

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES - 14 FEBRUARY 2013 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Public Service Efficiency

Question reference number: HS 31

Senator: Boyce

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 5 April 2013

Number of pages: 3

Question:

- a) 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: http://www.financeminister.gov.au/media/2012/mr_1982012.html).
- b) In addition, please provide the following detail:
 - 1) Can you quantify the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates for reductions in air travel?
 - 2) Has there been a reduction in business flights?
 - 3) What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
 - 4) Has there been a reduction in the use of external consultants and contractors?
 - 5) Has this impacted on the Department/agency, and how?
 - 6) What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
 - 7) Provide an update of moving recruitment advertising online.
 - 8) Is any recruitment still in printed materials, and if yes, why?
 - 9) What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
 - 10) Has the department/agency reduced its printing costs? If no, why not?
 - 11) Have printing costs increased, and if yes why and how much?
 - 12) Has the five per cent savings target been achieved – if yes, how, or if it will not, why not?
 - 13) What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?

Answer:

- a) The Department is achieving its required savings through targeted arrangements that reduce expenditure in non-staff areas such as air travel, consultants and contractors, through moving recruitment advertising online and reducing printing costs. Details of the savings achieved are provided in the responses to part (b) below.

- b) 1) The Department is unable to quantify the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates for reductions in air travel. However, it continues to monitor and manage expenditure in line with the Department's budget.
- 2) Yes. There has been a 34 per cent reduction in air travel expenditure for the period 1 July 2012 to 28 February 2013 compared to the same period in 2011-12.
- 3) The Department does not forecast administrative expenses in the forward estimates at a granular level to be able to quantify savings from travel, contractors, consultants, recruitment and printing. However, the Department will continue to have tight control over these expenses in line with the Government's efficiency measures.
- 4) Yes, the Department has reduced its use of external consultants and contractors to the minimum levels feasible to maintain efficient and effective delivery of services.
- 5) The reduction in the Department's use of consultants and contractors has required some staff to broaden their responsibilities into roles that might otherwise have been undertaken by consultants or contractors. Any resulting impact on those staff's other duties has been managed through the normal ongoing process of rationalising and streamlining the Department's business processes, so as to ensure that there is no impact on customer servicing.
- 6) The Department does not forecast administrative expenses in the forward estimates at a granular level to be able to quantify savings from travel, contractors, consultants, recruitment and printing. However, the Department will continue to have tight control over these expenses in line with the Government's efficiency measures.
- 7) The Department is complying with all aspects of the Department of Finance and Deregulation's Non-Campaign Recruitment Advertising Policy.
- 8) Yes, in accordance with the Non-Campaign Recruitment Advertising Policy, the Department of Human Services is restricting recruitment advertising in:
- specialist print media and major daily print media for hard to fill positions or target groups, where special circumstances justify a need for advertisement - in these cases, specific approval is required from the Secretary; and
 - Indigenous, local, rural and regional print media where print media advertising is considered essential to reach relevant target groups - in these cases, specific approval is required from the Deputy Secretary responsible for corporate matters.
- 9) The Department does not forecast administrative expenses in the forward estimates at a granular level to be able to quantify savings from travel, contractors, consultants, recruitment and printing. However, the Department will continue to have tight control over these expenses in line with the Government's efficiency measures.
- 10) Yes, the Department has reduced its printing costs.
- 11) No, the Department's printing costs have not increased.
- 12) The Department will achieve a reduction in printing costs by pursuing the following strategies:
- effective and competitive procurement practices using a panel of print providers;
 - increased use of online channels, including online claiming, transactions and communication;
 - print rationalisation, which focusses on reducing the number of customer products printed and warehoused;

- implementing the ICT 'follow me' initiative, which aims to reduce printing by Departmental staff; and
- letter and form reduction.

13) The Department does not forecast administrative expenses in the forward estimates at a granular level to be able to quantify savings from travel, contractors, consultants, recruitment and printing. However, the Department will continue to have tight control over these expenses in line with the Government's efficiency measures.