



Australian Government
Department of Employment
and Workplace Relations

Our Ref: EC25-000642

Secretary
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Dear Senators

Thank you for your letter 18 February 2025, concerning the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' appearance at the 2024–25 Additional Estimates hearings.

The enclosed information addresses the questions where information is readily available within the requested timeframe.

Responses to all questions on notice from the notice from the 2024–25 Supplementary Budget Estimates were tabled by 20 December 2024. Officials from the department will be prepared to answer further questions at the hearing.

Yours sincerely

Natalie James

24 February 2025

Cc: Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee Secretariat
eec.sen@aph.gov.au

Encl.

Question 1: The number and levels of staff currently employed by DEWR and all independent agencies within the portfolio including organisational structures.

Actual classification by headcount as at 31 December 2024, for the department, noting this excludes the independent agencies as they are not part of the department:

Classification	Headcount
APS1	0
APS2	33
APS3	159
APS4	448
APS5	645
APS6	1,072
EL1	1,324
EL2	534
SEB1	124
SEB2	30
SEB3	4
Grand Total	4,373

Data based on actual classification (includes acting arrangements) for all classifications except SEB3.

Excludes Secretary, inactive employees, casuals, public office holders.

The department's organisational structure is available at: [Organisation chart – Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government \(dewr.gov.au\)](https://www.dewr.gov.au/organisation-chart)

Question 2: A detailed breakdown of DEWR's Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and management. Please include how many staff are responsible in progressing FOIs, the average days to process, the median days to process, how many have been received, and their status -whether approved in-full, in-part, refused.

The department processes FOI requests in accordance with the requirements of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)* (FOI Act).

The department has met all its statutory timeframes for processing requests. The time taken to process a request depends on:

- the complexity of the request
- whether the scope needs to be clarified with the applicant
- whether third party consultation is required.

The department does not comment on the existence or progress of specific FOI requests. This protects the privacy of applicants and ensures that the department does not pre-empt decisions.

The department publishes a disclosure log which lists information released in response to FOI requests: www.dewr.gov.au/about-department/corporate-reporting/freedom-information-foi/foi-disclosure-log.

Staff responsible for FOI

As at 31 December 2024, the department's Information Law Team had 9 staff working in its FOI work stream. All staff also perform duties in other areas.

- Staff levels range from APS5 to EL2 classification level.
- One staff member works part-time.

FOI requests 1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024

Requests on hand at beginning of period		
On hand as at 1 July 2024	18	
Requests received during period		
On transfer from another agency	5	Total 98
Direct from applicants	93	
Decisions made		
Access granted in full	11	Total 72
Access granted in part	46	
Access refused	15	
-Documents do not exist: 11		
-Practical refusal: 2		
-Exempt in full: 2		
Alternative Outcomes		
Transferred to another agency	6	
Withdrawn	24	
On hand as at 1 January 2025	14	

Processing times (for access decisions made)	
Number of access decisions made	72
Average days to process	43
Median days to process	33

Reviews of requests received	Number
Internal reviews	
- on hand as at 1 July 2024	1
- received	9
- finalised	10
- on hand at 1 January 2025	0
Office of the Australian Information Commissioner reviews	
- on hand as at 1 July 2024	7
- received	3
- finalised	4
- on hand at 1 January 2025	6
Appeals to the Administrative Review Tribunal	
- on hand as at 1 July 2024	3
- received	0
- finalised	2
- on hand at 1 January 2025	1

Question 3: A current list of all boards, commissions, statutory appointments within the portfolio including date of appointment and cessation. Please include any vacant positions, the reason for the vacancy, when it became vacant and for how long it is expected to be vacant.

The department reports on ministerial appointments and vacancies under Senate Order 15. The latest available information is published at:
www.dewr.gov.au/about-us/corporate-reporting/senate-order-listings/senate-order-15-departmental-and-agency-appointments-and-vacancies

Question 4: An updated full breakdown on expenses related to the repayment of the underpayment of DEWR staff. This includes the cost of all external providers, payroll audit, legal advice costs, internal legal advice, advice from AGS;

Question 5: An updated list of any meetings or contact between DEWR and the Fair Work Ombudsman relating to DEWR's staff underpayments, including any file notes, agendas, minutes or correspondence related to those meetings and the staff underpayments.

