

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS ATTORNEY-
GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Question No. 101

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 18 November 2013:

Public Service efficiencies

1. Has there been a reduction in business flights? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
2. Has there been a reduction in the use of external consultants and contractors? Has this impacted on the Department, and how? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
3. Provide an update of moving recruitment advertising online. Is any recruitment still in printed materials, and if yes, why? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?
4. Has the department reduced its printing costs? If no, why not? Have printing costs increased, and if yes why and how much?
5. Has the five per cent savings target been achieved – if yes, how, or if it will not, why not? What are the estimated savings for each year over the forward estimates?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

- a) The Department's travel policy guidelines require travel to be only undertaken where alternative technology options including video-conferencing and tele-conferencing are not suitable. There has been an increase in the number of flights in the 2013-14 financial year to date compared to the same period in 2012-13. This increase is due to additional functions being undertaken by the Department such as the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and an increase in operational responses in emergency management following natural disasters. Savings for each year over the forward estimates cannot be provided as divisional budgets are established each financial year based on the Department's strategic and operational priorities at that time.

- b) The Department controls its expenditure on consultants whereby all proposed consultancies above \$20,000 require the approval of the Secretary or the Deputy Secretary Strategic and Policy Coordination Group. The Department has only a relatively small number of contractors at any one time. Contractors are generally only engaged where there is no in-house capability or to meet short term urgent needs. During 2012-13 the Department used 43 consultancies compared to 46 in 2011-12, with a corresponding 12.5% reduction in expenditure. Savings for each year over the forward estimates cannot be provided as Divisional budgets are established each financial year based on the Department's strategic and operational priorities at that time.
- c) All recruitment advertising is online. Only in very rare and exceptional circumstances, such as advertising of statutory or public office holder appointments for AGD portfolio agencies and in line with the whole of government recruitment advertising guidelines, would AGD seek approval from the Department of Finance to place an advertisement in print media. Savings for each year over the forward estimates cannot be provided as divisional budgets are established each financial year based on the Department's strategic and operational priorities at that time. In addition, recruitment costs are only a small proportion of the Department's total annual expenditures.
- d) Where it is practical and effective, the Department is moving to online publications to reduce printing costs. Savings for each year over the forward estimates cannot be provided as Divisional budgets are established each financial year based on the Department's strategic and operational priorities at that time. In addition, printing costs are only a small proportion of the Department's total annual expenditures.
- e) As at 18 November 2013, the quantum expressed as a 5% savings target for 2013-14 will likely be achieved. Savings for each year over the forward estimates cannot be provided as divisional budgets are established each financial year based on the Department's strategic and operational priorities at that time.

