

**Senate Economics Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Treasury Portfolio**

Supplementary Budget Estimates

2015 - 2016

**Department/Agency: ABS**

**Question: 925-932**

**Topic: Reviews**

**Senator: Wong, Penny**

**Question:**

Since 1 January 2015:

925. How many new reviews (defined as review, inter-departmental group, inquiry, internal review or similar activity) have been commenced?  
Please list them including:
- a) the date they were ordered
  - b) the date they commenced
  - c) the minister responsible
  - d) the department responsible
  - e) the nature of the review
  - f) their terms of reference
  - g) the scope of the review
  - h) Who is conducting the review
  - i) the number of officers, and their classification level, involved in conducting the review
  - j) the expected report date
  - k) the budgeted, projected or expected costs
  - l) If the report will be tabled in parliament or made public
926. For any review commenced or ordered since Budget Estimates in June 2015, have any external people, companies or contractors being engaged to assist or conduct the review?
- a) If so, please list them, including their name and/or trading name/s and any known alias or other trading names
  - b) If so, please list their managing director and the board of directors or equivalent
  - c) If yes, for each is the cost associated with their involvement, including a break down for each cost item
  - d) If yes, for each, what is the nature of their involvement
  - e) If yes, for each, are they on the lobbyist register, provide details.
  - f) If yes, for each, what contact has the Minister or their office had with them
  - g) If yes, for each, who selected them
  - h) If yes, for each, did the minister or their office have any involvement in selecting them:
    - i. If yes, please detail what involvement it was
    - ii. If yes, did they see or provided input to a short list
    - iii. If yes, on what dates did this involvement occur
    - iv. If yes, did this involve any verbal discussions with the department.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates

2015 - 2016

v. If yes, on what dates did this involvement occur

927. Which reviews are on-going?
- a) Please list them.
  - b) What is the current cost to date expended on the reviews?
928. Have any reviews been stopped, paused or ceased? Please list them.
929. Which reviews have concluded? Please list them.
930. How many reviews have been provided to Government? Please list them and the date they were provided.
931. When will the Government be responding to the respective reviews that have been completed?
932. What reviews are planned?
- a) When will each planned review be commenced?
  - b) When will each of these reviews be concluded?
  - c) When will government respond to each review?
  - d) Will the government release

**Answer:**

925: Two new reviews were ordered

1. Review of the Eform Implementation and Reduced Enumeration Period in the Monthly Labour Force Survey

- a) 15 June 2015
- b) 29 June 2015
- c) The Hon Kelly O'Dwyer, PST
- d) Australian Bureau of Statistics
- e) Review of change management from a statistical methodological perspective
- f) **Terms of Reference**

**Background:** From the December 2012 reference month the ABS commenced introducing eForms into the Monthly Population Survey, from which labour force estimates are derived, and in the February 2014 reference month the ABS reduced the target response rates for the survey from 95-97% to 93-95%. The main driver for these changes was to contain the enumeration costs of the survey, which had been repeatedly over budget. The introduction of eForms also satisfied internal and external pressures for providing an internet reporting option.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the review is to determine whether the reduction in target response rates for the Monthly Population Survey and the introduction of eForms into the Monthly Population Survey were properly handled from a methodological

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**Treasury Portfolio**

Supplementary Budget Estimates

2015 - 2016

perspective, particularly in regard to key labour force estimates, including whether decisions were based on appropriate information. The review will include an assessment of whether there was any likely impact on labour force estimates and their variability from either and/or both of these changes. The review will consider ABS documents relating to the changes, information provided to the public about the changes, interviews with relevant ABS staff and the relevant findings of the McCarthy review. The review is expected to take up to 15 days of actual work, with a report due to the Australian Statistician by 15 August 2015. If additional work or an extension in time is needed then this will be considered.

- g) Reduction in target response rates for and the introduction of eForms into the Monthly Population Survey
- h) Susan Linacre
- i) 1 non-ongoing. A number of ABS officers, at various levels, provided material for the review and/or were interviewed by the reviewer.
- j) 14 August 2015
- k) \$30,500
- l) The report will not be tabled or made public

2. Review of the State and Territory Statistical Services

- a) 15 June 2015
- b) 1 July 2015 (for 5 weeks)
- c) The Hon Kelly O'Dwyer, PST
- d) Australian Bureau of Statistics
- e) The review of the ABS State and Territory Statistical Services (STSS) focussed on how ABS engagement with State and Territory governments could be transformed within the restructured ABS, aligned with organisational priorities and senior staff accountabilities, and streamlined consistent with the objectives of the new ABS Corporate Plan.

f) **Terms of Reference**

**Background:** The ABS as Australia's National Statistical office has a key role in the broader statistical system supporting governments in making informed decisions. Recent reviews have highlighted the need for ABS to increase partnerships, take a stronger risk managed approach rather than a conservative approach, unlock administrative and big data and provide leadership in the wider statistical system (APSC Review and the National Commission of Audit). The Australian Government is also looking at reform of the federation and ABS and Australian Statistics Advisory Council is prioritising reform of the National Statistical System (NSS), of which the State and Territory system is a key element.

**Scope of the review:** The Review will look at the work currently undertaken by STSS and make suggestions of how a greater national approach to engagement could be undertaken, as well as reflecting the changed responsibilities of Senior ABS staff. The review will engage a range of staff and stakeholders, including selected external

**Senate Economics Legislation Committee**

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**Treasury Portfolio**

Supplementary Budget Estimates

2015 - 2016

stakeholders, seeking input and ideas on how to shape the future of the STSS within the context of the broader NSS.

The Review will draw input from STSS staff, selected internal and external stakeholders, the Head of Office, Senior Management and Executive Level Groups on the relative priorities.

**STSS Review Steering Committee:** The review will be guided by a Steering committee.

**Recommendations and implementation:** The review will produce a report to the First Assistant Statistician and Senior Management Group in August and will be completed by the end of September 2015. The review and proposed response will be discussed with the Executive Level Group and staff will be engaged in developing an implementation plan.

- g) The Review is to look at the work currently undertaken by ABS STSS to make suggestions of how a greater national approach to engagement could be undertaken, as well as reflecting the changed responsibilities of senior ABS staff. The review will engage a range of staff and stakeholders, including selected external stakeholders, seeking input and ideas on how to shape the future of the STSS within the context of the broader National Statistical System.
- h) Kristen Stone (non-ongoing EL2 on a part-time basis)
- i) Two officers - 1 x EL2 (part-time); 1 x EL1 (part-time)
- j) September 2015
- k) \$22042
- l) No.

926 Not applicable.

927 No reviews are ongoing.

928 No reviews have been stopped, paused or ceased.

929 Review of the Eform Implementation and Reduced Enumeration Period in the Monthly Labour Force Survey and Review of the State and Territory Statistical Services.

930 No reviews have been provided to Government.

931 NA

932 No future reviews are currently planned.