



Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee
Additional Estimates 2023–24
Wednesday, 14 February 2024
Daily summary

The committee met from 9.00am until 11.00pm

The committee called:

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Fair Work Ombudsman, Fair Work Commission, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Safe Work Australia and Australian Skills.

Quality Authority were on the program but were released before their scheduled appearance.

Cross-portfolio, Corporate and Enabling Services, and general matters

- Update to internal audit and other measures undertaken in relation to staff underpayment in the Department since last estimates, including the use of a communications consultant and correspondence with the Minister;
- Staff raising issues relating to refused breaks and deducted pay for toilet breaks;
- Work from Home policy and arrangements and measuring productivity;
- Arrangements for staff working outside of Australia;
- Application of the 'Right to Disconnect' in Federal departments;
- Current head count of APS and non-APS staff in the department; and
- Effect of the passing of the Closing Loopholes Bill on the department.

Outcome 3: Workplace Relations

- Opening of closed non-competitive grant rounds for the Working Women's Centre, reasons for delay, timeline for open competitive grant rounds and eligibility criteria;
- Shadow Treasurer The Hon Angus Taylor MP interview on Insiders Sunday 11 February;
- Right to Disconnect amendment to the Closing Loopholes Bill, drafting of the amendment and attempts to remove the criminal penalty;
- Gig workers - enforcing minimum standards;
- Casual employee conversion, regular patterns of work and the process of casual to permanent part time/full time conversion; and
- Review of the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Outcome 1: Employment

- Work for the Dole, mutual obligations, payment suspensions, complaints about providers and number of first nations people having payments suspended;

- PALM Scheme new deed and guidelines, consultation and engagement with the scheme, extensions to paid parity requirements, stand down provisions and disengaged workers; and
- ParentsNext replacement program and outcomes of consultation.

Fair Work Ombudsman

- Underpayment of casual staff at universities; investigations, payments recovered and current workload of investigations team;
- Pay rates in the black coalmining industry;
- Review of the Fair Work Ombudsman;
- Right of entry permits; and
- Underpayment of migrant workers.

Fair Work Commission

- Better Off Overall Test;
- Black coalmining industry award exclusion of casuals;
- Right to Disconnect; resourcing for the new responsibility; and
- Casual loading.

Safe Work Australia

- Released from the hearing without questions.

Outcome 2: Skills and Training (Including Jobs and Skills Australia)

- Apprenticeship and trainee numbers and changes between years and number of female apprentices;
- Subsidised training programs;
- Skills agreement reporting from states and territories;
- Fee-free TAFE enrolments across states and territories;
- Special Agricultural Workforce Visa;
- Appointment of Professor Barney Glover AO as the Commissioner of Jobs and Skills Australia; security clearance required;
- Clean Energy Workforce study;
- TAFE Centres of Excellence; and
- Australian Skills Guarantee.

National Centre for Vocational Education Research

- Commencement and completion rates of apprenticeships and traineeships.

Australian Skills Quality Authority

- Released from the hearing without questions.

The committee will return on 15 February 2024 at 9:00am in Senate Committee Room 2S3 for further examination of the Education Portfolio.