

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 9 FEBRUARY 2010 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Staffing – Efficiency Dividend

Question reference number: HS40

Senator: RYAN

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 March 2010

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) Have staffing numbers been reduced as a result of the efficiency dividend and/or other budget cuts?
- b) If so, where and at what level?
- c) Are there any plans for staff reduction? If so, please advise details ie. reduction target, how this will be achieved, services/programs to be cut etc.
- d) What changes are underway or planned for graduate recruitment, cadetships or similar programs? If reductions are envisaged please explain including reasons, target numbers etc.

Answer:

Department of Human Services

- a) The Australian Government approved a new four year funding agreement with the Department of Human Services for the Child Support Program in the 2009-10 Budget. In this agreement, the funding is subject to the normal efficiency dividends, but overall, staffing numbers increased through the provision of \$239m in additional funding over the four year period.
- b) Nil (refer Part a)
- c) Any reduction of employees will be a direct result of natural attrition.
- d) The Department of Human Services is working with Medicare Australia and Centrelink to create an Integrated Department of Human Services National Graduate Program. A working group was established in January 2010, with Medicare Australia designated as the project lead.

The Department of Human Services has funding to recruit 10 graduates on this program. The recruitment process will commence in March 2010 with graduates commencing in August 2010.

The Department of Human Services in the past two years has not had a graduate program.

Centrelink

- a) Centrelink budgets are aligned with anticipated customer demand. Staffing numbers in Centrelink have reduced over the past few months in line with anticipated customer demand. Budgets, customer demand and staffing numbers are appropriately and inextricably linked. Any staffing reductions have been primarily through natural attrition.
- b) Not applicable.
- c) Staffing levels are constantly monitored and adjusted based on the level of service delivery capability needed to meet anticipated customer workloads.
- d) The only change to Centrelink's entry level programs is the integration into portfolio wide programs in line with other integration activities. There are no expected changes to staffing numbers in Centrelink's entry level programs as a result of the efficiency dividends.

Medicare Australia

- a) In the 2009–10 portfolio budget statements, there is a decrease in FTE between estimated 2008–09 actual and 2009–10 Budget. Total funding available is the net sum of all budget measures, the efficiency dividend and adjustments for movements in program-specific transaction volumes.
- b) Not applicable.
- c) Not applicable.
- d) Graduate Recruitment in Medicare Australia is being enhanced as part of a whole of portfolio approach to graduate recruitment. A new program commencing in August 2010 has been developed that encourages the development of cross-portfolio experience for graduates along with an increased investment in formal graduate education and training. Existing student traineeship and cadetship programs will continue. No changes other than efforts to increase Indigenous representation in the workforce are envisaged. No reductions in participant numbers are envisaged.