

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
Supplementary Estimates – February 2014
ANSWER TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio

Department/Agency: Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General

Program 1: Support for the Governor-General and Official Activities

Outcome 1: The performance of the Governor-General's role is facilitated through the organisation and management of official duties, management and maintenance of the official household and property and administration of the Australian Honours and Awards system.

Topic: Legal costs

Senator: Ludwig

Question reference number: QoN 221

Type of Question: Written

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

Number of Pages: 2

List all legal costs incurred by the department or agency since 7 September 2013

1. List the total cost for these items, broken down by source of legal advice, hours retained or taken to prepare the advice and the level of counsel used in preparing the advice, whether the advice was internal or external
2. List the cost spend briefing Counsel, broken down by hours spend briefing, whether it was direct or indirect briefing, the gender ratio of Counsel, how each Counsel was engaged (departmental, ministerial)
3. How was each piece of advice procured? Detail the method of identifying legal advice

Answer:

The Office does not generally disclose specific details of legal advice received. As such, only total figures for legal services expenditure will be provided rather than a list of each service and costs. All figures are exclusive of GST.

1. The Office incurred total costs of \$165,297.76 for legal services from 7 September 2013 to 28 February 2014, as shown in the table below. This included a total of 444.3 hours.

Total Legal Costs

Cost (\$)	Source		Level of Counsel
104,843.05	AGS	External	AGS lawyers - various
19,325.46	AGS	External	Senior counsel
41,129.25	AGS	External	Junior counsel
\$165,297.76			

Briefing Counsel

	Direct	Indirect	Male	Female
Cost (\$)	12,291.10	-	8817.15	3473.95
Hours	23.2	-	15	8.2

2. The majority of advice pertained to one matter, which was the subject of a High Court hearing. AGS was chosen from the Office's legal panel because of its experience and knowledge of the matter concerned. The High Court of Australia handed down its decision on 6 December 2013, awarding costs to the Commonwealth. The Office is taking steps to pursue costs in accordance with the Commonwealth *Legal Services Directions 2005*.