

## Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

Answers to questions on notice

### Agriculture, Water and the Environment Portfolio

**Question No:** 103  
**Hearing:** Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Corporate  
**Division/Agency:** People Division  
**Topic:** Working from home  
**Question Date:** 04 November 2020  
**Question Type:** Written

**Senator McKenzie asked:**

1. What is the number of public servants working from home for each month from the Department?
2. How has the Department measured increased, static or declining productivity and what are the conclusions from that measure?
3. What is the number of sick days from the Department with a work-from-home workforce for each month of the lockdown and the corresponding sick days for the corresponding months in 2019?

**Answer:**

**Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment**

1. The Department officially directed staff to work from home in late March 2020, figures provided are approximate for the months April 2020 to October 2020.

Month	APS staff working from home
April 2020	4000
May 2020	4855
June 2020	4730
July 2020	4272
August 2020	4324
September 2020	3953
October 2020	1600

2. The Department has not seen a decline in productivity. During the pandemic AWE employees have:

- established the new organisation, including a new Secretary, transitioning all staff to a single enterprise agreement and establishing new internal policies
- continued to deliver government priorities including to;
  - help to carry out additional health checks on the international travellers coming into the country
  - move additional resources to screening international mail, to address the increased volume during the pandemic
  - deliver the government's International Freight Assistance Mechanism to re-establish and maintain existing supply chains in the agricultural and seafood sectors
  - safely closed then reopened parks and gardens, supported by COVID management plans

- work with the National Bushfire Recovery Agency and Emergency Management Australia to ensure farmers and rural communities have the tools and assistance they need to recover from the bushfires
- increase the number of environment approvals under the EPBC Act that were improved on time from 12% to 98% and cut our backlog of key decisions by more than 60%.

3. The Department came into existence on 1 February 2020, so data has been provided from that point in time. To generate the comparative dataset would be an unreasonable diversion of resources.

Table 1 outlines the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) days of personal leave taken per FTE in the department each month during the coronavirus pandemic.

Month	Personal leave takings per FTE (FTE days)
February 2020	0.87
March 2020	1.01
April 2020	0.59
May 2020	0.70
June 2020	0.77
July 2020	0.85
August 2020	0.82
September 2020	0.84

*Table 1 Personal leave days per month*

**Note:** FTE days of personal leave does not include the leave of employees who left the department during that month.

## **Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA)**

### 1. Staff working from home

Month	APS staff working from home
March 2020	N/A
April 2020	156
May 2020	153
June 2020	152
July 2020	134
August 2020	136
September 2020	12
October 2020	12

**Note:** As of 14 September 2020, all AFMA employees, with the exception of Victorian-based staff and a small number of vulnerable individuals, returned to the office in some capacity.

2. AFMA Management monitored productivity levels in the agency during the pandemic crisis, particularly through team managers paying additional attention to employee outcomes. AFMA considers productivity levels increased. This assessment is based on the continuing high delivery level of outputs/outcomes by AFMA across the full range of regulatory services to the

fishing industry (including responding to increased demands from the industry), as well as positive feedback received from the Commonwealth fishing industry and other key stakeholders.

### 3. Personal Leave days per FTE

Month	Personal leave takings per FTE (FTE days) 2019	Personal leave takings per FTE (FTE days) 2020
April	0.57	0.97
May	0.80	0.51
June	0.74	0.44
July	0.84	0.60
August	1.08	0.62
September	0.85	1.0
October	1.0	0.44

**Note:** The data includes all personal leave taken (Sick/Carers). Full office shut down was from 31 March 2020, so March figures are not included in this data.

## Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA)

### 1. Staff working from home

Month	APS staff working from home
March 2020	172
April 2020	173
May 2020	173
June 2020	149
July 2020	143
August 2020	143
September 2020	141
October 2020	139

2. The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority's (APVMA) quarterly timeframe performance statistics indicate the following:

- a. Q1 FY2019-20 – 85% of total applications processed within timeframe
- b. Q2 FY2019-20 – 87%
- c. Q3 FY2019-20 – 90%
- d. Q4 FY2019-20 – 90%
- e. Q1 FY2020-21 – 94%

### 3. Personal Leave days per FTE:

Month	Personal leave takings per FTE (FTE days) 2019	Personal leave takings per FTE (FTE days) 2020
February	183.29	135.35
March	200.08	126.57
April	181.3	47.44
May	248.25	53.29
June	210.72	70.8
July	165.11	131.48
August	170.98	76.81
September	177.6	109.91
October	183.29	135.35