Question 6: An updated breakdown of how many people have been underpaid since the audit has stated, include a breakdown across APS levels, the average amount, and the total cost to DEWR for the underpayment (including interest costs);

There have been no changes to the responses for questions 4 to 6. Please refer to responses to questions 4 to 6 in your letter of 29 October 2024 and tabled at the hearing of 6 November 2024.

Question 7: A copy of any internal correspondence, guidance notes or policy documents given from DEWR to staff members regarding their "right to disconnect" since the last Estimates hearings

The department's corporate areas regularly communicate with our staff about their conditions.

Question 8: A copy of any correspondence between DEWR and representatives of the CFMEU since the May 2024/25 Budget Estimates.

Question 9: A copy of any correspondence between the current Minister for Employment (and his office) representatives of the CFMEU since the May 2024/25 Budget Estimates.

Question 10: A copy of any correspondence between the former Minister for Employment (and his office) and representatives of the CFMEU since the May 2024/25 Budget Estimates.

Question 11: A copy of any notes or records of phone conversations between DEWR and the CFMEU since the May 2024/25 Budget Estimates.

Question 12: A copy of any notes or records of phone conversations between the current Minister for Employment (and his office) and the CFMEU since the May 2024/25 Budget Estimates.

Questions 8 to 12 refer to interactions between representatives of the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU) and, variously, the department, the current and former Ministers for Employment and Workplace Relations, and their representatives, since the May 2024-25 Budget Estimates.

The department, Ministers and their offices interact with the CFMEU and its representatives in different contexts.

Question 13: A copy of any notes or records of phone conversations between DEWR and the former Minister for Employment (and his office) since the May 2024/25 Budget Estimates.

The department engaged with the former Minister and his office regularly as required.

Question 16: A list of all ministerial submissions that have been created after 1 September 2024, including the area of the Department that prepared the submission, dates submitted to both Ministers, and all Assistant Ministers, requested signature dates, actual signature dates, and whether the Minister disagreed with any recommendations, as per the table below:

The department prepares briefs within agreed timeframes on a case-by-case basis.

Question 17: A list of all meetings the Department has undertaken with external stakeholders, which were at the request of the current Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and/or his office, since the November 2024/25 Budget Estimates hearings.

The department regularly meets with a wide range of stakeholders as part of our business as usual and as part of specific projects.

Question 18: The number of compliance notices have been issued under the new Workforce Australia system.

Question 19: The latest workforce Australia caseload, how many are in each stream, how long they have been in the stream, when they first became a participant.

Question 20: A table outlining the number of long term and very long term jobseekers in the caseload broken down by how many years they have been in the system.

Answers to questions 18, and 20 can be found in the department's published and publicly available data at www.dewr.gov.au/employment-services-data.

Workforce Australia does not allocate people into categories known as streams as was done under the previous employment services arrangements.

Question 21: Latest estimates or data on the VET-FEE HELP Scheme Redress payments, broken down by State, age, average amount paid to each applicant, median amount per applicant, lowest amount paid, highest amount paid, average days to progress payment of redress, median days from application for redress to payment.

The amount of payments made nor the number of students re-credited have not changed since my last letter to you prior to the previous hearing of this committee.

Question 22: Release an unredacted interim skills reporting schedule for the past financial year.

The Fee Free TAFE Skills Agreement provides a framework under which state and territory governments report information about what has been delivered under the agreement. These report schedules enable the Commonwealth to assess progress and make milestone payments.

The Fee Free TAFE Skills Agreement does not include states and territories agreement to publicly release their Fee Free TAFE quarterly reports. States and Territories have provided this data in confidence.

Question 23: Most up to date data on the number of in training apprentices and trainees, broken down by gender, age, state, and electorate.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is the national skills and training data custodian for all States, Territories and the Commonwealth. The most up to date data on the number of in training apprentices and trainees, broken down by gender, age and state is available at [Apprentices and trainees 2024: June quarter](#)

Data on the number of in training apprentices and trainees broken down by electorate was recently provided to the Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment at No.IQ25-000001.

Question 24: An up to date breakdown of Workforce Australia participant numbers by the points target they need to achieve during each monthly period.

This data can be found in the department's published and publicly available data at www.dewr.gov.au/employment-services-data.