

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

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-2011**

Outcome 4 - Employment & Participation Policy

DEEWR Question No.EW0542_11

Senator Xenophon provided in writing.

Question

SPS - COMPLAINTS

How does the Department deal with complaints made against providers?

Answer

Complaints about providers can be referred to the Department in a range of ways including through a 1800 number (free call from landlines), email or by letter. Complaints related to employment services are handled by the Department's Customer Service Line, which is operated by dedicated staff in each state and territory office. Contacts or complaints received about Disability Employment Services may be referred to the Department's outsourced Complaints Resolution and Referral Service which provides specialist expertise in handling complaints from people with disability.

The Department's response to complaints depends on the source and nature of the complaint/contact. Where contact is made by a party other than the job seeker, the job seeker must give consent for the Department to contact a provider and disclose the complaint on their behalf.

Where a complaint is received about a provider, the Department may respond by either reviewing internally held data, discussion with the relevant contract manager, contacting the employment services provider or as a last resort, referral to third parties. Referrals will depend on the nature of the complaint and may include external bodies such as, Fair Work Australia, the Privacy Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission or the relevant law enforcement body.

Service providers are required under the contract to have an internal complaints handling mechanism. Complaints handling, including how effectively they are managed by providers, is part of the contract and performance management framework.