

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2009-2010**

Outcome 5 - Workplace Relations

DEEWR Question No.EW0856_10

Senator Fierravanti-Wells provided in writing.

Question

AWARD MODERNISATION

1 - • What impact will the Government's supposed Fair Work system and its award modernisation process have on the nursing workforce? 2 - • Can the Department quantify the pay cuts nurses in various sectors of the health system will suffer under this system? 3 - • Is it the case that nurses working in the aged care sector in particular stand to lose up to \$300 a week from the pay packets? 4 - • Is this likely to drive nurses out of the health workforce, particularly from the aged care sector which already has significant nursing staff shortages?

Answer

Question 1

Following the commencement of the national workplace relations system on 1 January 2010, the nursing sector became covered by the Nurses Award 2010. This single occupational-based modern award applies to all nurses in the national system not covered by an enterprise agreement. The modern award replaces 49 state and federal industrial instruments. This has resulted in a significant reduction of regulation for the sector, making things simpler for employers and employees to understand their rights and obligations.

Question 2

Through the availability of take-home pay orders under the Fair Work legislation, the Australian Government has provided a mechanism to ensure that no existing employee, including those working in the health system, will have their take home pay reduced as a consequence of the award modernisation process.

Question 3

No. Please refer to the response to Question 2.

Question 4

Refer to the response to Question 2. The Fair Work system is centered on collective bargaining at the enterprise level. Enterprise bargaining provides an opportunity for employers and employees to put in place arrangements to attract and retain staff, including in those sectors where staff shortages exist. In the absence of enterprise bargaining, employers may also offer wages that are above the wages provided in a modern award where they consider it desirable to do so in order to attract and retain

suitably qualified and experienced staff.