

Senate Finance and Public Administration Standing Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 20 October 2009 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Consultancies

Question reference number: HS75(a and b)

Senator: Scullion

Type of question: *Hansard F&PA page 117*

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 4 December 2009

Number of pages: 2

Question:

(a) **Senator SCULLION**—Well, perhaps on notice—and thank you again for that comprehensive list [of consultancy services since November 2007]—you can indicate in each case why the department or agencies could not undertake that work themselves and perhaps explain those specific talents that were not inside the department and for which you had to go outside, as well as the rationale of the project and its intended use.

Ms Hartland—Okay.

(b) **ACTING CHAIR**—Just while you are on this point, there is a table on page 223 of the annual report which covers most of these but I am just a bit confused, as you were reading it to Senator Scullion, that there is a difference between a contract price and the price you have specified. Could you include an explanation for that as well?

Ms Hartland—Yes, we can do that.

Answer:

a) A comprehensive list of the consultancy services let, to the amount of \$10,000 or more, during 2008-09 can be found in the respective annual report of each agency. The list includes the consultant's name, a description of the title and purpose of the consultancy, the contract price, the selection process and the justification.

The justification for engaging a consultant is grouped into three categories:

- A – skills currently unavailable within agency;
- B – need for specialised or professional services; and
- C – need for independent research or assessment.

The specific talents not within an agency vary across the portfolio due to the nature of their business; some examples include:

- specialised professional skills not available in-house, including:
 - specialist tax and business advice;
 - industrial relations skills;
 - market research;
 - marketing skills;
 - branding;
 - international best practice; and
 - market knowledge of IT infrastructure and software.
- external quality assurance in preparation for an audit by the ANAO;
- probity advice, as this needs to be objective and independent of the people involved; and
- independent advice for benchmarking.

b) The contract price refers to the total value over the life of the contract, whereas, the amount spent refers to the expenditure for the contract within a reporting period (in this instance the 2008-09 financial year.)