

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Portfolio

Question No. 97

Senator Humphries asked the following question at the hearing on 16 October 2012:

Staffing reductions

Are there any plans for staff reduction? If so, please advise details including if there is a reduction target, how this will be achieved, and if any services/programs will be cut.
If there are plans for staff reductions, please give the reason why these are happening.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

Attorney-General's Department

Average staffing levels (ASL) will be reduced in 2012-13 as detailed in the 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements. The reduction to ASL will result from terminating programs and specific budget savings measures, including the one-off 2.5% Efficiency Dividend. Voluntary redundancies were offered and contracts for non-ongoing employees were not renewed beyond 30 June 2012 where appropriate.

A rigorous recruitment approval process is in place which applies to every vacancy within the department. When a vacancy arises it is to be filled from within the department if possible, prior to external recruitment action being commenced. Reductions will be achieved across the whole Department rather than in relation to specific areas, classifications, services or programs.

Australian Crime Commission

a) Yes. Any reductions in staff will, where possible, be achieved through natural attrition. The ACC operates a scalable business model and resources will continue to be allocated to the highest threat priorities.

b) ACC revenue will reduce in 2013-14 and funding for positions associated with the revenue items will cease. Some ACC costs will also increase for property, ICT and employee expenses which will impact on the ACC's budget allocations.

Australian Customs and Border Protection Service

Customs and Border Protection is anticipating achieving an average staffing level for 2012-13 of 5,100, as reported in the 2012-13 Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements. No programs or services will be ceased in achieving this target.

The reduction in staff numbers across 2012-13 will be managed, wherever possible, through natural attrition and by not backfilling vacant positions. Where voluntary redundancies are required, these will be targeted wherever possible areas of lowest business risk

These staffing reductions are necessary in order to manage the impact of the one off 2.5% efficiency dividend, the ongoing efficiency dividend, as well as other budget savings/offsets.

Australian Federal Police (AFP)

The AFP's workforce planning for 2012-13 is for an increase in AFP staff numbers.

Australian Government Solicitor

Australian Government Solicitor (AGS) is a government business enterprise operating on a commercial and competitive basis in providing legal and related services to government and its agencies. AGS does not receive any Budget or other appropriations and its employees are engaged outside of the Public Service Act 1999. The question is therefore not applicable to AGS.

Australian Human Rights Commission

The Commission has received additional funding in the 2012-13 budget for the new Children's Commissioner and the measure to counter negative age stereotyping. The Commission will need to review and where possible redeploy its current staffing resources in order to align with the new priorities and to address the effects of the efficiency dividend. In order to attain the best overall skill mix and support for the establishment of these new activities the Commission in the first instance would look to redeploy staff and then consider other options such as voluntary redundancies.

Australian Institute of Criminology

The AIC has potential staff reduction of 1–2 FTE. This is dependent upon the AIC being able to meet its external contract research income targets. Current staffing is based on specified budget level of external income generation. With the tight financial environment there are pressures on achieving this target.

Any reduction in staff will be achieved by natural attrition, potential termination of contract or redundancy depending on the positions identified.

Australian Law Reform Commission:

The ALRC has no plans for staff reduction.

Australian Security Intelligence Organisation

While overall staff growth has been deferred indefinitely ASIO will continue to recruit new intelligence professionals and technical officers within budget allocations and increase the skill-set of existing officers to meet the increasingly diverse challenges of our security environment.

In response to budgetary pressures ASIO has:

- reduced the size, but not the reach, of its overseas presence;
- reduced its foreign engagement for training and capability development purposes;
- reduced the amount of domestic and overseas travel undertaken by ASIO officers; and

- reduced its senior executive structure.

Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions

In the 2012-2013 Portfolio Budget Statements the staffing levels expected for 2012-13 is anticipated to be ASL of 504.

Reductions will be achieved across the broad range of office functions rather than in relation to specific areas, classifications, services or programs.

CrimTrac

There are no plans for staff reduction at CrimTrac at this time.

Family Court of Australia

Over recent years the court has undertaken many initiatives to reduce costs and generate efficiencies; however the court continues to face ongoing financial pressures. The court is identifying different ways to continue to provide access to justice for all litigants, including alternative approaches to the use of in-house resources and the best use of external resources.

The Minister for Finance and Deregulation has approved the court's financial deficits for the current financial year; however, there is an expectation by Government that the court does not run further deficits. We continue to work with the Attorney-General's Department and the Department of Finance and Deregulation to develop budget strategies to ensure this will be the case. Despite this, it is inevitable that there may be some staff reductions. Reducing staffing is as always, a last resort.

Federal Court of Australia

There are no plans or targets for staff reductions. There may however be a small reduction in numbers in some areas over the remainder of 2012 – 2013 which will be managed by a combination of measures including natural attrition and voluntary redundancies.

Federal Magistrates Court of Australia

Over recent years the court has undertaken many initiatives to reduce costs and generate efficiencies; however the court continues to face ongoing financial pressures. The court is identifying different ways to continue to provide access to justice for all litigants, including alternative approaches to the use of in-house resources and the best use of external resources.

The Minister for Finance and Deregulation has approved the court's financial deficits for the current financial year; however, there is an expectation by Government that the court does not run further deficits. We continue to work with the Attorney-General's Department and the Department of Finance and Deregulation to develop budget strategies to ensure this will be the case. Despite this, it is inevitable that there may be some staff reductions. Reducing staffing is as always, a last resort.

National Native Title Tribunal

The National Native Title Tribunal has no specific plans for further staff reductions in 2012-13. The agency will continue to monitor staffing throughout 2012-13 to ensure staffing levels are commensurate with the funding provided as a sub-program of the Federal Court.

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC)

The OAIC is considering a range of measures to ensure it maintains a balanced budget, and these could include reducing staff numbers. If any reduction in staff numbers is necessary, the OAIC would endeavour to achieve this through attrition.