities, as follows:
 - Facebook - blocked (except for approved staff for official purposes)
 - Twitter - coached (except for approved staff for official purposes)
 - YouTube/MySpace- blocked (except for approved staff for official purposes)
3. The number of hours spent on these sites cannot currently be measured and reported on specifically, but given the restrictions in place in relation to the use of YouTube, online social media and online discussion forums and blogs, this would be very minimal.
4. The ATO considers current restrictions to these sites are appropriate.