

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2014 - 2015

Outcome: Skills and Training

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000189

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing.

National Training Complaints Hotline

Question

1. How much funding is allocated to the National Training Complaints Hotline?
2. How many staff monitor the Hotline?
3. Will the National Training Complaints Hotline actually resolve student issues and concerns or simply refer them to ASQA or other State, Territory or Commonwealth departments and agencies?
4. How many calls has the Hotline received to date?
5. What issues have been raised?
6. Is the Department advertising the Hotline? Where? How much is this costing?

Answer

1. The Department of Education and Training's call centre, which receives the calls from complainants, has advised that it will be charging the Department around \$21,400 (GST inclusive) for activities related to implementing and managing the Hotline to the end of April 2015. This includes initial establishment costs for the Hotline (approximately \$16 300 GST inclusive), and ongoing costs for the Department's call centre.
2. The Hotline operates as part of the "Skilling Australia Information Line" at the department's call centre.

Within the department's call centre, staffing allocated to taking hotline calls will vary depending on the level of demand for the service.

Two Average Staffing Level (ASL) has been allocated within the Skills Policy Division of the Department of Education and Training for assessment and referral of complaints. Staffing requirements will be monitored on an ongoing basis, so that there is appropriate resourcing to ensure the effectiveness of the hotline.

States and territories have nominated contacts to assist with the referral of complaints within their jurisdictions.

3. The Hotline does not investigate complaints. It reviews complaints and forwards them to the most appropriate agency, authority or jurisdiction for consideration. By providing a single number for training complaints, the hotline, an initiative of the Council of Australian Governments Industry and Skills Council, is making it easier for students, parents, employers and others concerned about the quality of skills training, to have their complaint heard and actioned.

4. As at close of business on 20 May 2015, 277 complaints had been received by the Hotline.
5. The majority of complaints raised relate to consumer concerns with VET FEE-HELP or registered training organisations.
6. The department has advertised the Hotline through a range of mechanisms.
 - A media release was issued by Assistant Minister Birmingham on 20 January 2015.
 - A dedicated web page was established for the Hotline (www.education.gov.au/trainingcomplaints).
 - The Hotline was also advertised on the department's 'Vet Reform' website (<http://vetreform.industry.gov.au/news/national-training-complaints-hotline-launched>).
 - The launch of the Hotline was advertised in the department's February 2015 *Skills@Work* newsletter.
 - The Hotline was mentioned extensively by Assistant Minister Birmingham in speeches and communications with the VET sector, in media interviews and on social media platforms.
 - The department liaised with state and territory governments and VET sector peak bodies who have assisted in advertising the launch of the Hotline.

As the Hotline has been advertised through departmental mechanisms, any staffing costs involved have been met through existing resourcing.