

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

**Question No:** 126  
**Hearing:** Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Corporate  
**Programme:** Corporate Strategies Division (CSD)  
**Topic:** REDUNDANCY PROGRAMME  
**Hansard Page:** N/A  
**Question Date:** 26 May 2014  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Ruston asked:**

Senator RUSTON: Sorry if I ask a number of questions that have already been asked, but I am trying to work out what part of this redundancy program is actually still the residual from the reduction in numbers that were required of the department prior to the election and how much are in line with the 2.5 per cent efficiency dividend that, obviously, we sought for the department to deliver. What is the status of the voluntary redundancy program that was introduced by the previous government? Has that been completed, and if it hasn't been, were is it at?

Ms Carlos: It is not possible to allocate specific redundancies to a specific efficiency measure. The organisation overall has to manage its budget to the bottom line. The reductions in our funding are a combination of many items—not only efficiency dividends, but also programs that have ceased from quite some time ago. There are impacts on the funding for the organisation across the course of the forward estimates. So it is not possible to say clearly. We do not allocate a particular cadre. We can say that the redundancies that we have run up until now have been in line with our budget to make sure that we can manage the budget for this year. The redundancy program that we are running now is to manage our budget into the forward years.

Senator RUSTON: I am a little confused, I must say, with that answer.

Dr de Brouwer: The point is that we have a series of decisions over a number of years which go to various efficiency savings, be they efficiency dividends or staff management requirements. We can work out what the dollar value of that cost is so that we get a sense, over time, of what it means to the dollar value of a particular efficiency dividend or the nature of a measure to the department's budget. That is a significant amount that accumulates over time, depending on the nature of the efficiency dividend. The difficulty is that when it comes down to the actual staff number that is associated with that, on average we can say that staff numbers will be x for a particular dollar value reduction in our budget. But at times we have operational decisions or operational control over it. So do we absorb into some other area or do we look, for example, at supplier expenses as opposed to losing a job. So we can, on average, make an allocation. We can work out the dollar value of different measures that affect the department's budget and on average we can say what that would be notionally for staff reductions. But it is an average allocation. It would not necessarily be so precise that we can associate this particular job with that particular dollar lost through a dividend save or through a program reduction. We have some flexibility in how we manage our budget.

Senator Cormann: We might have to take on notice to see whether we can provide you with some more precise information in response to that question

**Answer:**

The current voluntary redundancy program being conducted by the Department is part of the Executive Board's response to significant decreases in Departmental Operating funding over the forward estimates.

It is not possible to allocate specific redundancies to specific measures. The redundancy requirements have been based on affordable staffing levels within the Department's total budget.