

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Additional Estimates

13 – 14 February 2013

Question: AET 1083

Topic: Making the Public Service More Efficient

Written: Received from Committee – 22 February 2013

Senator BUSHBY asked:

1083. Please provide an update of the savings achieved through pursuing further efficiencies in the way the public service operates (see media release by the Minister for Finance and Deregulation and the Special Minister of State of 25 September 2012 at: http://www.financeminister.gov.au/media/2012/mr_1982012.html).

In addition, please provide the following details:

- a. Can you quantify the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates for reductions in air travel?
- b. Has there been a reduction in business flights? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
- c. Has there been a reduction in the use of external consultants and contractors? Has this impacted on the Department/Agency, and how? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
- d. Provide an update of moving recruitment advertising online. Is any recruitment still in printed materials, and if yes, why? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
- e. Has the Department/Agency reduced its printing costs? If no, why not? Have printing costs increased, and if yes why and by how much? Has the five per cent savings target been achieved – if yes, how, and if no, why not? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?

Answer:

The ABS' Expense Appropriations have been reduced by \$7.242 million over 5 years to 2016-17 since the 2012-13 Budget.

These reductions have arisen from the savings announced by the Australian Government on 25 September 2012 (*Making the Australian Public Service more efficient*).

The ABS continuously monitors and evaluates its operations, projects and priorities to ensure effective and efficient achievement of its deliverables. This forms part of the ABS' ongoing corporate governance framework. The ABS does not estimate savings down to the levels requested over the forward estimates. However, there has been a reduction in operating expenditure in 2012-13 including consultants, contractors and travel. Due to budget reductions there have been adjustments to our work program.

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The ABS has put in place initiatives to achieve cost reductions in its operational costs through the examination of work practices, negotiating the best outcomes with suppliers and education of staff. The examination and implementation of alternative strategies and cheaper solutions to meet operational requirements are in line with the recent government objective to reduce costs in a number of discretionary areas, including:

- reductions in the use of consultants and contractors;
- replacing domestic and international travel with the use of virtual meeting facilities where appropriate;
- making use of fare types under the whole of Australian Government negotiated fares and restrictions on business class travel;
- The ABS has fully implemented the government guidelines on non-campaign recruitment advertising. All recruitment advertising is online except for rural interviewer positions, indigenous positions and where it has been difficult to attract a suitable field of candidates, for example some SES positions.
- reductions in printing and publication expenditure.