

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates

20-21 November 2013

Question: SBT 41-42

Topic: Staff allocation to inquiries

Hansard Page: 23 & 24, 20 November 2013

Senator PRATT asked:

Senator PRATT: Are there any officials from the Productivity Commission on secondment to the Commission of Audit?

Mr Harris: Not to my knowledge.

Senator PRATT: I would like an update, please, from you on the reference that the government has given you on the motor vehicle industry.

Mr Harris: We have started the inquiry with an issues paper and a description of the kinds of advice that we will give to the government in the relatively short period that has been allocated to deliver this response. Mr Quinlivan will probably be able to give you specifics in relation to that. But in a general sense we will be providing the Treasurer with a document immediately prior to Christmas as, if you like, an early update of things that we have discovered. We will be doing public hearings prior to that, so probably in the early part of December. There are probably specific dates established for that but I do not have them to mind. Then at the end of January we will be providing a further document on the likely outcomes as we view them. Then we will go to another set of public hearings, where that document will be able to be considered by participants in the inquiry. Then there will be a final report, which is due on 31 March.

Senator PRATT: How much is budgeted for that review?

Mr Harris: We just internally allocate resources according to the capabilities of staff that we have available at the time. The budgeting is not inquiry by inquiry.

Senator PRATT: You do not even have an internal approximation of that, even though as an organisation you are good at helping other people audit the resources?

Mr Harris: But that is just it. We would expect people to reallocate their resources effectively. That is what the Productivity Commission does. We recommend it to others and we should be able to do it ourselves. That is what we do: we look at the capabilities—

Senator PRATT: Surely therefore there is a line item that indicates what that looks like somewhere.

Mr Harris: There will be a basic budget. But we take people and their capabilities and put them against inquiries until we reach the point where we have too many.

Senator PRATT: Perhaps you can let me know how many FTEs and their Public Service levels.

Mr Harris: We can give you a staff allocation to the inquiries

Senator PRATT: Thanks. I would now like to ask some questions in relation to the inquiry into child care. Have you been formally instructed to conduct this inquiry?

Mr Harris: Yes.

Senator PRATT: That was just a few days ago, I think.

Mr Harris: There was a reasonable amount of uncertainty. We have seen drafts continuously, so when the final comes in it is in back of your mind that you are going to—

Senator PRATT: You have the terms of reference?

Mr Harris: We have got them.

Mr Quinlivan: On 17 November.

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Senator PRATT: They were finalised then. How is this review being funded? It is a fairly large one.

Mr Harris: The same way that the others are.

Senator PRATT: Internally?

Mr Harris: We internally allocate staff to the purpose.

Senator PRATT: Can you take on notice the allocation of staff to that as well?

Mr Harris: We will do that.

Answer:

41-42. Details on the staff allocations for the automotive and childcare inquiries are contained in the response to SBT40.