

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Budget Estimates February 2010
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question No.: CORP 01

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Alterations of October 2009 Supplementary Senate Estimates Questions

Hansard Page/s: 6 (09/02/10)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Well, Mr Mrdak, I was very angry with your department, but I see my anger was misplaced. Your department has obviously done its job. Can you tell me how many of the answers submitted by the department to the minister came back with alterations required?

Mr Mrdak—I do not have that information.

Senator Conroy—We will have to take that on notice.

Mr Mrdak—I do not have that information, Senator.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—You would not have the notice in exact terms, but were there a lot, a few?

Mr Mrdak—I think—

Senator Conroy—We will take that on notice so that we can give that an accurate answer, Senator Macdonald.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—No, I am not after an accurate answer, thanks, Minister. Just an approximation will do. Is it a lot?

Senator Conroy—We would prefer to give accurate answers, Senator Macdonald, so we will take that on notice.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—You are here to answer questions, not indicate your preferences.

CHAIR—The minister has said he will take it on notice.

Senator Conroy—We said we will take it on notice.

Answer:

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Question No.: CORP 02

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Public Notices

Hansard Page/s: 9-10 (09/02/10)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Can you give me details of the public notice advertising?

Mr Mrdak—Senator, the government has laid out very extensive guidelines in the definition of the term ‘advertising’ and has put in place guidelines since 2008 which set out a very defined definition and a process for approval of government advertising. I am happy to take on notice the amount of public notices that the department has published, but they are not advertising. They are notices in relation to regulatory changes, or where there are discussion papers and the like, seeking public comment. But I would not in any way characterise them as advertising in accordance with the definitions of the government’s guidelines.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Thank you, Mr Mrdak, but can I have details on that for 2007-08 and 2008-09, please? Can I update the question on marketing for 2008-09 on just what was spent on public notice advertising as well?

Mr Mrdak—Yes, Senator.

Answer:

\$92,657.11 (GST Exclusive) 2007-08

\$162,573.61 (GST Exclusive) 2008-09

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Question No.: CORP 03

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Minister's Office Pot Plants

Hansard Page/s: 10 (09/02/10)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Mr Mrdak, how many pot plants in the minister's office?

Mr Mrdak—I am not aware there are any, Senator, but I am happy to take that on notice.

Senator Conroy—We will do a headcount for you.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Could you take on notice how many pot plants are in the minister's office, what is the cost—

Mr Mrdak—I do not believe there are any, Senator, that are publicly funded, but I will check that.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Well, that would be unusual.

Senator Conroy—By the department.

Mr Mrdak—By the department. Sorry. I do not believe there any the department has—

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Okay. That would be unusual, and very frugal if that is the case, but could you take on notice are there any pot plants paid for by the department and, if so, can you give us the financial details of those?

Answer:

There are 11 pot plants in the Minister's Parliament House Office which are paid for by the Department at a cost of \$119.10 (GST inclusive) per month for their hire and maintenance.

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Question No.: CORP 04

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Hospitality

Hansard Page/s: 10-11 (09/02/10)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Thank you. Can you tell me what the department and the minister's office spend—

Senator Conroy—We know there is a pot plant in your office.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—on hospitality for the year to date, and can you detail the date, location, purpose and cost of those events? And for each minister and parliamentary secretary's office, could you detail the total hospitality spend for the year to date and, again, giving me the detail—date, location, purpose and the cost—of those events?

Mr Mrdak—Certainly, Senator. I think there have been answers provided on notice to those questions.

Senator Conroy—Absolutely. They get tabled every six months. Publicly.

Mr Mrdak—I will check the detail, Senator, of that.

Answer:

For the 2009-10 financial year to 31 December 2009 the Department spent \$42,120.67 (GST exclusive) on hospitality for departmental and non-departmental officers. Of this total, \$100.12 (GST exclusive) was spent on hospitality for Parliamentary Secretary McKew's Office.

The Department does not record the location and purpose of those events in its Financial Management Information System.

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Question No.: CORP 05

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Recruitment

Hansard Page/s: 11 (09/02/10)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Okay. Thank you. I would appreciate that. You mentioned before about your rearrangement of staffing. Can you tell me what is the permanent staff recruited since the last estimates and the level of those staff?

Mr Mrdak—I will get that information for you, Senator. It is a relatively small number. The department has been going through a restructure and a reduction in resourcing, as with all Commonwealth agencies, and there would be very few permanent appointments been made. But I will take that on notice.

Answer:

Since the last estimates the Department has recruited 55 ongoing employees.

