

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates

17 October – 18 October 2012

Question: SBT 327-332

Topic: Public Service Efficiency (ABS)

Written: Received from Committee – 26 October 2012

Senator BUSHBY asked:

327. Please detail how the department/agency will achieve savings over the forward estimates through pursuing further efficiencies in the way the public service operates (see media release by the Minister for Finance and Deregulation and the Special Minister of State of 25 September 2012 http://www.financeminister.gov.au/media/2012/mr_1982012.html).

In addition, please provide the following detail:

328. How will reductions in air travel spending be achieved? What is the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
329. What restrictions will be implemented for business flights? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
330. How will the use of external consultants and contractors be reduced? How will this impact on the Department/agency? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
331. How will the department/agency manage moving recruitment advertising online? Will all future recruitment advertisement be online only? If not, explain why. What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
332. How will printing costs be reduced? Explain if and how the department/agency will reduce its printing costs by five per cent, or if it will not, why not? How will it be determined what documents will no longer be printed? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?

Answer:

327. The ABS continuously monitors and evaluates its operations, projects and priorities to ensure effective and efficient achievement of its deliverables. This forms part of the ABS' ongoing corporate governance framework.

The ABS has put in place initiatives to achieve cost reductions in its operational costs through the examination of work practices, negotiating the best outcomes with suppliers and education of staff. The examination and implementation of alternative strategies and cheaper solutions to meet operational requirements are in line with the recent government objective to reduce costs in a number of discretionary areas, including:

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- reductions in the use of consultants and contractors;
 - replacing domestic and international travel with the use of virtual meeting facilities;
 - reductions in spending on hospitality and entertainment;
 - minimising media and advertising expenditure;
 - reductions in printing and publication expenditure; and
 - more efficient and consistent delivery of training.
328. In line with government policy, travel restrictions are in place. The ABS is making effective use of improvements in technology in audio and video conferencing to reduce the amount of travel undertaken. When air travel is required the ABS makes effective use of fare types by ensuring early booking and the most effective use of Whole of Australian Government negotiated fares.
329. In line with government policy, business class tickets are generally not used for short haul flights. The ABS makes effective use of fare types by ensuring early booking and the most effective use of Whole of Australian Government negotiated fares.
330. The ABS has put in place initiatives to reduce the number of contractors and consultancies through the examination of work practices and identification of alternative strategies to meet business needs.
331. The ABS has fully implemented the government guidelines on non-campaign recruitment advertising. All recruitment advertising is online except for rural interviewer positions, indigenous positions and where it has been difficult to attract a suitable field of candidates, for example some SES positions.
332. The ABS is increasingly moving from paper to electronic products, and this is being achieved by continuing to:
- make free publications available on the ABS website and increasing the number of publications available electronically, to reduce demand for printed publications;
 - have a knowledge framework, incorporating digital recordkeeping rather than paper records and automatic recordkeeping facilities; and
 - utilise electronic reporting such as the eCensus, electronic reporting and computer assisted interviewing to replace paper forms.