

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2015

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Australian Public Service Commission

Outcome/Program: 1.1

Topic: Reduction in Sick Leave Entitlements for Public Servants

Senator: Ludwig

Question reference number: 340

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 10 July 2015

Number of pages: 2

Question:

On May 4, it was reported in the Canberra Times that there could be changes to the sick leave entitlements of 160 000 Commonwealth Public servants.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/public-service/higher-wages-offered-for-fewer-public-service-sickies-20150504-1mz82h.html>

1. Could you provide a detailed outline of the proposed changes?
2. How far have these negotiations progressed?
3. Has legal advice been sought with regard to this change? If yes:
 1. Did the advice suggest that it would be legal to reduce sick leave?
 2. How much was spent on the legal advice?
 3. Who provided the legal advice?
 4. When was the advice received?
4. Has there been any research into the likely affects this change would have on workers and their families? If no, why not? If yes:
 1. Please provide a summary of these effects.
 2. How much did the research cost?
 3. Who performed the research?
 4. When was the research received?
5. Has there been any research into the likely affects this change would have on workers who suffer chronic or acute illnesses throughout their working lives? If no, why not? If yes:
 1. Please provide a summary of these effects.
 2. How much did the research cost?
 3. Who performed the research?
 4. When was the research received?
6. Have any representatives of these workers expressed concern about the change of conditions?
 1. If yes, please detail.

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Answer:

1. The article is referencing the use of changes to personal/carer's leave entitlements as productivity measures to offset public sector wage increases. Agencies bargain enterprise arrangements at the agency level in accordance with the Australian Government Employment Public Sector Workplace Bargaining Policy (Bargaining Policy). Under the Bargaining Policy, any pay rise must be offset by genuine productivity improvements. Part 3.1.6 of the Bargaining Policy provides that improving workforce availability, for example by reducing unscheduled absences, is a productivity improvement.

The Bargaining Policy does not require agencies to reduce existing entitlements to personal/carer's leave. Agencies will need to decide if they wish to modify personal/carer's leave entitlements as part of the bargaining process. No change to entitlements will come into effect until the enterprise agreement has been supported by employees through a ballot.

2-6.

Questions of this nature are best directed to individual agencies