

Finance and Public Administration Legislative Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Australian Public Service Commission

Estimates 2008-09 – Budget Estimates, May 2009

Question: PM 98(a-d)

Topic: National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy

Senator Fifield asked:

- a) The Commission (the Commission) is providing training and support for disability network forums. What consultations have taken place with stakeholders in developing this training?
- b) The Budget papers state that the Commission will “absorb” the costs associated with this training and support. How will the Commission provide these services without any additional funding?
- c) How many staff from the Commission will work on the training and support?
- d) What relevant experience does the Commission have in providing support to programs like this?

Answers:

The 2009-10 Budget commitments include a role for the Australian Public Service Commission (the Commission) to contribute to outcomes under the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy (the Strategy). Specifically the Budget papers state *‘The Commission will develop training and best practice advice for agencies and managers, and establish and support disability network forums.’*

a) *The Commission is providing training and support for disability network forums. What consultations have taken place with stakeholders in developing this training?*

The Commission has already consulted with the APS Diversity Network (the Network) to include disability employment issues as a standing agenda item for its meetings and to establish a Disability Steering Group (the Steering Group) to drive the content of that agenda. The Steering Group and the Network will be the primary mechanism for determining the content and format of best practice and training requirements for APS agencies and managers. The Network currently reflects representation from approximately 30 APS agencies and membership is made up of staff with responsibility for diversity issues within their agencies.

The Commission will also continue to access other relevant APS networks such as the HR (Human Resource) Directors’ Forum, the Corporate Management Forum and the ACT Small Agencies Forum, and relevant peak bodies as required, to ensure appropriate consultation on, and awareness of, issues concerning the employment of people with a disability occurs more broadly throughout the APS.

b) *The Budget papers state that the Commission will “absorb” the costs associated with this training and support. How will the Commission provide these services without any additional funding?*

In order to meet the Budget commitment the Commission has reallocated existing work priorities and will leverage off existing internal expertise in Human Resource management, developing and promulgating better practice advice, learning and development, and disability employment issues to produce the required deliverables.

c) *How many staff from the Commission will work on the training and support?*

The staffing requirements to deliver on this commitment will vary depending on the work program that will be developed following consultations with key stakeholders. The Commission has dedicated 0.5 of an Executive Level 1 staff member to drive this commitment and intends to use existing Commission and APS staff and draw on their expertise to design, develop and deliver the necessary training and support.

d) *What relevant experience does the Commission have in providing support to programs like this?*

The Commission has strong credentials in providing support to programs such as the Strategy within the APS context. For example the Commission has carriage of implementing the *APS Employment and Capability Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employees* through which we work with agencies to support them in improving outcomes in the recruitment, retention and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. More specifically, however, the Commission has already undertaken significant work to support APS agencies to improve employment outcomes for people with a disability.

In 2006, the APS Management Advisory Committee (MAC), which is coordinated and managed by the Commission, released a report entitled *Employment of People with a Disability in the APS*. The report identified barriers to employing and retaining people with a disability in the APS, and recommended practical actions to enhance career opportunities.

The Commission has worked with key stakeholders to implement a number of initiatives arising from the MAC report including:

- the publication and promotion of *Ability at Work—Tapping the talent of people with disability* toolkit, launched by the Commission in June 2007 to support agencies in improving the way they attract, recruit, employ and retain employees with disability; and to provide an array of better practice advice, information, and training resource materials;
- the development of a companion publication entitled *Ability at Work—Working better together*, providing guidance to disability support providers and others involved in supporting employment of people with disability on pathways to employment in the APS, as well as practical advice on all aspects of APS selection processes;

- a link to the APSjobs employment portal from the website of the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator to facilitate access to APS employment opportunities to jobseekers with disability;
- a 2006 circular advising agencies about the availability of existing special employment measures for people with intellectual disability, to raise awareness and encourage their use;
- promotion of the MAC report through the Corporate Management Forum, Leadership Development Network and other Commission networks Australia-wide; and
- the Commission continues to report on trends in disability employment in the APS and to monitor agencies' progress against MAC initiatives through the annual *State of the Service Report*.

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