

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**TREASURY**

**Australian Taxation Office**

(Budget Estimates 29 May 2007)

**Question**                    **BET 94.**  
**Topic:**                      **Tasmania-debt legals team**  
**Hansard Page:**            **E45**

Senator **Carol Brown** asked:

If you could on notice provide me with the consultation process and the dates and the people involved in that, and particularly the consultation that was held with the staff and union and the dates, I would appreciate that. Thank you. I have finished.

**Answer**

On 5 December 2006, the Regional Director of the legal team in Debt Collection visited the Hobart Office and informed the Debt legal team that legal work in the Moonee Ponds Office was to be transferred to the World Trade Centre Office. Staff were advised at the time that further consolidations were being considered, including transfer of the Debt legal function from Hobart. The Regional Director Legals also met with the Hobart Site Leader to convey this information.

Regular communication between the Regional Director Legals and the Team Leader Hobart Debt legal team followed, during which the Team Leader Hobart Debt legal team was informed that transfer of the Debt legal function from Hobart remained under consideration.

On 12 April 2007, the Regional Director Legals met with the Hobart Debt legal team to advise that the decision to transfer the Debt legal function from Hobart had been made. A representative of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) was present. Staff were assured that management would work closely with them to ensure that they moved into new roles that suited their qualifications and skills, as well as the needs of the organisation. Staff were invited to work with management to develop strategies to ensure that the changes would be seamless and not result in a reduced service for Tasmanians.

The decision to transfer the Debt legal function from Hobart was taken by the Debt Executive following consideration of:

- the small Tasmanian workload:
  - there were around 270 Tasmanian cases, with only about 185 requiring regular case management.
- the opportunities available regarding the placement of the four staff:
  - there were a number of vacant positions which suited the skills of the staff.
- the Debt business line's strategy in relation to remote team management:

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- reducing remote team management and creating larger, fully supported sites provides greater career opportunities for staff.
- the Debt business line's ability to remotely manage work:
  - the Debt legal function's experience is that it can effectively undertake work from a remote location without adversely impacting the community, as demonstrated in the case of the ACT, whose workload is managed by NSW.

On 13 April 2007, the Regional Director Legals met with the Hobart Site Leader to inform him of the situation and seek possible placements that would continue to provide career opportunities for the staff.

On 13 April 2007, agreement was reached with two Hobart Debt legal team members as to their new roles.

On 1 May 2007, agreement was reached with the remaining two Hobart Debt legal team members as to their new roles.

On 1 May 2007, an Assistant Commissioner from the Debt Collection area facilitated a workshop with the Hobart Debt legal team to work through the detail regarding the change. The Director of the legals team in Debt Collection and the Regional Director Legals also participated. An action plan for movement of the workload from Hobart was put in place.

On 2 May 2007, a meeting was held with the relevant Assistant Commissioner, the Director of Employee and Industrial Relations for the Debt Business line, the Director Legals, the Regional Director Legals, the CPSU representative and the Regional Secretary CPSU to discuss the changes.

On 22 May 2007, the Commissioner of Taxation provided a written response to a letter dated 9 May 2007 from the CPSU Regional Secretary. The Commissioner outlined the reasons for the decision and advised that, as part of normal business practice, periodical reviews of work load priorities and resources are required to ensure that the Tax Office continues to deliver on its commitment to the community.

On 25 May 2007, transfer of the Debt legal function from Hobart was finalised.

All four members of the Debt legal team have commenced in their new roles.