

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 214
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Corporate
Program: Corporate Strategies Division (CSD)
Topic: Legal Costs - Itemised List
Hansard Page: -
Question Date: 14 March 2017
Question Type: Written

Senator Bilyk asked:

Can an itemised list of costs of each legal matter (GST inclusive) please be provided?

Answer:

The Department is required each year to report on legal services expenditure under the *Legal Services Directions 2005*. This information must be provided to the Office of Legal Services Coordination in the Attorney-General's Department within 60 days of the end of financial year. The information is also published on the Department's website.

The Australian Government does not generally disclose to the public details about the legal matters it is involved with. It is important for government to be able to make fully informed decisions based on comprehensive and confidential legal advice. Providing details on these matters may undermine the protection of the confidentiality and privilege of the Government's legal advice. The information that is published annually by the Department complies with guidelines issued by the Attorney-General's Department for the reporting of legal services expenditure, which reflect these aims.

External legal expenditure data will be compiled following the end of the financial year. Compiling figures for the Department's external legal spend at this time, outside of the regular reporting cycle, would involve an unreasonable diversion of resources.

Figures for the 2015-16 financial year can be found at:

www.ag.gov.au/Publications/Pages/CommonwealthLegalServicesExpenditure.aspx