

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 150
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 3
Program: Australian Antarctic Division (AAD)
Topic: Labour hire
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Question Type: Spoken

Senator Urquhart asked:

Senator URQUHART: I now want to touch on the labour hire companies. Does the Antarctic Division in the department use any labour hire companies to source staff?

Dr Gales: We have in many ways more itinerant staffing arrangements than many departments because of our peaks in summer, when we recruit annually a large number of people to travel south and run our stations and support the science we undertake through that. That is undertaken through normal—

Senator URQUHART: They are employed through the Antarctic Division?

Dr Gales: They are employed through the department. In some areas the department has used labour hire companies to recruit staff in, usually for shorter term areas of work.

Senator URQUHART: What would those sorts of areas be? What sort of expertise?

Dr Gales: I would feel more comfortable to take the question on notice, just so I can ensure that I am exactly accurate rather than listing the couple of areas that I am aware of now.

Senator URQUHART: I am happy for you to take it on notice. I have a number of other questions, so I will run through them and maybe you can then give me a comprehensive outlay on notice. Does the department use labour hire agreements? If you employ people, do you then have an agreement with the labour hire company? If you have used them, for how long have you used labour hire companies? How many staff are employed under those arrangements? I know that might be spasmodic but maybe you can give us detail around that. How many staff are employed by the division or the department as contractors? Who authorises the use of the labour hire companies? Is the minister aware of the reliance on those labour hire arrangements? Do staff under those labour hire arrangements receive as much training and security clearance as permanent staff? Do staff under those arrangements receive the same pay and conditions as permanent staff? Do these temporary staff have access to the same systems and databases? Is this a concern from a security perspective—so, if they do, what sort of security do you have in place? Does it impact on the productivity of the division or department if staff employed via labour hire arrangements are unable to access the required resources to do their jobs—so, if they do not have the same access, do they then have issues with how they can actually do the job? That is the compact of questions.

Answer:

The Australian Antarctic Division uses labour hire companies to source staff. We currently have eleven individuals at the Division contracted through a labour hire arrangement. They are employed in a range of areas within the Division including Information and Communication Technology, Engineering and Supply Services. Their expertise includes: IT business analysis; database support; logistics; inventory management; and civil engineering. They are all employed through individual agreements with a labour hire company, with periods ranging

from six weeks up to 12 months. Authorisation for the use of a labour hire arrangement is given by the Director of the Australian Antarctic Division.

Individuals covered by labour hire agreements receive any training necessary to undertake their duties. Their pay and conditions are the responsibility of the labour hire company, however their pay is generally linked to an APS level and therefore in line with other staff at that level.

Labour hire staff have access to the systems and databases necessary to do the duties they have been employed to undertake. They undertake the necessary security clearance process prior to accessing any systems, so there is no increased security risk in that sense. To date there have been no issues with labour hire staff receiving the necessary clearances, so it has not been a productivity issue.

The AAD is responsible for its own recruitment arrangements and does not report on labour hire arrangements to the minister.