The level of staff recruited during this period consisted of: one Senior Executive Band 3; one Senior Executive Band 1; three Executive Level 2; two Executive Level 1; nine APS Level 6; eight APS Level 5; two APS Level 4 and 29 APS Level 3 employees (as participants of the 2010 Graduate Development Program).

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Question No.: CORP 06

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Community Cabinet

Hansard Page/s: 12 (09/02/10)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Thank you for that. Do you have details of the cost of ministers' travel and expenses of community cabinet meetings, so far as your department is concerned? Do they involve many departmental officials travelling with the minister?

Mr Mrdak—No. Generally, either myself or one of my deputies will accompany the minister at community cabinet, but since my time in the portfolio I think we have had one additional officer attend a community cabinet meeting. But apart from that, no, generally just myself or a senior executive will attend with the minister.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Could you, on notice, give me details of the costs of travel and otherwise of yourself and whoever else from the department goes? If you have ministerial costs that are paid for by the department, could we have a look at those, too, please?

Mr Mrdak—Certainly. We do not meet any of the ministerial costs. They are met through the normal provisions of ministerial officers by the Department of Finance and Deregulation.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Thank you for that. Could you let me know what it costs the department.

Answer:

The cost to the Department of the executives who attended the Community Cabinet Meetings held since the October 2009 Supplementary Estimates Hearings is:

Location/Date	Departmental Executive Attended	Cost
Adelaide, SA 20 January 2010	Mike Mrdak, Secretary	\$1,807
Townsville, QLD 8 December 2009	Lyn O'Connell, Deputy Secretary	\$2,679
Bathurst, NSW 9 November 2009	Andrew Wilson, Acting Deputy Secretary	\$389

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Question No.: CORP 07

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Major Cities Unit Budget

Hansard Page/s: 17 (09/02/10)

Senator Williams asked:

Senator WILLIAMS—Senator Conroy is not interjecting or pinning my ears back, so we will move on. According to the May 2009 estimates the unit has an annual budget of \$1 million. We have been into that. What is the breakdown of this? How much were wages, administration, et cetera? Do you know that?

Mr Deegan—I will get that for you. There are four staff engaged and I will get the breakdown for you.

Answer:

Employee Expenses	\$598,965
Supplier Expenses	\$401,035

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Question No.: CORP 08

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Rosebery Office

Hansard Page/s: 19 (09/02/10)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—Has the department occupied premises in Sydney before?

Mr Banham—We have offices at Rosebery.

Senator NASH—And what is the cost per square metre out there?

Mr Banham—I do not have that information. I can get that to you, Senator.

Answer:

The cost per square metre is \$270.44. The Rosebery office, subleased from the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service located in an industrial area adjacent to Sydney Airport, provides suitable accommodation for the operational requirements of the Department's Office of Transport Security and Airport Environment Protection and Building Control Office.

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Question No.: CORP 09

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Infrastructure Australia Rental Adjustments and Reviews

Hansard Page/s: 21 (09/02/10)

Senator Abetz asked:

Senator ABETZ—What is the uplift factor in the seven-year contract lease per annum? Is it CPI or a centenary house type lease, nine per cent per annum irrespective of CPI?

Mr Banham—My understanding is it is four per cent. I will get back and correct myself—

Senator ABETZ—Irrespective of market movements?

Mr Banham—There would be a rent review midway through the lease, which would adjust things if the market has moved.

Senator ABETZ—Please let us know what the annual increase is and when the rent review is to take place.

Answer:

Annual increase is fixed at 4.5%. Rent review is to take place on 1 July 2010.

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Question No.: CORP 10

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Infrastructure Australia Staff Costs

Hansard Page/s: 26 (09/02/10)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—The 2008-09 PBS said that the department would provide staff from 2008-09 to assist you. Is it 17 staff including you?

Mr Deegan—It is 16 staff, plus one secondee who is paid for the capital city lord mayors.

Senator NASH—And what is the overall cost of those 16 staff?

Mr Deegan—I will get that for you.

Senator NASH—Could you take that on notice for me?

Mr Deegan—Yes.

Answer:

Overall cost of 16 staff is \$2,047,665.

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Question No.: CORP 11

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Staffing (including portfolio agencies) SES and Non-SES

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. What is the total expenditure on staffing for the Department and for all portfolio agencies? What is the SES and non-SES breakdown?
2. What are the current staffing levels for SES and non-SES officers? What is the breakdown by location?
3. What have been the changes in ASL since November 2007? Why have these changes occurred? What have been the Budgetary implications?
4. In the case of reductions in staff numbers, how have these reductions been absorbed by the Department? What functions have been sacrificed and why?
5. Has there been a target for staff reductions to achieve savings? What is that target and what strategy is being implemented to achieve this?
6. Have any voluntary or involuntary redundancies been offered to staff? If so, how have staff been identified for such offers? Are there such plans for the future?

