

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

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

Agency - Comcare

DEEWR Question No.EW0547_11

Senator Humphries asked on 20/10/2010, Hansard page 6.

Question

INTERSTATE CLAIMING

Senator HUMPHRIES—Is it common practice for a team or officer from a different location to make an assessment about a claim from an officer of Comcare itself? For example, if a claim were coming from a person in Canberra, would it usually be made by a person from another state office? Mr O'Connor—That is the customary practice. It was not the situation with regard to Ms Ryan's claim. Senator HUMPHRIES—Why not? Mr O'Connor—I am not aware of the detailed background, but I will take it on notice to get you an explanation why normal practice was not followed. However, irrespective of that, we believe that the fact that the claim was determined by somebody who did not know Ms Ryan, who was not connected with her or her work—

Answer

Comcare has provided the following response:

Comcare has a policy of determining staff claims in a different state office to the staff member. This policy applies to staff who are employed by Comcare at the time the claim was made (and continuing) and has been in place since 1 November 2006. The handling of claims from former Comcare staff members is determined on a case by case basis.

Ms Sara Ryan's claim was submitted after she left Comcare. Accordingly, she was an ex-employee rather than a current staff member and the policy did not apply to her claim. However, the question of whether to have Ms Ryan's claim determined in the Canberra office or an interstate office was considered by Comcare.

The main factors taken into account were that the claims services officer chosen to determine Ms Ryan's claim had expertise in dealing with complex claims and had no knowledge of Ms Ryan.

On or about the first week in November 2009, Claims Services met with Comcare's Corporate Services Branch to ascertain whether there were any concerns with Ms Ryan's claim being assessed in Canberra. The then Director, Human Resources and the General Manager of Claims Services agreed that there was no problem with the claim being handled in Canberra.