

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: MS 01

Division/Agency: Management Services

Topic: Savings

Hansard Page: 9 (26/05/08)

Senator McGauran asked:

Senator McGAURAN—You mentioned that shiftwork was another area where you were going to save. What is the estimated saving, and can you explain what you mean by that?

Mr Pahl—Senator McGauran, when we last met I was talking about the automation of timesheets for shiftworkers. There was a product called Timekeeper, which we are progressively rolling out across the full range of our shift workforce. This will replace a paper based system that requires people to fill in their sheets and fax them in and so on. We expect that by automating this arrangement we will make fairly significant savings. I do not have the number off the top of my head, but again I would be more than happy to see if we cannot get that number for you in the course of the morning. But we do see better use of automation as a way forward in terms of making the appropriate savings to meet the efficiency dividend costs.

Answer:

We estimate a gross saving of \$1.6 million in 2008/09. The net saving will be slightly less due to Timekeeper implementation costs.

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Question: MS 02

Division/Agency: Management Services

Topic: Staff Information

Hansard Page: 12 (26/05/08)

Senator Scullion asked:

Senator SCULLION—Again, thank you for your comprehensive answer on that matter. As you said, there have been some small numbers of staff changes. I wonder if you would be able to provide those changes to me on notice. In addition to the information provided with regard to the 211 members of staff who are employed on a contract, could you also provide the average length of their employment period?

In addition to that, you may want to provide for me information on the base and top-level salaries of APS levels 1 to 6 officers, executive-level officers and senior executive service officers and the equivalent officers employed. I do not want those details at the moment; it is clearly a question on notice, and I would appreciate your getting back to me. I would like it in the same sort of format. In fact, I would like to make it a standard question on notice and then you will know to provide estimates with an appreciation of the staffing in one answer, just for the benefit of time.

The fourth question is: how many officers are employed at an executive and SES level? As I said, you can provide those on notice or, if you can, you may even get back to us here—we will be here until Thursday. So if you can get back to this committee before then it would be very useful, but if you cannot I would understand.

Mr Pahl—Sure. Some of that I think we can get back to you in good time to facilitate these hearings, but there might be components that I just will not be able to deliver on.

Senator SCULLION—I do appreciate that.

Mr Pahl—So if you are happy to take a part answer and then the remainder on notice—

Senator SCULLION—That would be appreciated.

Answer:

The average length of service for the 211 non-ongoing (contracted) staff was 1.08 years. Of these the average length of service for fulltime staff was 1.09 years and for part-time staff 1.04 years.

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The base and top level salaries of the APS, Executive Level and SES officers are listed in the table below.

Salary Maximum & Minimum including Retention and AWA salaries

APS Group	Maximum	Minimum
GAA/APS Trainee	42998	21247
APS Group 1	37866	35412
APS Group 2	42998	40848
APS Group 3	56916	45284
APS Group 4	68116	41447
APS Group 5	68481	54469
APS Group 6	88989	61095
APS Group 7	91040	76504
APS Group 8	137952	89039
SES	215500	125000

The number of staff at Executive and SES levels as at 30/4/2008 were:

Headcount

Classification	EL 1	EL 2	SES 1	SES 2	SES 3	Grand Total
Total	574	506	75	19	4	1178

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Question: MS 03

Division/Agency: Management Services

Topic: Staff Information

Hansard Page: 12 (26/05/08)

Senator Scullion asked:

Senator SCULLION—Again, you may be able to get back on these in a short period of time: I have a number of other questions with regard to staff. How many permanent staff have been recruited since 26 November and what level are those staff? How many temporary positions now exist or have been created since that date—that is, 26 November? Since that date, how many employees have been employed on contract and what is the average length of their employment period? If you can take the same approach as you have in response to the other questions, I know that you will provide what you can whilst we are still in session until Thursday, and I will accept that what you cannot provide by Thursday you will provide to me on notice.

Answer:

Part A:

The number of ongoing (permanent) staff who commenced employment between 26 November 2007 and 30 April 2008 was 310. A breakdown by classification appears below:

APS Equivalent Grouping	DAFF Band and Level	Grand Total
Trainees	Band 1 Level 1	17
Graduates	Band 1 Level 2	55
APS Group 2	Band 1 Level 2	112
APS Group 3	Band 1 Level 3	26
	Meat Inspector 1	7
APS Group 4	Band 1 Level 4	17
APS Group 5	Band 2 Level 5	12
APS Group 6	Band 2 Level 2 Sci	1
	Band 2 Level 2 Vet	3
	Band 2 Level 6	17
APS Group 7	Band 3 Level 3 Sci	1
	Band 3 Level 7	20
APS Group 8	Band 3 Level 3 Vet	3
	Band 3 Level 4 Sci	1
	Band 3 Level 4 Vet	1
	Band 3 Level 5 Sci	2
	Band 3 Level 8	9
	Band 3 Level 9	1
APS Group 9	SES 1	4
APS Group 10	SES 2	1
Grand Total		310

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Part B:

The number of non-ongoing (temporary) staff who commenced employment between 26 November 2007 and 30 April 2008 was 141.

The number of casual staff who commenced employment between 26 November 2007 and 30 April 2008 was 12.

The total number of non-ongoing (temporary) staff employed as at 30 April 2008 was 222.

