

Senate Economics References Committee

Inquiry into the future of Australia's automotive industry

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Department of Human Services staff at the General Motors Holden plant in Elizabeth

Question reference number: SERC150415 – HS 1

Member: Senator Carr

Type of question: Hansard page 37

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator KIM CARR: As I understand it, General Motors Holden has set up facilities on site in the head office. Is that right? This is at the Elizabeth plant.

Ms Ryan: Yes, that is my understanding.

Senator KIM CARR: And you provided self-service terminals in those plants?

Ms Ryan: Correct. That is right. But we do have staff there as well.

Senator KIM CARR: How many staff do you have there?

Ms Ryan: My understanding is that we have two financial service officers and two child support officers there.

Senator KIM CARR: How many other officers do you have to assist with various payments?

Answer:

The Department of Human Services operates a national service delivery footprint that includes a network of Service Centres, a nationally networked telephony service and a range of online services to provide information, support and assistance to people, including those who are facing redundancy or retrenchment.

Once the department is notified that a company intends to retrench more than 15 staff as per section 530 of the *Fair Work Act 2009*, contact is made with the company to provide information regarding the services that the department may be able to offer. This information may include:

- information on how to contact the department;
- information from the department's website relating to redundancy and payments that may be available to affected workers; and
- information on other support that may be available, such as referrals to Employment Services assistance.

Depending on the circumstances of the retrenchments and at the request of the company, tailored services may also be provided by the department.

Consequently, at the request of General Motors Holden, four staff from the department were located onsite at the Holden Transition Centre at the Elizabeth plant for several days to provide information, support and answer general enquiries for General Motors Holden workers.

General Motors Holden requested the department's continuing presence at the Transition Centre to support workers and their families over the next 18 months as more employees are made redundant. The department has worked with General Motors Holden to establish three self-service terminals in the Transition Centre. Departmental staff will be able to provide personalised services linking employees and their families through myGov services and smartphone applications. In addition, the local Service Zone has established a part-time outreach service at the site. It is expected that supply chain company employees will also use the Transition Centre in the future.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Services provided at the Toyota plant in Altona

Question reference number: SERC150415 – HS 2

Member: Senator Carr

Type of question: Hansard page 38

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator KIM CARR: Do you provide special facilities at the Toyota plant?

Answer:

As discussed in the answer to HS 1, the Department of Human Services operates a national service delivery footprint that includes a network of Service Centres, a nationally networked telephony service and a range of online services to provide information, support and assistance to people including those who are facing redundancy or retrenchment. Depending on the circumstances of the retrenchments and at the request of the company, tailored services may also be provided by the department.

Consequently, at the request of Toyota, the department provided information packs to the Altona Toyota plant. The information pack included redundancy fact sheets and products, including a guide to Victorian and Australian Government assistance. The packs also included information on how to access services provided by the department.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Services provided at the Ford plant in Broadmeadows

Question reference number: SERC150415 – HS 3

Member: Senator Carr

Type of question: Hansard page 38

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator KIM CARR: Let's turn to Broadmeadows. What do you provide in Broadmeadows at the Ford plant?

Ms Ryan: It would be a similar service as to what I have described.

Senator KIM CARR: At General Motors?

Ms Ryan: At General Motors.

Senator KIM CARR: Can you take that on notice?

Ms Ryan: Yes, I can. I can probably provide you with much more detail about what services we do and do not offer

Answer:

As discussed in the answer to HS 1, the Department of Human Services operates a national service delivery footprint that includes a network of Service Centres, a nationally networked telephony service and a range of online services to provide information, support and assistance to people, including those who are facing redundancy or retrenchment. Depending on the circumstances of the retrenchments and at the request of the company, tailored services may also be provided by the department.

Consequently, at the request of Ford Australia, the department provided information packs to the Broadmeadows plant. The information pack included redundancy fact sheets and products, including a guide to Victorian and Australian Government assistance. The packs also included information on how to access services provided by the department.

In addition, in April 2014 the department participated in a Jobs Fair for employees located at the Broadmeadows Ford plant. The Jobs Fair was organised by the Ford Transition Committee with over 60 exhibitors present including local employers, financial and banking services, training providers and state government organisations.

Further Jobs Fairs are planned for 2016 and the department intends to participate in these arrangements again.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Facilities provided for companies on the ATS

Question reference number: SERC150415 – HS 4

Member: Senator Carr

Type of question: Hansard page 38

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator KIM CARR: There are 122 companies currently registered and 57 have recently deregistered on the ATS. What facilities are you providing to those individual companies? Do you know who they are?

Ms Ryan: I do not personally know who they are.

Senator KIM CARR: Does the department know who they are?

Ms Ryan: It will come down to whether or not they have formally provided the department under the Fair Work Act with a notice of intention to make a number of workers redundant. I would have to go back to see whether or not we have been advised about that.

Answer:

The Department of Human Services is not notified when a company registers or deregisters on the Automotive Transformation Scheme (ATS).

