

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES - 20 OCTOBER 2011 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Financial Information Service seminars

Question reference number: HS 9

Senator: Fifield

Type of question: Hansard pages 89-91

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 9 December 2011

Number of pages: 3

Question:

- a) **Senator FIFIELD:** Firstly, Centrelink do undertake financial information seminars throughout the country.

Ms Campbell: Yes.

Senator FIFIELD: How many of those would be undertaken each year?

Ms Golightly: In the order of 2,000 to 3,000. That could be participants, Senator. I will check that for you.

- b) **Senator FIFIELD:** Is there a policy that prefers some venues over other venues?

Ms Golightly: No. The policy goes more to guidelines in fact. They give advice to our officers about making sure that selected venues are, most importantly, accessible to people in the community who might be availing themselves of these seminars. That would take into account first and foremost things like easy transport, disability access and general comfort for the community. Then there are other things that we advise our people to take into account. For example, things like whether there are cultural or alcohol issues and perhaps gaming issues, but first and foremost it is about the accessibility, useability and convenience to encourage people to come to these seminars.

Senator FIFIELD: Could you table a copy of the guidelines?

Ms Golightly: I will check on that for you.

Senator FIFIELD: There would be no reason they could not be tabled, would there?

Ms Golightly: They are internal guidelines. They do not have any force of law or anything like that.

Senator FIFIELD: I appreciate that, but there would be no reason they could not be tabled.

Ms Campbell: I do not see any reason why not.

Answer:

- a)

Financial Year	Total FIS seminars	FIS Officer organised seminars	FIS Officer organised seminars - venues with gaming facilities	
			Number	Percentage
2010-11	2,704	1,196	399	33%

- b) The internal venue selection guidelines for Financial Information Service (FIS) seminars are attached.

This document is a guideline for FIS Officers when investigating and procuring venues for customer focussed seminars.

VENUE PROCUREMENT

Financial Requirements

The financial delegations for the APS6 group which FIS Officers currently sit within is determined by the financial policy (*Authorisation to approve proposals to spend public money*) signed by the National Manager, Older Australians, Disability and Carers Branch – Centrelink, Smart Services Division, as the representative of the Secretary. The policy specifies the limitations for approving proposals to spend public money and references the *Directions to authorised officials* complying with the *DHS Spending Approver User Guide* (see financial rules in **Relevant Documents** section below).

There are mandatory requirements for approving expenditure of public money which are outlined in the DHS Financial Rules - *Approving spending proposals* (see **Relevant Documents** section below).

Spending Proposal form

A *Spending Proposal* (Reg 9 approval) form is available on the DHS intranet Procurement page (see **Relevant Documents** section below).

The completed Venue Options Template can be attached to the form as the Value for Money (VFM) assessment.

VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT (EFFECTIVENESS)

There are key components of VFM assessment for FIS seminars that are to be considered. The mandatory factors to consider when assessing venues are:

- **Accessibility** – Public transport, parking, signage, access for people with a disability
- **Safety** – Lighting, safety at the locality
- **Equipment** – Does the venue cater to FIS Seminar needs for presentations?
- **Legal** – Check venue indemnity (link below)
- **Finance** – Reasonable cost
- **Locality** – Is the venue well known and has previously been used successfully?

A mix of venues to cater for community diversity is recommended for a more inclusive approach. Other factors to consider to ensure the best mix of venues to maximise attendance are:

- Whether the venue has a sole/perceived religious or ethnic group affiliation:
- If alcohol is served
- If the venue has gaming facilities
- If holding the seminar at particular times changes the safety concerns for the customer (e.g. at night)

Not sure about VFM assessment?

Please contact your respective Service Leader for guidance. Service Leaders are to approve final selection and mix of venues.

Review

It may be economical to make advanced bookings with a selected venue for a period of time, such as 6 months in advance. However, it is recommended that a review of venue options be done periodically to determine if any other venues are assessed as suitable.

Cancellations or changes

Please advise the FIS Team of any proposed cancellation or change in venue bookings.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

Document name	Location
DHS Financial Rules: <i>Arrangements involving contingent liabilities (Indemnity)</i>	http://centrenet.csda.gov.au/homepage/divfin/brstratcost/sdr/financial_rules/rules/arrangements_involving_contingent_liabilities.html
Spending Proposal (Reg 9 approval) form: <i>New - less than \$80k</i>	http://dhsintranet/C3/Business+Management/Finance_n_Procurement/Procurement/? (Forms & Templates box) or Business Management > Finance & Procurement > Procurement
DHS Financial Rules: <i>Approving Spending Proposals</i>	http://centrenet/homepage/divfin/brstratcost/sdr/financial_rules/instrument/approving_spending_proposals_reg_9_a1_2011-001.pdf or Business Management > Finance & Procurement > Procurement
Seminar Checklist	FIS Teamroom
Venue Options template	FIS Teamroom Note: Completed template requires Service Leader approval
FIS Venue Hire workflow chart	FIS Teamroom