

**Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (2015 Budget Measures) Bill 2015
17 September 2015
Answers to questions on notice from the Veterans' Affairs portfolio**

Question 5

Outcome: 1, 2 Program: 1.2, 1.6 and 2.6

Topic: Case work loads

(FADT Hansard Proof 17 September 2015, p 22).

Senator LAMBIE asked:

Thank you. How many cases does each officer have in Veterans' Affairs? How many cases do each of them have stacked up on their desks?

Answer

Compensation delegates had an average caseload of 104 claims each during 2014-15.

It should be noted that each caseload includes a mixture of claims at various stages of the claims process e.g. newly registered, those awaiting information/evidence, and claims that are ready to be determined (decision ready).

Therefore on any given day a delegate does not actively work on each case in their holding.

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Question 6

Outcome: All Program: All

Topic: Staff changeover rates

(FADT Hansard Proof 17 September 2015, p 22).

Senator LAMBIE asked:

What is your staff changeover rate? Can I have the numbers to that, at some stage, please? I put that on notice. Do you have figures which show the decrease in staff for DVA over the past 10 years? Can I have that on notice too, please?

Answer

DVA had an ongoing turnover rate of 7.1% per annum in 2014-15.

Table 1 shows the number of staff (headcount) for the last 10 years; i.e. actual staff as compared to Full Time Equivalent (FTE).

**Table 1: DVA number of staff
2006 – 2015**

Date	Headcount
30 June 2006	2455
30 June 2007	2364
30 June 2008	2366
30 June 2009	2132
30 June 2010	2118
30 June 2011	2125
30 June 2012	2115
30 June 2013	2058
30 June 2014	1987
30 June 2015	1968

Source: DVA Annual Reports

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Question 7

Outcome: 1 Program: 1.1

Topic: Veterans' Review Board

(FADT Hansard Proof 17 September 2015, p 24).

Senator LAMBIE asked:

Do you have the numbers on who actually goes to that side and how many go to lawyers to prepare their case? Do have the numbers on that?

Answer

Over the last three financial years, the Veterans' Review Board has finalised on average 3300 appeals per year.

In those appeals, on average over 88.6 per cent of applicants had a representative. Largely, these representatives were from major ex-service organisations. Of those not represented, it was overwhelmingly their choice not to be represented.

Under section 147(3) of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*, people with legal qualifications are prohibited from representing applicants at Board hearings. This restriction was first introduced in 1929 as part of the *Australian Soldiers Act 1920*. It was brought in after lobbying from the Returned and Services League and it was intended to prevent appeal hearings becoming overly adversarial, technical and resource intensive. This prohibition continues to enjoy the support of most major Ex-service Organisations.

Applicants are, of course, permitted to consult lawyers prior to their hearing. Written legal submissions will be accepted by the Board for consideration as evidence.

The Board does not keep statistics in respect of applicants who consult a lawyer to prepare written submissions for their hearing.

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Question 8

Outcome: 1 Program: 1.2 and 1.6

Topic: Statistics for psychological injuries

(FADT Hansard Proof 17 September 2015, p 30).

Senator LAMBIE asked:

I am sure you will have to put this question on notice; I am actually looking for stats. When people leave the Defence Force and put in a claim for a physical injury, how many of those people end up putting in a claim later in life—without PTSD; do not include PTSD—for depression, alcohol abuse, drug abuse and major depression? I would like to see the stats for any psychological injuries they come down with, besides PTSD.

Mr Carmody: You are interested in former members who put their claims in after they leave the service?

Senator LAMBIE: No, of those who were medically discharged with a physical injury—and they only put in a claim for a physical injury—I would like to see how many of them, further down the track—

Mr Carmody: Put in a subsequent claim.

Senator LAMBIE: A subsequent claim for those things: every psychological injury you can think about, apart from PTSD.

Answer

The Department of Veterans' Affairs does not capture information regarding the number of medically discharged Australian Defence Force members (with an accepted physical disability) who subsequently claim for a mental health condition.