

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2015

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications and the Arts

Question No: 53

Program 2.1

Hansard Ref: Written, 30/10/2015

Topic: Shared Services

Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:

1. Consolidation of the back office functions of the National Cultural Institutions in the Attorney-General's Department. Now that responsibility for the arts has been moved to the Minister for Communications, has this not been conclusively proved to be a totally bad idea?
 - (a) Is the project still proceeding?
 - (b) What is the progress on the project?
2. If the back office functions of the national cultural institutions are now the responsibility of the A-G's Department, as appears to be the case from the Department of Communications and the Arts answers at the Estimates hearings, what is the oversight role of the Ministry for the Arts in relation to the National Cultural Institutions?
 - (a) How can the Ministry know how efficient and effective their operations are, when they only refer all questions to A-G's?

Answer:

1. The Australian Government through its 'Smaller Government' policy is seeking to create efficiencies of which shared services is one component. In the 2014-15 MYEFO statement the government announced a number of areas in which efficiencies were being created including the abolition, or consolidation into existing departments of some government bodies; the merger of some bodies as well as the consolidation of back office functions with shared service centres or supporting departments.
 - (a) The consolidation of back-office functions for the Canberra arts portfolio agencies remain.
 - (b) Since late 2014, the Museum of Australian Democracy, the National Portrait Gallery of Australia and the National Film and Sound Archives has transitioned to shared services provided by the Attorney-General's Department (AGD).

The remaining arts portfolio agencies were in the process of preparing to transition to the AGD provided shared services by 30 June 2016. Following a decision in September 2015 by the Attorney-General's Department not to continue to provide Share Services, these agencies and the remaining Canberra arts portfolio agencies will transition to another shared services provider.

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- (a) The Ministry for the Arts works with the arts portfolio agencies to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and governance requirements. The back office functions of the arts portfolio agencies remains the responsibility of the individual agency. Agencies obtain shared services to do so on a fee-for-service basis with contractual obligations being agreed between the Agency and the Shared Service provider.