

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Additional Estimates

26 February 2014

Question: AET 1804-1808

Topic: Public Debt Interest (ACCC)

Written: 7 March 2014

Senator BUSHBY asked:

According to MYEFO the net interest payments for debt held by the General Government Sector for the current financial year total \$8.8 billion, while the total interest cost is \$12.4 billion. Both figures rise to be \$12.8 billion and \$16.7 billion respectively in the final out-year.

1804. What would the Government be able to do with the equivalent amount of money in this portfolio if these billions were spent on programs and outcomes instead of on debt?
1805. Does your agency ever observe connection between performance management of staff and claims of stress leave or other forms of sick leave?
1806. What is the number of staff on stress leave or psychological injury claims at any one time in your agency? How many harassment claims are there at any one time? How many of these cases are connected to performance cases? Have you observed any instances of stress claims and harassment claims being a tactic used by staff which the agency tries to performance-manage?
1807. Looking at the length of time claimed for sick leave, are you seeing longer absences for people with physical injuries or people claiming to have psychological injuries? What's the degree of difference?
1808. How much would be saved from your workforce insurance costs if you did not have the current levels of stress-related claims and other psychological injury claims?

Answer:

1804. Please refer to Treasury response to AET 1705.
1805. Yes. The ACCC has observed, in minimal and isolated cases, a connection between performance management of staff and claims of stress leave or other forms of sick leave.
1806. Psychological injury claims – average of between 0 and 2 at any one time.
Harassment claims – average of between 0 and 1 at any one time.
The ACCC has not observed any instances of stress claims and harassment claims being used as a tactic when the agency performance manages an individual.
1807. The ACCC has observed that on average psychological injuries lead to longer work absences than physical injuries.
The ACCC does not require staff applying for sick leave to disclose detailed information regarding the nature of the illness or injury.

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Based on the data extracted from the self-selecting sick leave system, for the second quarter of 2013-14, records show:

- 3 staff took a total of 11 sick leave days for psychological injuries – averaging 3.66 days per individual
- 57 staff took a total of 105 sick leave days leave for physical injuries – averaging 1.85 days per individual

Based on the above figures the degree of difference is approximately 2:1.

1808. This information is not available to the ACCC and it would be an unreasonable diversion of resources for the ACCC to obtain this information in the timeframe available.