

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2005-2006 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: All
Output Group: All

DEST Question No. E013_06

Senator Mason provided in writing.

Question:

- 1) For each of the last four financial or calendar years for which this information is available:
 - a) what was the average number of sick leave days taken per full-time equivalent employee;
 - b) what was the average number of days of unscheduled absence (encompassing all types of leave) taken per full-time equivalent employee.
- 2) Does the department collect, collate and analyse data about unscheduled absence and/or sick leave, for example, which days of the week that employees are away, reasons for absence, dates of absence, employee's age, gender, length of service and work unit location?
- 3) Does the department record the number and/or percentage of working days lost due to unscheduled absence and/or sick leave in the Annual Report?
- 4) Does the department record the cost of unscheduled absence and/or sick leave in annual financial statements?

Answer:

Unscheduled Absences/Sick Leave

- 1) The following figures are extracted from DEST's HR Benchmarking Programme (InfoHRM).
 - a) Calendar years: 2002 - 8.69, 2003 – 9.24, 2004 – 9.15*
 - b) Calendar years: 2002 – 11.43, 2003 – 12.13, 2004 – 12.05

* This is a reduced figure from data shown in PQ442 (9.77) due to unscheduled absence data being updated by InfoHRM.

The first half of the 2005 calendar year shows the figures are trending down on an annualised basis (Sick Leave: 7.96, Total Unscheduled absences: 10.70).

- 2) Yes. DEST's HR benchmarking programme allows DEST to monitor sick leave trends on a quarterly basis including against an APS agency benchmark group (Federal Government Benchmark Group).

Benchmark results and analysis are reported to People and Leadership Committee (PLC) and Corporate Leadership Group on a quarterly basis where they are actively discussed.

A recent PLC meeting requested further investigation and analysis of DEST's unscheduled absences including analysis by location, day of the week, with or without certification and correlation with other HR indicators including DEST staff survey results.

Unscheduled absences are discussed as part of annual workforce planning discussions.

DEST acknowledges the importance of ensuring the efficient and effective management of unscheduled absences and has adopted a planned and systematic approach.

Strategies have been designed to address the issue from an organisational-wide perspective (for example, DEST's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy) as well as providing tools and information to assist managers to target strategies at the local (line) level. DEST believes that people who are sick should stay home rather than come to work to reduce the likelihood of passing their illness onto others.

It is also important to note that it only takes a relatively few individuals to have long term periods of leave (for long term chronic illness or a major event for example) to significantly effect the department's total unscheduled absence results.

3) No.

4) No.