

**Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Finance and Administration Portfolio**

**Department of Human Services and Agencies**

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2006-2007, 31 October, 2006

**Question: HS50**

**Outcome 1, Output 1**

**Topic: Coordination of Question Time Briefing**

**Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written Question**

**SENATOR LUDWIG** asked the Minister for Human Services, upon written notice:

With regard to the preparation of Possible Parliament Questions briefs or other such documents intended to brief Minister's on an issue specifically for Question Time, could the department/agency provide:

- (1) The number of such briefs prepared in each of the last three financial years (2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06).
- (2) The number of staff who are responsible for coordinating such briefs and the salary level they are engaged at.
- (3) The name of internal unit/team that those staff belong to and a description of its other responsibilities.
- (4) The total budget associated with the unit/team referred to in response to part 3.

**Answer:**

- (1) Records held indicate that around 550 Question Time Briefs were prepared by the Department of Human Services and Human Services agencies during the period from October 2004 (when the department was created) to June 2006. An indicative breakdown by financial year is provided below.

|         |     |
|---------|-----|
| 2004-05 | 250 |
| 2005-06 | 300 |

- (2) The Department of Human Services and each of the Human Services Agencies have coordination areas that are responsible for the management of Ministerial and Parliamentary business. There are also a number of other officers within the department and agencies involved in coordination and preparation of these briefs. Given the differing nature of individual Question Time Briefs, their varying complexities and different clearance requirements in each of the Human Services agencies, it is not possible to provide the exact number and levels of staff involved in this process.

The central portfolio coordination point for Question Time Briefs is the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services section within the Department of Human Services. This section comprises seven staff; the average annual salary level of staff in this section is \$71,950.

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- (3) As noted above, the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services section within the Department of Human Services has overall responsibility for coordination of Question Time Briefs across the portfolio. This section is responsible for managing all other Ministerial and Parliamentary business (for example, coordination of all Ministerial briefs and correspondence, Cabinet matters and Parliamentary Questions).
- (4) The annual running cost of the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services section in the Department of Human Services is estimated at \$513,650. This includes salary and direct administrative costs.

To prepare this response it has taken approximately 3 hours at an estimated cost of \$176.