

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2013-2014

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman
Outcome/Program: 1
Topic: Education costs

Senator: Ryan

Question reference number: 98

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 12 July 2013

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- (1) What are the department/agency's guidelines on study?
- (2) For this financial year to date, detail all education expenses (i.e. in house courses and tertiary studies) for each portfolio department and agency. Include what type of course, the total cost, cost per participant, the employment classification of each participant, how many participants and the amount of study leave granted to each participant (provide a breakdown for each employment classification). Also include the reason for the study and how it is beneficial for the department/agency.

Answer:

- (1) The Office's study guidelines are set out in our *Human Resources: Studies Assistance Guidelines*, dated December 2010, which provide that:

In considering applications for all types of assistance, Management will take into account the following factors:

- the employee's development needs as identified in Personal Development and Individual Work Plans;
- the supervisor's assessment of overall work performance and personal commitment against expectations in Individual Work Plans;
- relevance of studies and the short- and long-term benefits to the team and the Office as a whole;
- the impact on the team and Office operations, including workloads and available employees resources;
- the overall cost of assistance, including any backfilling requirements;
- the applicant's existing qualifications, study history and the level of any assistance provided previously;
- period of service in the Public Service and the Office and responsibilities of employee;

- the availability of funds within the Office's budget;
- any additional information that the employee wishes to put forward about special circumstances, in particular their financial position.

Where financial assistance is being sought, the relevant Senior Assistant Ombudsman (SAO) will determine if any assistance will be provided on a case-by-case basis taking into account all of the above criteria. It is anticipated that financial assistance would be significantly less common than granting of leave. It is also anticipated that, even where financial support is provided, the Office will not generally fully-fund studies.

- (2) The Office does not record education data in a way that would readily allow it to answer those questions without an unreasonable division of resources. The Office's total education and training expenses year to date as at the end of May 2013 are \$230,224.55.