

## Senate Standing Committee on Economics

### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

31 May – 2 June 2011

Question No: BET 200

Topic: Trade Union Member

Hansard Page: 88

Senator Abetz asked:

**Senator ABETZ:** Right. There has been a degree of boasting by a particular union that they have seen a growth of 30,000 in their membership, which is interesting, but in fairness to ABS I do not think you could necessarily shed any light on that. Would you consider somebody who said they were a non-financial member as a member? Do you go into that specificity or that detail?

**Mr Harper:** I would have to take that question on notice about the detail around whether we consider somebody to be a trade union member. But even if we collected information about membership of individual unions we would never be able to publish that information, because of our confidentiality requirements. We can only publish information in the aggregate.

**Senator ABETZ:** Yes. But if people were to say that they were a member of the—to pick a random example—Australian Workers Union you would then be able to tell us how many had indicated they were members of that union, without disclosing of course who those individuals are?

**Mr Harper:** We actually would ask the question, 'Are you a member of a trade union?' and we would get a yes or no answer to that. There would not be discussion.

**Senator ABETZ:** So you do not ask what particular union. The question is just whether they consider themselves to be a member, I would assume—you do not break it up into financial or non-financial?

**Mr Harper:** I would have to take that level of detail on notice.

**Senator ABETZ:** So if you could take the membership—

**Mr Harper:** We will get back to you with the specific definition that we use in the survey.

Answer:

The ABS publication, *Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership* (ABS cat. no. 6310.0), is the only ABS source of data about trade union membership. Trade union membership within this publication is defined as:

‘Employees who are members of a trade union, not necessarily in connection with their main job’.

Data about trade union membership are collected as a response to the question, “Do you belong to a trade union in any job?”

Data are not collected about whether a respondent is a financial or non-financial member of a trade union.

Data are not collected about to which union a respondent belongs.

