Question No: 7

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: Page 14, 24/05/2017

Topic: Labour hire – Training and Security

Senator O'Neill, Deborah asked:

Senator O'NEILL: I might come back to that later today, so hopefully you will be able to find an answer to that question. Under the labour hire practices, do those staff receive as much training and security clearance as permanent staff?

Ms Talbot: Certainly we have certain security requirements and we do induction with our staff when they come on board.

Senator O'NEILL: Is it the same induction process and the same level of training?

Ms Talbot: It is the same induction process. Obviously when we generally use contractors we are looking for people with specific skills—that they actually have those skillsets.

Senator O'NEILL: So less training?

Ms Talbot: It does not mean that they do not get training. I would have to take that on notice. It would really be on a case-by-case basis on what was required.

Senator O'NEILL: And what about security clearance?

Ms Talbot: Certainly there are a lot of roles where a security clearance is required. Again, I would have to look at each of those individuals to see what clearance was required. But, yes, clearances are usually required for a lot of roles in the department.

Senator O'NEILL: Do temporary staff have access to the same systems and databases as full-time staff?

Ms Talbot: They have access to a lot of systems. Some of our systems not all staff would have access to. It depends on, again, the level of clearance.

Senator O'NEILL: Is that the concern from a security point of view?

Ms Talbot: I really need to take that on notice to have a look at the details of the staff that we have got. Generally we do not put people in roles that do not have the requisite security clearance to do the job.

Senator O'NEILL: So we can be absolutely confident that the data that these temporary workers are accessing is not compromised?

Ms Talbot: I will need to take that on notice to look at what people are actually accessing. But, as I have said, we do not put people in roles to access information that they do not have an appropriate clearance for.

Senator O'NEILL: And you are confident that there are no breaches of security?

Ms Talbot: We have not had any breaches of security to my knowledge.

Answer:

All employees, including contractors (labour hire) require a baseline security clearance as a minimum if their employment term is expected to exceed three months (or upon extension past three months).

If an employee or a contractor does not already hold the necessary level of clearance, the Department of Communications and the Arts will initiate this process so a clearance can be obtained.

If a higher level of security clearance is required and they do not have that clearance but have a critical skill set, access can be provided under the Temporary Access provisions of the Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF) - Australian Government Personnel Security Protocols 7.1 and 7.1.1.

It should be noted that regardless of role or employment type, all staff (contractors, APS and SES) must have a cleared National Police check, prior to being given access to any of the Department's systems or facilities.

All staff receive a security briefing and induction on commencement in the Department before they can access any systems. Any other relevant training is discussed with the staff member and their manager and is dependent on a range of variables: the duration of their employment contract, their development needs and the operational requirements of their role, team and their work deliverables.

Access to information is controlled through the Department's electronic records management system. When non-ongoing and contract staff are engaged, their systems access is controlled to role specific and security clearance requirements.

In order to perform the role they are employed for, contractors and temporary staff have access to the relevant systems and information. This is the same protocol for permanent employees.