Outcome 3, Program 3.1
Topic: Budget Management Tool for Parliamentarians

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Senator Collins asked:

I think that relates to my earlier question, which is that you consider the new framework we are within now. If we are to be publicly accountable for detailed reporting of our costs that not only should we be informed of the parameters we are operating in those areas but also I think Senator Polley's point is quite right: the department should be considering what software we need to support us to responsibly manage those costs.
Senator Polley asked:
And training for staff.
Senator Collins asked:
Could you please take that on notice?
Senator Polley asked:
And the amount of time it takes to keep track of and checking of your management reports.

Answer:

The Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance) provides monthly management reports on entitlements usage to Senators, Members and certain former Parliamentarians. Monthly management reports are one of the tools Senators and Members have available to them to manage their expenditure and monitor budgets. Senators and Members are also able to request reports from Finance on point in time actual and budget information regarding their entitlements at any time.

Senators and Members are provided with Microsoft Excel (spreadsheet) and Microsoft Access (database) as part of their standard issue of software. Both of these tools are able to be used to create reports and monitor and track expenditure on entitlements.

Senators and Members may purchase additional software privately or using their electorate allowance, should they consider it necessary for the operation of their electorate office.

Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 (MOP(S) Act) employees have access to training in the computer systems and software applications provided by Finance. In addition to the training component of the software allowance and training provided for the standard suite of Microsoft applications, MOP(S) Act employees can access training and professional development activities that satisfy their individual development needs. Approval to attend ad hoc training and professional development activities must be sought in advance from the relevant Entitlements Manager and must have the support of the employing Senator or Member. It is open to MOP(S) Act employees to apply for ad hoc training in relation to software applications, other than those provided by Finance, used in their office.

Finance does not hold information regarding the time taken for Senators and Members to check their monthly management reports.