Table 1 Personal leave days per month

**FOR DEPARTMENT/MINISTERIAL OFFICE INFORMATION ONLY**

*NB: previous numbers were for **total sick days only** and was the total hours divided by 7.35 to get full time days taken for the period as a stand-alone total. As per the revised request the new totals are for **personal leave** which under the APVMA Personal Leave Policy and our accruals **includes** Carer's Leave as well as sick days with or without medical certificate.*

## Bureau of Meteorology

### 1. Staff working from home

Month	APS staff working from home
March 2020	1260
April 2020	1243
May 2020	1245
June 2020	1164
July 2020	1175
August 2020	957
September 2020	962
October 2020	964

**Note:** This data is the approximate working from home numbers that have been provided in the weekly/fortnightly APSC COVID survey, as at the end of the particular month. The numbers represent an estimate of the staff working exclusively from home, noting that a large majority of Bureau staff are based in Melbourne.

2. The Bureau measures productivity through its services to its customers. The Bureau has not reduced any of its weather, climate, water, ocean services during the COVID-19 crisis and continued to provide all essential services to industry, emergency services, the Australian Defence Force and the wider Australian community. Over the lockdown period services continued to be provided during two cyclones crossing the coast in NT and WA, the thunderstorm events in south east Queensland, and reporting and advising on multiple east coast lows affecting NSW and Vic.

### 3. Personal Leave days per FTE

Month	Personal leave takings per FTE (FTE days) 2019	Personal leave takings per FTE (FTE days) 2020
March	0.62	0.52
April	0.53	0.23
May	0.77	0.32
June	0.66	0.35
July	0.86	0.37
August	0.78	0.33
September	0.74	0.38
October	0.76	0.39

(The leave in the above table includes personal sick leave illness or injury (both paid and unpaid, and with and without medical evidence).

### Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)

1. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (the Authority) had on average 268 employees (including labour hire staff) during the period from March to October 2020. From mid-March 2020 to mid-July 2020 90 per cent of staff were working from home. From mid-July to 31 July 2020 this percentage decreased to 80 per cent. From 31 July to 31 August 2020 approximately 70 per cent of staff were working three days per week at home and two days in the office. From 1 October 2020 to now, approximately 60 per cent of staff are working two days per week from home and three days in the office.

2. Over the period of March to October 2020 the Authority has continued its usual tracking and reporting on program, activity and project delivery. Through this the Authority is able to track actual milestone delivery against anticipated delivery timeframes as outlined in planning documents; including how staff are tracking against the completion of tasks in relation to the delivery of these. To date most projects and programs are being delivered within the bounds of expected timeframes, indicating that our staff have continued to be as productive in completing their work, while working from home, as they would be in the office. In addition to this, anecdotal information from individual line managers has also been used to monitor the ongoing effectiveness of working from home arrangements which indicates our staff work performance remains consistent.

### 3. Personal Leave days per FTE:

Month	Personal leave takings per FTE (FTE days) 2019	Personal leave takings per FTE (FTE days) 2020
March	1.27	1.56
April	0.86	0.66
May	0.94	0.67
June	1.03	0.56
July	0.96	0.69
August	1.18	1.31
September	1.35	0.78
October	1.42	0.85

## Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA)

1. The following table outlines the total Headcount of APS employees working from home.

Month	APS staff working from home
March 2020	291
April 2020	277
May 2020	277
June 2020	280
July 2020	277
August 2020	277
September 2020	260
October 2020	258

2. The MDBA has not captured this data.

3. Personal leave days per FTE

Month	Personal leave takings per FTE (FTE days) 2019	Personal leave takings per FTE (FTE days) 2020
March	0.40	0.39
April	0.57	0.76
May	0.70	0.44
June	0.87	0.43
July	1.07	0.61
August	0.90	0.62
September	0.77	0.80
October	0.58	0.48

<b>Portfolio Agency</b>	<b>Response</b>
Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA)	See above
Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA)	See above
Bureau of Meteorology (BoM)	See above
Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC)	Nil response – not APS employees
Director of National Parks (DNP)	Included in DAWE response
Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC)	Nil response – not APS employees
Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC)	Nil response – not APS employees
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)	See above
Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA)	See above
Regional Investment Corporation (RIC)	Nil response – not APS employees
Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (AgriFutures)	Nil response – not APS employees
Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (SHFT)	Nil response – not APS employee
Wine Australia	Nil response – not APS employees