

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates February 2017

Communications Portfolio

Australia Post

Question No: 74

Australia Post

Hansard Ref: Page 72, 28/02/2017

Topic: Employees working while on workers compensation

Senator Abetz, Eric asked:

Senator ABETZ: Have there been any reimbursements to Australia Post by employees caught engaged in other commercial activities whilst allegedly off on workers compensation?

Mr Fahour: If people are not working at Australia Post, and it is due to the fact that they are not able to work, and they are doing things that are inconsistent with the rules of the scheme, then appropriate action will be taken.

Senator ABETZ: Right. And have there been real-life examples of that occurring within Australia Post where you have sought compensation or repayment?

Mr Fahour: I am not aware, personally, of individual cases because—

Senator ABETZ: All right, is anybody else aware of individual cases?

Mr Fahour: If you would like us to follow up to see if there are cases—

Senator ABETZ: Yes, if you can take that on notice.

Mr Fahour: We will take that on notice.

Senator ABETZ: For example, one person running an internet-based company; another allegedly as a national sales and marketing manager. Did Australia Post receive repayments? And were those people were pursued for fraud and, if they were not pursued for fraud, was there any particular union pressure placed on Australia Post not to pursue those—

Mr Fahour: Sure. We will definitely follow those up. But could I just make a statement, Senator, about that particular point, which is very important—

Senator ABETZ: Could I stop you? I doubt it! Go for it.

Mr Fahour: Just a quick one. We will take that on notice. But I just want to say this: it is people's right—while they are not working in their duties—at home to be able to pursue business opportunities, to be internet entrepreneurs, to have a life outside of work. Because we do not own them; we give them employment.

Senator ABETZ: Of course. Understood.

Answer:

There have been a very small number of cases where Australia Post has recovered overpayments from workers as a result of it being identified that those workers received workers compensation payments that were in excess of their correct entitlements. Recovery action was taken in accordance with the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRC Act).

Australia Post has pursued a very small number of employees for alleged fraud in workers compensation cases where the factors outlined below have supported doing so. In making a decision to pursue alleged fraudulent behaviour, Australia Post needs to consider a range of factors including the strength of the evidence, the extent of the alleged fraud, the time and resources likely to be associated with pursuing it, and the likelihood of recovery. Ultimately, each case needs to be considered on its merits.

No unions have pressured Australia Post not to pursue fraud.