

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2017

Attorney General's Department

Program: 1.1 AGD Operating Expenses - Civil Justice and Legal Services

Question No. BE17-005

Senator Pratt asked the following question on 24 May 2017:

Senator PRATT: I want to ask some questions about the use of labour hire companies. Does the department use labour hire agreements at all?

Mr Anderson: From time to time the department does hire employ people on labour hire arrangements. That is generally the last resort. The vast majority of our staff are ongoing staff. We have a number of staff who are non-ongoing public servants and then a much smaller proportion are people engaged on labour-hire arrangements.

Senator PRATT: For how long has this been the department's practice?

Mr Anderson: I could not say precisely. My recollection is that we have used labour hire arrangements for a great number of years. As I said, it is a last resort, if you need someone at particularly short notice or if you need someone who has specialist skills and you cannot otherwise obtain them. We have frequently used labour hire arrangements if we needed to engage a temporary executive assistant, for example, if someone is going on a period of leave and we need to have someone to help run the administrative affairs of a unit.

Senator PRATT: How many staff are employed by the department under these arrangements?

Mr Anderson: I would have to take that on notice. Not many, is my recollection.

Senator PRATT: In the main, it is administrative staff and—what?—consultants in specialist areas?

Mr Anderson: It is where we cannot source a particular skill set. It might be in the IT area, for example, if we need a particular skill set for a particular project or it might be an administrative staff person such as an executive assistant, if we need a short-term cover for that role for, but it is really the last resort. We normally go through other ways to engage staff.

Senator PRATT: If you can, would you take on notice how many and in what areas staff are brought in as contractors. Who authorises the use of labour hire companies?

Mr Anderson: For the sake of being absolutely correct, I will take that on notice as well. I believe that we have delegated the ability to engage to SES band 1 officers, but I will confirm that.

The response to the honourable Senator's question is as follows:

The department uses panel arrangements to engage contractors through labour hire companies.

Use of labour hire companies has been a long standing practice of the department. Our records indicate that payments have been made to labour hire companies since 1998.

As at 24 May the department had 66 staff contracted through labour hire companies.

The department has on contract 13 Administrative staff, 8 Legal/Research Officers and 45 IT Specialists

The officer with the appropriate level of delegation in the responsible area has the authority to approve the use of labour hire companies.