

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES 2011-2012

Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of Finance and Deregulation

Outcome/Program: 3 / 3.1

Topic: Experts who provided advice concerning plastic mats (*Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (MOP(S) Act) employees)

Senator: Ryan

Question reference number: F39

Type of question: Hansard, F&PA Committee page 70, 18 October 2011

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday, 2 December 2011

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Can you take on notice what experts you took advice from. I would appreciate the names of the experts you took advice from; the names of all companies that are involved in these ergonomic assessments, because I am assuming that there would be something in place to make sure that the people making the recommendation do not have the capacity to then benefit from the recommendation directly or indirectly; and whether or not there is any legal or regulatory requirement for this, or whether this was something that your department did of its own initiative.

Senator Abetz: Could we also have the cost of obtaining that expert advice, if that was not part of the list of questions.

Answer:

In the matter the subject of the discussion, Konekt Australia Pty Ltd (Konekt) provided advice on chair mats to Finance on 20 September 2011. Their advice was consistent with advice published by Comcare and Worksafe Victoria that *care must be taken not to provide slippery mats at desks where chairs with castors are in use.*

Konekt has been engaged by Finance to assist in the delivery of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) program for MOP(S) Act employees. The purpose of the OHS program is to provide support, risk management and safety mechanisms for MOP(S) Act employees and to comply with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* (OHS Act) and the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRC Act). One of the OHS services Konekt provides for M&PS is ergonomic assessments for MOP(S) Act employees.

The OHS Act and the SRC Act outline specific roles and responsibilities for employers and employees. Commonwealth employers have a duty under section 16 of the OHS Act to, *inter alia*, take all reasonably practicable steps to provide safe systems of work, to provide adequate facilities for the welfare of employees at work, and to ensure that workplaces are

safe and without risks to health. The SRC Act requires Commonwealth employers to take responsibility for the rehabilitation of employees with work related injuries.

Konekt is contracted to provide information, support and training to Finance, to enable it to meet its OH&S obligations to MOP(S) Act employees, including advising Finance on risk management and prevention strategies. The cost of advice on risk management and prevention strategies will vary depending on the complexity of the advice sought and the amount of research and consultation Konekt is required to undertake to ensure its accuracy and suitability for the MOP(S) Act employment environment.

In the matter the subject of the discussion, the estimated cost of an ergonomic assessment to determine the suitability of chair mats for use by employees in Senator Ryan's office is around \$550 per incidence.