However, as discussed in the answer to HS 1, where a company formally notifies the department under section 530 of the *Fair Work Act 2009* to retrench more than 15 staff, contact is made with the company to provide information regarding services that the department may be able to offer.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Contact with the Department of Industry –South Australia

Question reference number: SERC150415 – HS 5

Member: Senator Carr

Type of question: Hansard page 39

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator KIM CARR: Thank you. Ms Ryan, has your department had any contact with the department of industry about the effects of this shutdown?

Ms Ryan: I personally have not had that contact, but I understand that other areas within the department have.

Senator KIM CARR: Who?

Ms Ryan: At the Victorian—

Senator KIM CARR: At the state office?

Ms Ryan: At the state office level, yes.

Senator KIM CARR: So they have taken responsibility for the national closure or just the Victorian closure?

Ms Ryan: I beg your pardon, no. It is just the Victorian closure, not—

Senator KIM CARR: Who in South Australia deals with the department of industry?

Answer:

The Department of Human Services is actively engaged with other federal, state and municipal governments and non-government services to help people, families and communities impacted by company closures. Depending on the circumstances this may be managed at a national or state level depending on the nature, scale and impact of redundancies to ensure the timely delivery of tailored assistance to businesses and workers.

The department is represented on the South Australian State Government's Automotive Workers in Transition Regional Coordination Committee and the Northern Adelaide Local Response Group to Automotive Workers in Transition forum. The Department of Industry is also represented at these forums. The department also meets regularly with the Department of Industry, the Department of Employment and the South Australian Department for State Development to discuss the broader impact of company closures, including opportunities to provide financial information and other support services and advice to workers made redundant.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Estimates of impact on Social Security Payments

Question reference number: SERC150415 – HS 6

Member: Senator Xenophon

Type of question: Hansard page 41

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator XENOPHON: On notice—and this is to Ms Halbert and Ms Ryan—have there been any projections, estimates, made in respect of the likely additional impact on social security payments as a result of the original equipment manufacturers leaving this country by the end of 2017? I would be very interested to hear that—I dare say Senator Carr would as well—in terms of how that balances up against the ongoing assistance that was due to be given to the industry.

Answer:

The Treasury in consultation with Department of Social Services and the Department of Finance determine and review social security expenditure throughout the Budget process.

The Department of Human Services does not have any information on how future social security expenditure may be impacted.

This question should be referred to the Department of Social Services as it has policy responsibility for social security payments.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Measuring the impact of services

Question reference number: SERC150415 – HS 7

Member: Senator Canavan

Type of question: Hansard page 42

Number of pages: 1

Question:

ACTING CHAIR: How do you benchmark or measure what impact these people have in terms of getting people better access, actually delivering results on what they are tasked to do? I know it is hard to estimate. I hear good things back anecdotally, but how do you measure their performance as a department?

Ms Ryan: I am not sure how to answer that.

ACTING CHAIR: You can take it on notice. As a department, presumably you are continually assessing the performance of different spending initiatives.

Ms Ryan: Absolutely, and we get very positive feedback on the services that our financial information service officers provide—

ACTING CHAIR: As I do.

Ms Ryan: and similarly our social workers et cetera. But I would have to go to the area that looks after that to see how they measure that. We have a national presence, and where there is a hotspot or pressure point we can mobilise staff to provide better support. That can be done over the phone or the web. It does not mean you have to have someone permanently, physically, there.

Answer:

The Department of Human Services is committed to delivering high quality services to customers. The department uses a number of channels to gather feedback from individuals and stakeholders and monitor complaints, compliments and suggestions to improve service delivery. Feedback can be provided in person, online or in writing and is used to inform the ongoing delivery of services.

The department has received positive feedback on these services, in particular the servicing provided by the Financial Information Service and Social Work Services.

More broadly, the department's outcomes and programme structure and key performance indicators are published in the department's annual Portfolio Budget Statements. They are used to monitor and assess the department's performance.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Effect on Social Security Budget

Question reference number: SERC150415 – HS 8

Member: Senator Carr

Type of question: Hansard page 42

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator KIM CARR: Could you give me a figure on departments' estimate of the cost to the social security budget across the forward estimates of the reduction in employment in the automotive industry.

Ms Halbert: I would have to take that on notice.

Senator KIM CARR: Yes, of course. Can you provide that information about what the department expects—

Ms Halbert: I am not sure whether we can split that off, but I will take it on notice and give you what information we can.

Senator KIM CARR: I would be surprised if the government had not budgeted for it.

Ms Halbert: As I said, these kinds of factors will be part of the Treasurer's advice to the department.

Senator KIM CARR: Sure, but the Department of Social Services must know what the effect on its budget is going to be. Could the same question be answered by the Department of Human Services, because it has budgetary implications for you, as well?

Answer:

The Treasury, in consultation with Department of Social Services and the Department of Finance, determine and review social security expenditure throughout the Budget process.

The Department of Human Services does not have any information on how future social security expenditure may be impacted.

This question should be referred to the Department of Social Services as it has policy responsibility for social security payments.