

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 15-18 October 2012

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1.1 Domestic Policy

Topic: Costs for the Social Inclusion Unit

Senator: Senator Fifield

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Question:

Ms Cross: We can give you an estimate of the direct costs of the Social Inclusion Unit but, as I said, there are other resources of the department. That will not include the corporate overhead costs or the policy input of other parts of the department to work that the Social Inclusion Board is commissioning. We can give you an amount and we can build it up from the bottom, but it is a subset of the expenditure and activity and will not include those overheads.

Senator FIFIELD: Are you able to do that now?

Ms Cross: We would have to take that on notice. We have some data here on the cost of the Social Inclusion Board remuneration sitting fees, but we do not have the staff costs and we do not have in front of us the complete set of activities in the financial year.

Senator FIFIELD: Would you provide advice as to the current full-time-equivalent staffing levels, the SES bands and APS levels that are relevant and whether that \$3.3 million per year figure is a-I appreciate that it might not cover the corporate overheads, as you said, but-

Ms Cross: There has been no change in that allocation to the department but since then the department has had efficiency dividends and other things, and they are taken from the department's budget as a whole.

Senator FIFIELD: But you will take on notice, to the degree you are able to, what the cost of the Social Inclusion Unit is?

Ms Cross: Yes.

Senator FIFIELD: Recognising that there may be some additional expenditures in the department that relate to the Social Inclusion Unit, it will not be an absolute figure; it will be a conservative estimate. Is the Social Inclusion Board supported by the Social Inclusion Unit or is there a Social Inclusion Board secretariat?

Ms Cross: There is a secretariat within the unit.

Senator FIFIELD: So whatever figure you give me will include that?

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Ms Cross: Yes.

Senator FIFIELD: The costs for the Social Inclusion Board, in addition to that, would be sitting fees, or however you term it, airfares-

Ms Cross: Travel accommodation.

Senator FIFIELD: Yes. You can give me that as well?

Ms Cross: And publications. We can give you that information.

Senator FIFIELD: Are you able to tell me now how much money is spent on research and publications, or would they come from that same amount?

Ms Cross: I think we can give you the cost of developing the social inclusion report on how Australia is faring.

Senator FIFIELD: That was from a few years ago, now, wasn't it?

Ms Cross: There was a version published this year that provided an update on that data. We can probably give you that now, if you want.

Senator FIFIELD: Sure.

Answer:

- The direct cost of the Social Inclusion Unit in the 2011-12 financial year, including the cost of the Australian Social Inclusion Board, was around \$2.16 million (comprising costs of \$2.09 million for the Unit and \$77,000 for the Board). This does not include support from other Divisions and corporate overheads within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- There are currently 11 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in the Social Inclusion Unit (SIU), at Executive Level 1 and 2 and APS Level 5 and 6. The Unit is also supported by 0.5 of an SES Band 1 and 0.25 of an SES Band 2.
- The Board Secretariat is comprised of staff within the SIU and the number of staff working on secretariat tasks varies depending on requirements.
- Staff costs for the Social Inclusion Unit for 2011-2012 are estimated to be around \$1,935,243. Other direct costs of the Unit (such as flights, publications etc) for the 2011-12 Financial year are estimated to total \$157,628.29, leading to a total cost for the Unit for that financial year of around \$2.09 million.
- The Australian Social Inclusion Board (the Board) members receive sitting fees set by the Remuneration Tribunal, and are reimbursed costs related to meeting attendance. The Remuneration Tribunal reviews the remuneration annually. Currently the sitting fees are Chair; \$768 per day, Member; \$606 per day.
- Under the Remuneration Tribunal determination for Part-Time Office Holders, Board members are entitled to Business Class air travel, however a number of members, including the Chair, elect to travel economy.
- The Board sitting fees for 2011-12 were \$16,288.50. The other direct costs of the Board (such as flights, accommodation, publications etc) for 2011-12 were around \$55,700, leading to a total cost for the Board of around \$72,000.