

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES – 6 MAY 2016 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Variations in work undertaken by DHS

Question reference number: HS 7

Senator: Cameron

Type of question: Hansard page 180

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 14 September 2016

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Mr Tidswell: Senator, it is important to draw a distinction here. Because we are a service delivery agency, we rise and fall on the work that comes to us from the policy settings. In that reduction of revenue, there is work we will not do next financial year. There are things that have moved to other departments, where we lose the staff and the revenue, and there are things that were planned to proceed in the next financial year, in the previous budget, but they are not going ahead.

Senator CAMERON: Can you give me a list of them on notice?

Mr Tidswell: Certainly.

Answer:

Work that the department forecast it would not do in 2016-17 includes:

- terminating fraud and compliance measures from the 2012-13 Budget - elements of these measures were designed as short term interventions with ongoing benefits and have reached the end of their planned life;
- finalising the Disability Support Pension reviews for the under 35 year olds - the measure applied to a limited demographic;
- the planned closure of the Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS) – for which responsibility was to transfer to the States (2016-17 Budget Measure);
 - The average staffing level impact for the closure of the CDBS was included in the 2016-17 Budget; however, legislation has not yet passed. The department continues to deliver CDBS services on a business as usual basis; and
- health compliance work and related staff have been transferred to the Department of Health, which will now have responsibility for carriage of this work.

Work that is diminishing in 2016-17 compared to 2015-16 includes:

- work associated with implementing Family Payment Reform - the initial system changes and communications phase tapers off, with reduced ongoing workload requirements for the department now in place;

- addressing Welfare Reliance in Remote Communities – the initial system changes and communications phase tapers off;
- the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Reforms - work associated with ICT changes and initial communications regarding the changed requirements reduce;
- Digital Transformation Agenda – stage one and establishment of the Digital Transformation Office - short term project work to develop a trusted digital identity framework and extend the utility and delivering changes to the existing digital mailbox solution, with part year funding only in 2016-17 to complete the projects;
- Growing Jobs and Small Business – Youth Employment Strategy – intensive support for vulnerable job seekers - due to initial up front changes to ICT systems and communications requirements regarding the new arrangements ceasing; and
- Welfare Payment Infrastructure Transformation – tranche one (costs for developing a second pass was only budgeted for a part year in 2016-17), and funding for tranche two is not yet reflected in the department’s budget estimates.