

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2013-14
3 and 4 June 2013

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: AUSTRALIAN SKILLS QUALITY AUTHORITY (ASQA)

TOPIC: External Auditors

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 3 June 2013, page 56)

QUESTION No.: BI-15

Mr Robinson: Indeed, some previous regulatory experience reflected repeated examples of people who were given opportunities to rectify and who made undertakings to do so; but of course the next time they got audited the same problems existed.

Senator NASH: That is a fair call to make. How do you determine which audits go to external auditors?

Mr Robinson: We have a process in the organisation where the audits are scheduled: it is the number of audits that the internal auditors would have on their plate and whether it is necessary, in that particular location and if all the internal auditors are booked out, that we use some external auditors to do further work. Sometimes we also get an external auditor who may have particular expertise in an area to do the audit.

Senator NASH: So, in the main, it is a workload issue. When the workload gets too high internally you employ the external ones, unless they have got a specific area of expertise. What sort of percentage of the overall auditors would the external auditors be?

Mr Robinson: I am not sure of the exact percentage. The majority of our audit work is done by the internal auditors, but I will have to come back to you with the precise figure. It is certainly the vast majority that is done by internal auditors.

Senator NASH: You have undertaken to take on notice today those 70 staff, and then I think you said there were 40, give or take, who did risk assessment. In that, perhaps you could have a quick look at the external auditors for me as well. It can be a rough ballpark figure; it does not have to be exact.

Mr Robinson: We will try to get it today, but if we cannot we will get back to you soon with it anyway.

ANSWER

As at 31 May 2013 the split between internal and external auditors in terms of the number of audits undertaken was approximately 50/50. This figure has shifted over time depending upon workload and staffing levels. However, ASQA's internal auditors undertake those audits that are likely to involve longer time frames, so in terms of actual audit time, the majority is done by ASQA internal auditors.