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Question: MS 04

Division/Agency: Management Services

Topic: Efficiency Dividend

Hansard Page: 17 (26/05/08)

Senator Scullion asked:

Senator SCULLION—We have had a number of people talk to you about the efficiency dividend. I understand you have provided Senator McGauran with some answers. It is a difficult way to say ‘question on notice’, because I understand that for some of the remaining 7.5 million you are not in a position to say, ‘Look, these are where we are going to find our efficiencies, Senator,’ and I appreciate that. Rather than waiting until the next set of estimates to ask the question ‘How did you go with your 7.5 million efficiency dividend,’ would you be able to provide that to the committee? It may be an innovative way to supply the Senate with information, but when you have that information—hopefully it will be between now and the next set of estimates—would you be able to provide that to the committee?

Dr O’Connell—It is probably worth explaining: in a sense we do not differentiate the requirement there to look at the efficiency dividend from all of the rest of the planning for our budget. Essentially, what we have now is our budget allocation for 2008-09. We know where we have got to live, if you like, and we will go through a process which will plan to do that. We intend to do that so that we start the financial year flying. But there will not be a particular element there where we will say, ‘Ah, this is how we have managed the efficiency dividend.’ Rather we will say, ‘We’ve got our budget and now we’ll live within our budget.’ We can certainly explain when we have our budget planned how we have done that, but if you are looking for—

Senator SCULLION—When would you reasonably expect to be in that position? I am trying to be fair dinkum with you. There is no point asking a question if you are not able to provide an answer for it. I will put the question on notice. \$7.5 million in terms of efficiency dividends: are you able to provide those issues that you have done at the moment? If you can be more fulsome by providing that information as you make a decision, for instance, when you say, ‘There are some other ones,’ would you be able to provide that to the committee? I think that would be a very useful process.

Answer:

The department takes the amount of the efficiency dividend into account in determining internal budget allocations and the total amount of funds available each year. Some initiatives can be specifically identified such as further automation of payroll functions and more efficient travel arrangements. The department has initiated a review of support services which will examine the introduction of more efficient support services across a broad range of activities such as human resource management, financial management, communications, public affairs, publications and internet functions. Departmental divisions are also asked to live within reduced allocations to ensure that the total budget envelope is not exceeded. Program

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managers are asked to administer their programs in the most efficient manner and to minimise any elements of discretionary expenditure.

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Question: MS 05

Division/Agency: Management Services

Topic: Program cuts

Hansard Page: 18 (26/05/08)

Senator Scullion asked:

Senator SCULLION—Perhaps I should spin the question the other way: do you anticipate any cuts to programs from the \$32.5 million?

Dr O’Connell—I would have to take that on notice, but at the moment, no, this is departmental funding and so it is adjustments to our expenditure to do the job.

Answer:

No, the \$32.5 million is a net reduction in departmental funding and will not affect program funding.

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Question: MS 06

Division/Agency: Management Services

Topic: Modelling to estimate effect on industry

Hansard Page: 22 (26/05/08)

Senator Scullion asked:

Senator SCULLION—Thank you. Perhaps to Dr O’Connell just a general question on notice: what modelling has been done to estimate the effect on industry from any cuts that will be provided in programs or as a consequence of administrative cuts? Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Answer:

There has been no modelling to estimate the effect on industry from any of the funding reductions.

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Question: MS 07

Division/Agency: Management Services

Topic: Printer cartridges

Hansard Page: 94 (27/05/08)

Senator Milne asked:

Senator MILNE—Could you come back to me with some more specific information about reuse, because my understanding is that those new chips on those cartridges actually are activated to make sure that they cannot be refilled, that the manufacturers have now stopped people being able to refill them. I would really be interested to know what percentage you are now refilling and whether that is a drop in percentage because of the chips being activated to prevent refilling.

Mr Pahl—I will come back on that if I could.

Senator MILNE—Thank you.

Answer:

The department is a member of the Group 8 outsourcing arrangement with Volante who in turn uses Lexmark to provide the majority of our printing devices. We have sought clarification on the matter of printer chipping and reuse, and understand that in the case of Lexmark, there are a number of consumable options. Options include:

1. Standard Cartridge with no return commitment.
 - In the case of the Standard cartridges they are not chipped and can be refilled by any party for subsequent reuse.
2. Return Program Cartridge with a return commitment.
 - Where printer cartridges are returned they undergo a reuse / remanufacturing process up to five times. Thereafter the cartridges are broken down and used in recycling programs with a 0% land-fill guarantee from Planet Ark.

In regard to the percentage of cartridges being refilled, the department holds no records.

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Question: MS 08

Division/Agency: Management Services

Topic: Programs, initiatives and undertakings of Rudd Government

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

In relation to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and agencies within its responsibility, please answer the following questions in relation to each of the Federal seats of Banks, Lowe, Bennelong, Macquarie, Cunningham, Throsby, Barton, Watson, Charlton and Werriwa:

- What programs, initiatives or other undertakings of the Howard Government will be maintained under the Rudd Government?
- What programs, initiatives or other undertakings of the Howard Government will be reversed under the Rudd Government?
- What new programs, initiatives or other undertakings will be allocated to these seats under the Budget?

Answer:

The Government has made various decisions, including in the Budget context, about the establishment of new programs and initiatives, and changes and terminations to existing programs and initiatives. These are detailed in Portfolio Budget Statements, including for the Department of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Programs in the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio are not implemented or allocated differentially on the basis of Federal electorates and it is therefore not possible to answer this question.