

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates 26 May-6 June 2014

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: FOI requests - refusals

Senator: Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question reference number: 45

Type of Question: FPA, Tuesday 27 May 2014, page 36

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 11 July 2014

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator McKENZIE: How many FOI applications have been refused due to the request being an unreasonable diversion of resources under section 24.1 of the act?

Ms Kelly: I do not have that information to hand, but I can obtain that readily, I think in the course of the day, and come back to it.

Senator McKENZIE: That would be great, thanks. Can you provide an outline of the number and the classification of people who work in the department's FOI section, and if there has been any increase over the recent period of time.

Ms Kelly: I will need to take that on notice.

Senator McKENZIE: And the cost of supporting the section.

Answer:

The Department collates similar information on a quarterly basis for each financial year for the purpose of reporting to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. For the period 1 July 2013 to 31 March 2014, the Department refused five requests on the basis that processing them would substantially and unreasonably divert the Department's resources from its other operations.

As at 27 May 2014, there were eight positions whose work includes processing FOI requests made to the Department and portfolio ministers. In addition to processing FOI requests, the team also handles privacy matters, Ombudsman policy and complaints, and other areas of administrative law. The team reports to an SES Band 1 position. Classifications and numbers in the team (in full time equivalent) are as follows:

- EL 2: 2.6
- EL 1: 2
- APS 6: 2
- APS 4: 0.7

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates 26 May-6 June 2014

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

The team supports the Department's FOI decision makers. All SES officers in the Department are authorised decision makers for the purposes of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Over recent times, there have been increases and decreases in staffing numbers consistent with the machinery of government changes, and other staffing needs of the team as per business requirements. One position is currently vacant pending recruitment action.

As noted above, the section handles a range of matters in addition to FOI requests. Total staff costs, including salaries, superannuation, leave and overtime, for the section for the period 1 July 2013 to 31 May 2014 were \$664,119.