

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2011-2012**

Agency - Fair Work Australia

DEEWR Question No. EW1075_12

Senator Abetz asked on 15 February 2012 , Hansard page 34

Question

FWA - Weekly meetings with Australian Government Solicitor

Senator ABETZ: Right. How many of these weekly meetings have there been, Mr Nassios? Mr Nassios: I could not tell you exactly but they started from March 2011. There obviously would have been individual weeks where we would not have met for one reason or another, but I would have to do a rough arithmetic at the moment. Senator ABETZ: Wait a minute. Are they weekly meetings or not? Mr Nassios: Weekly meetings, yes, except there would be weeks where clearly it was just not possible to have a meeting for absences, et cetera. Senator ABETZ: So, was it fortnightly? Ms O'Neill: It might be more helpful, Senator, to take that on notice and then we can— Senator ABETZ: We have only had twelve weekly meetings discovered to us under the Freedom of Information Act, so I just trust there are not more weekly meetings that have not been disclosed to us. Can I ask you, Ms O'Neill, to take this on notice,

Answer

Fair Work Australia has provided the following response:

The former General Manager had a regular, generally weekly, meeting with each of his direct reports, including Mr Nassios as the Director of Tribunal Services and Organisations. For various reasons meetings did not take place every week. These meetings were general purpose discussions and an opportunity for Mr Nassios to raise any matters or issues. Usually a short agenda was prepared which on some occasions included the progress of the HSU investigations. These agendas were released (in part or in whole) in response to the FOI application of Mr Fryar.

From on or about 10 March 2011 the former General Manager initiated regular meetings with Mr Nassios, other FWA staff involved in the investigations, and the AGS to track the progress of the HSU investigations. The intention of these meetings is recorded in the minutes of the first meeting to be:

- 1) keep the General Manager apprised of key developments in the investigation that impact upon his ability to exercise powers under section 336(2) of the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009;
- 2) allow the General Manager to determine the approach on key matters that relate to his ability to exercise those powers;

- 3) avoid a situation where significant chunks of information enter the public arena with the potential of appearing, for instance, to place public pressure upon the outcome that is expected from FWA; and
- 4) maintain the integrity of the process.

There have been 19 such meetings with the former General Manager and then the acting General Manager, Mr Nassios, the FWA staff involved in the investigation and the Australian Government Solicitor. The documents surrounding these meetings were in the category of exempt documents and as such were not disclosed under the original FOI request made by Senator Abetz.