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Topic: Absenteeism
Verbal: 25 May 2015

CHAIR: Dr Laing, this committee has had an ongoing inquiry into the performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services. I am the first to acknowledge that has affected morale at some levels within DPS. What is morale like in the Department of Senate? Has there been any increase in absenteeism or any particular issues in any subsections of the department that the committee needs to be aware of?

Dr Laing: I do not believe so. I do not want to be a pollyanna, but I think that we work hard, we enjoy it and we know why we are here. We are here to serve the Senate and its committees. There is a very clear purpose for us in coming to work every day. I think that is an aid to morale even though the workload is sometimes horrible.

CHAIR: This is the other aspect of it. The workload is increasing. Sometimes when people feel overwhelmed they have unexplained absences, sick days or however you might characterise it. Has there been any change in that?

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Dr Laing: I will take that on notice but I am not aware of any marked change in the pattern of sick leave usage.

Answer

The Department of the Senate grants leave on account of illness from an employee's personal/carer's leave (PCL) balance.

The total amount of PCL taken per person in recent years is set out in the table below:

- 2014 - 8.6 days per person
- 2013 - 10.7 days per person
- 2012 - 9.8 days per person in 2012
- 2011 - 9.4 days per person

During the period 1 January to 21 May 2015 an average of 2.3 days PCL per person was taken.

These figures are inclusive of long term, chronic illnesses.