



Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee  
Additional Estimates 2025-26  
Wednesday, 11 February 2026  
Daily summary

The committee met from 9:00am until 8.36pm.

The committee called the Employment and Workplace Relations Portfolio, discussing the following topics:

**Department of Employment and Workplace Relations**

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

- Termination and performance of former secretary, Ms Natalie James; and
- Outsourcing and labour hire in contact and call centres.

Outcome 3: Workplace Relations

- Working conditions on cruise ships;
- Targeted Compliance Framework;
- Administration of the CFMEU - Queensland Commission of Inquiry report, Geoffrey Watson SC investigation, resignation of Mr Zach Smith;
- Same Job, Same Pay orders;
- *Fair Work Amendment (Baby Priya) Act 2025* - consultation with unions;
- *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* Review – Final Report;
- *Fair Work Amendment (Closing Loopholes) Act 2023*;
- Wage growth trend;
- Potential for industrial action in the transport sector; and
- Secure Australian Jobs Code.

Outcome 1: Employment

- Self-Employment Assistance program;
- Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme;
- Workforce Australia audit;
- Reconnection, Employment and Learning (REAL) Program; and
- Workforce Australia targets and provider performance.

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

- Priority hiring incentive;
- Key apprenticeship program;
- Closing the Gap in skills and training;
- Skills and demand visa; and
- Fee-free TAFE.

#### Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman

- Cross River Rail Woolloongabba incident;
- Active investigations into CFMEU;
- Criminalisation of wage theft – investigations;
- Pilot increased monitoring of wages under the Seagoing Industry Award 2020;
- Voluntary redundancies within the agency;
- Unintentional use of corporate credit cards by staff;
- Allegations of underpayments for cruise ship workers; and
- Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme.

#### Fair Work Commission

- Junior pay rates;
- Report by Geoffrey Watson into Victorian division of the CFMEU;
- Operational capacity of the Fair Work Commission;
- Termination of the Small Business Support measure;
- Multi-employer bargaining; and
- Right of entry permits.

#### Comcare

- *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* Review – Final Report recommendations.

#### Safe Work Australia

- Exposure limits for chemicals.

#### Australian Skills Quality Authority

- Cancelled qualifications - impact and complaints from students; and
- Reappointment of the Chief Executive Officer.

That concludes the committee's examination of the Additional Estimates 2025-26 for the Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio. The committee will meet again tomorrow to examine the Education portfolio.

If you have any questions, please contact the secretariat on (02) 6277 3521 or [eec.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:eec.sen@aph.gov.au).