Answer:

1. Information on staffing expenditure for the Department and each portfolio agency is contained in their annual report.
2. A breakdown of staffing levels is contained in the annual report.
3. The change in ASL from November 2007 is a reduction of 30.57 ASL. As at 30 November 2007 total ASL was 1,130.95. At 1 July 2009 the Australian Transport Safety Bureau became an independent statutory agency. No budgetary implications.
4. Minimal changes in staff numbers managed as part of normal business operations.
5. No.
6. Yes, 60 voluntary redundancies and one involuntary redundancy have been accepted since November 2007. These employees were identified at an Executive level as being excess to the Department's operational requirements in the specific location. There are no plans to offer voluntary or involuntary redundancies to staff in the future.

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Question No.: CORP 12

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Election commitments

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. What is the status of each election commitment within the portfolio?
2. Which election commitments are experiencing slippages? Why? Where relevant, what are the revised implementation dates? What are the implications of this slippage?

Answer:

1 - 2. The Government is committed to meeting all its election commitments.

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Question No.: CORP 13

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Consultancies

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. How much has the Department spent on consultancy services since November 2007?
How can the department justify this expenditure?
2. Could the Department provide a complete list of current consultancy services. For each consultancy, please indicate the rationale for the project and its intended use. For each consultancy, please indicate why the Department or its agencies could not have undertaken the work themselves.

Answer:

1. Departmentally contracted consultancy services have been reported on AusTender and details are available on the website.
2. The primary requirements for the Department engaging consultants are:
 - Need for independent research or assessment; or
 - Need for specialised or professional skills; or
 - Skills currently unavailable within agency.

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Question No.: CORP 14

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Departmental advertising and marketing expenditure/contracts

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. How much has the Department spent on advertising and marketing since November 2007? Ask for justification of expenditure.
2. Could the Department provide a complete list of current contracts? Please indicate the rationale for each service provided and its intended use.

Answer:

1. All details in relation to advertising and marketing are contained in the Department's Annual Report.
2. No contracts are held by the Department for advertising or marketing services.

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Question No.: CORP 15

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Discretionary Grants

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

Could the Department provide a list of all discretionary grants, including ad hoc and one-off grants since November 2007? Please provide details of the recipients, the intended use of the grants and what locations have benefited from the grants.

Answer:

All grants under the Commonwealth Grants Guidelines are tabled in Parliament in accordance with Senate Order 192 and are available on the Department's website.

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Question No.: CORP 16

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Commissioned Reports

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. How many Reports have been commissioned by the Government in the infrastructure portfolio since November 2007?
2. Please provide details of each report including date commissioned, date report handed to Government, date of public release, Terms of Reference and Committee members.
3. How much did each report cost? How many departmental staff were involved in each report and at what level?
4. What is the current status of each report? When is the Government intending to respond to these reports?

Answer:

1. 12.
2. Information concerning reports commissioned by the Government is on the Department's website.
3. Reports were funded from within existing departmental resources. Preparation of these reports was conducted by existing departmental staff.
4. Completed reports are available on the Department's website following release by government. Responses are available on the Department's website, as appropriate.

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Question No.: CORP 17

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Staffing – permanent and temporary (including contractors) since the 2009 Supplementary Budget Estimates

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Barnett asked:

In relation to staffing:

1. How many permanent staff recruited since the supplementary budget estimates?
2. What level are these staff?
3. How many temporary positions exist or have been created since budget estimates?
4. Since supplementary budget estimates, how many employees have been employed on contract and what is the average length of their employment period?

Answer:

1. & 2. See response to CORP 05.
3. Positions are not identified as temporary. Contractors and non-ongoing staff are engaged as business priorities necessitate.
4. Since Supplementary Budget Estimates to 1 February 2010, 34 contractors have been employed through the Department's contractor panel arrangement with the average length of contract being 14.6 weeks.

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Question No.: CORP 18

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Budget cuts/efficiency dividend effects on staffing and future plans

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Barnett asked:

In relation to budget cuts/the efficiency dividend:

1. Have staffing numbers been reduced as a result of the efficiency dividend and/or other budget cuts?
2. If so, where and at what level?
3. Are there any plans for staff reduction? If so, please advise details ie. reduction target, how this will be achieved, services/programs to be cut etc.
4. What changes are underway or planned for graduate recruitment, cadetships or similar programs? If reductions are envisaged please explain including reasons, target numbers etc.

Answer:

1. No.
2. N/A.
3. No planned reduction.
4. It is expected that in 2011 graduate recruitment levels will be maintained at current levels.

