

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2014

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Australian Public Service Commission

Outcome/Program: 1.1

Topic: Mental fitness at work course

Senator: Smith

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Question:

Senator SMITH: This special workshop was called 'Mental fitness at work: building your strength, flexibility and endurance'. ... I am curious to know how many people attended the course.

Mr Sedgwick: You have us at a disadvantage.

Senator SMITH: I think that is from the Australian Public Service Commission website.

Mr Sedgwick: We are quite happy to track that down for you. It sounds as if it might be a course we provide to people who are prepared to pay for it.

Senator SMITH: I would be interested to know how many people attended the course and what prerequisites might have been necessary to attend the course, if any. I would also like to know whether participants took leave from work to attend and whether or not \$12,724 of taxpayers' money, which was paid to the facilitator, is considered value for money.

Mr Sedgwick: I do not know what that course is. We will look into it and come back to it. We do have an issue in our workforce in the area of the management of mental health conditions.

Senator SMITH: My questioning in no way detracts from the seriousness of mental health issues for everybody in the Australian workplace. My question goes to value for money.

Mr Sedgwick: I understand.

Senator SMITH: In that vein, it would be interesting to know what postcourse assessments might have been done of the success or otherwise of \$12,000 worth of expenditure on a facilitator.

Answer:

The two workshops on the subject of 'Mental fitness at work: building your strength, flexibility and endurance' were attended by 59 participants. The workshops were available to executive level one and two employees; no other prerequisites were required.

The Commission has no detailed information about any leave arrangements made by participants in order to attend the workshops. It is our understanding, however, that employees attending short courses as part of on-going professional development relevant to their employment would not normally be required to take leave to attend.

The fee of \$12 724 was for the design, preparation and delivery of two workshops by a specialist provider. The procurement was considered to represent good value for money as the facilitator had specialist subject matter expertise, recent relevant delivery experience that was favourably received and a fee that was within the range for specialist providers in this field.

A post workshop survey indicated 83 per cent of attendees found the workshop useful or very useful.