

Department of Finance

Response to Question on Notice

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON JOB SECURITY

Inquiry into Job Security

Hearing of 27 August 2021

Question on Notice 1 (Proof Hansard page 6)

Senator SHELDON: Just before I hand over to Senator Small, I want to follow up on a couple of questions that I was asking you before. This is to you, Mr Hetherington, and Mr Yannopoulos may want to make some additional comments. CPSU, the Community and Public Sector Union, says there are at least 30,000 people engaged as contractors or through labour hire. I've asked a number of department this question on notice through the committee, and Veterans' Affairs, for example, said 39.9 per cent of their workforce are labour hire or contractors. A Canberra Times investigation in January this year found one in five workers across the Public Service are engaged as labour hire or on other external arrangements. Do these figures sound feasible to you?

Mr Yannopoulos: The numbers appear higher than we would understand. But it has to be dealt with, as per my earlier evidence, on an agency-by-agency basis. It is true that the Department of Veterans' Affairs had a very high proportion of labour hire to try to get a hold of their backlogs. The government made a decision at the last budget to increase their APS staffing levels—I'll get one of my officers to dig out the exact number, but it was a bit over 400 people—and so that will bring that percentage down quite considerably. As I've testified earlier, we don't have an overall figure, but one in five to me seems high.

Response

The 2021-22 Budget increased the Average Staffing Level for the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) by 584.0 in the 2021-22 financial year, which represents a 39.5 per cent increase. DVA was also provided with \$164.6 million over two years from 2021-22 for additional resources to ensure continued capacity to meet veteran support needs and process compensation and other claims in a timely way.