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Question No.: CORP 19

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Communication programs advertising expenditure

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Barnett asked:

In relation to Government advertising:

1. What communications programs has the Department/Agency undertaken, or are planning to undertake?
2. For each program, what is the total spend?

Answer:

1. The Department has no planned communication programs.
2. N/A.

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Question No.: CORP 20

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Hospitality expenditure FYTD (Department and Minister/Parliamentary Secretaries offices)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Barnett asked:

In relation to hospitality expenditure:

1. What is the Department's hospitality spend FYTD?
2. Please detail date, location, purpose and cost of all events.
3. For each Minister/Par Sec's office, please detail total hospitality spend FYTD.
4. Please detail date, location, purpose and cost of each event.

Answer:

Refer to CORP 04.

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Question No.: CORP 21

Division/Agency: Corporate Services
Topic: Appointments (Department and agencies)
Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Barnett asked:

In relation to board appointments:

1. What is the gender ratio on each board and across the portfolio?

Answer:

As at 9 April 2010

Board	Total members	Male	Female
Airservices Australia	8	6 (75%)	2 (25%)
Australian Maritime Safety Authority	8	8 (100%)	-
Australian Transport Safety Bureau	3	2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)
Australian Rail Track Corporation	6	5 (83.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Civil Aviation Safety Authority	4	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
International Air Services Commission	3 (1 vacant)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Infrastructure Australia	12	10 (83.3%)	2 (16.7%)
National Transport Commission	5	4 (80%)	1 (20%)

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Question No.: CORP 22

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Freedom of Information (FOI) requests

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Barnett asked:

In relation to freedom of information requests:

1. Has the Department/agency received any advice on how to respond to FOI requests?
2. How many FOI requests has the Department received?
3. How many have been granted or denied?
4. How many conclusive certificates have been issued in relation to FOI requests?

Answer:

1. No.
2. & 3. All details in relation to FOI requests are contained in the Department's Annual report.
4. None.

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Question No.: CORP 23

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Community Cabinet costings (Minister's Office and Department) since Budget Estimates

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Barnett asked:

In relation to Community Cabinets:

1. What was the cost of Ministers travel and expenses for the Community Cabinet meetings held since Budget Estimates?
2. How many Ministerial Staff and Departmental officers travelled with the Minister for the Cabinet meeting?
3. What was the total cost of this travel?
4. What was the total cost to the Department and the Ministers office?

Answer:

1. The Department does not meet any of the ministerial costs.
2. The number of the staff who attended the Community Cabinet Meetings held since Budget Estimate Hearings is:

Location/Date	Number of Departmental Staff Attended
Adelaide, SA 20 January 2010	1
Townsville, QLD 8 December 2009	1
Bathurst, NSW 9 November 2009	1
Hobart, TAS 13 October 2009	1
Geraldton, WA 1 October 2009	1
Port Macquarie, NSW 25 August 2009	1
Elizabeth, SA 28 July 2009	1
Beenleigh, QLD 30 June 2009	1

3. \$14,206 travel and accommodation.
4. Total cost to the Department \$14,206.

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Question No.: CORP 24

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Status of Reviews - Department and agencies (including planned reviews for 2009-10 Financial Year)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Barnett asked:

In relation to Departmental reviews:

1. How many Reviews are currently being undertaken in the portfolio/agency or affecting the portfolio agency?
2. When will each of these reviews be concluded?
3. Which Reviews have been completed since Budget Estimates?
4. When will the Government be responding to the respective reviews that have been completed?
5. What is the total number of Reviews *both completed and ongoing* in the portfolio/agency or affecting the portfolio agency since November 2007?
6. What is the estimated cost of these Reviews?
7. What further reviews are planned for 2009 - 10 FY?

Answer:

1. One.
2. June 2011.
3. & 4. Six Reviews have been completed. The Government has responded to three of the Reviews.
5. Nine.
6. Reviews were funded from within departmental resources.
7. Satellite Based Augmentation System.

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Question No.: CORP 25

Division/Agency: Corporate Services

Topic: Status of Consultancies since November 2007 (including planned consultancies Calendar Year)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Barnett asked:

In relation to consultancies:

1. How many consultancies have been undertaken or are underway since November 2007? Please identify the name of the consultant, the subject matter of the consultancy, the duration and cost of the arrangement, and the method of procurement (ie. open tender, direct source, etc). Please also include total value for all consultancies.
2. How many consultancies are planned for this calendar year? Have these been published in your Annual Procurement Plan (APP) on the AusTender website and if not why not? In each case please identify the subject matter, duration, cost and method of procurement as above, and the name of the consultant if known.

Answer:

Refer to CORP 13.