

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017

Agency - Fair Work Ombudsman

Department of Employment Question No. EMSQ16-000880

Senator McKenzie asked on 19 October 2016 on proof Hansard page 109

Question

FWO - Contact with the President of the Farmers' Federation

CHAIR: Have you ever met with the president of the Farmers' Federation?

Ms James: Personally, no, I have not. I am sure that members of my staff have.

CHAIR: That is all right. Can you also then take on notice and provide some file notes about when you were, if you ever were, contacted by the National Farmers' Federation to support and help promote the work that they were doing in educating growers and producers to be more aware of their workplace obligations?

Ms James: Certainly.

CHAIR: My understanding is that you were contacted to assist, to promote, to engage, and nobody has heard from you.

Ms James: I am happy to take that on notice.

Answer

On 25 August 2016, the Fair Work Ombudsman, Natalie James, received an email from Sarah McKinnon, General Manager, Workplace Relations and Legal Affairs at the National Farmers Federation (NFF) requesting a meeting to discuss how the NFF could work more closely with the FWO on issues flowing from the FWO's Harvest Trail Inquiry.

On 26 August 2016, the FWO's Executive Director – Dispute Resolution and Compliance, Steven Ronson sent a response by email to Ms McKinnon on Ms James' behalf to arrange a meeting. For a variety of scheduling reasons on both sides, it took some time to confirm a face-to-face meeting.

The meeting was held on 4 November 2016 and was attended in Sydney by FWO's Director of Regional Services; FWO's Director of Knowledge Solutions, NFF's General Manager of Workplace Relations and Legal Affairs and the Industrial Relations Manager of NSW Farmers Association.

A range of topics were canvassed during the meeting including:

- The FWO's 417 Inquiry report;
- the FWO's Harvest Trail Inquiry; and
- FWO litigations.

The FWO and NFF agreed to meet on a more regular basis in the future.