

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000493

OUTCOME: 0 - Whole of Portfolio

Topic: Waste

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Xenophon, Nick

Question:

Given that government and opposition politicians have all raised concerns over time and had policies on government waste:

1. Is there a central government authority responsible for the elimination of waste?
2. If so
 - a. Is there a government wide definition on the meaning of ‘waste’, and if so, what is that definition?
 - b. How does this central government authority monitor and manage waste within the Department?
 - c. Is there a central government mechanism (e.g. phone number, email address, web site) for public servants or contractors to report Departmental waste?
 - d. How much Departmental waste was identified by the central government authority in FY 13/14, FY 14/15 and FY 15/16?
3. If not:
 - a. Is there a departmental definition on the meaning of ‘waste’, and if so, what is that definition?
 - b. What are the Department’s arrangements for monitoring and managing waste?
 - c. Is there a central Departmental mechanism (e.g. phone number, email address, web site) for public servants or contractors to report Departmental waste?
 - d. How much waste was identified by the Department in FY 13/14, FY 14/15 and FY 15/16?
4. In either case:
 - a. Can Departmental officers or contractors report waste anonymously?
 - b. Are they afforded a protection if they do so?

Answer:

1. and 2.

Please refer to the Department of Finance’s response to Additional Senate Estimates Question on Notice F128.

3a. No.

- 3b. The Department does not specifically monitor for 'waste'.
- 3c. The *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* provides for current or former Commonwealth public officials (which includes contractors) to disclose information (anonymously or otherwise) to an authorised officer with concerns of maladministration and wrong doing. This can include concerns in relation to 'waste'. Contact details for authorised officers are published on the Department's website. In addition, disclosers can email the Public Interest Disclosure team at publicinterestdisclosure@health.gov.au.
- 3d. Nil.
- 4a. A disclosure made under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* can be made anonymously.
- 4b. The *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* provides protections from reprisal. These protections remain in place for a discloser for the lifetime of the complaint regardless of the action taken to resolve the matter. Information provided under a disclosure is also protected from use and dissemination beyond a disclosure investigation and resolution activity.