

**SENATE EMPLOYMENT, WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND EDUCATION
LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

**2003-2004 SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING
6 NOVEMBER**

EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS PORTFOLIO

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Outcome: Corporate

Question Number: W305-04

Question:

Senator Webber asked in writing:

Work-life balance issues have been identified as important for the public service. The March 2003 Management Advisory Committee report *Organisational Renewal* discussed workforce planning issues, stating:

As the labour market tightens into the future, there will be increased pressure on attracting the skills required and maintaining competitive remuneration packages which support effective recruitment at the base grade and lateral levels.

Employment conditions and the capacity for work/life balance will be an important element of such packages, and may offer APS agencies a competitive edge ...

Increased flexibility in working patterns and arrangements will be an important part of the response to the demographic changes, recognising the life stage dynamics influencing workforce participation.

The APS has been a leader in providing family friendly work practices (e.g. part-time work, flexible working hours, home based work, purchased leave) and needs to continue in this role through flexible conditions and supportive management approaches as part of its attraction and retention strategy.

In light of the MAC report, the following questions are asked of each department:

- 1) What has been the department's response to the MAC report to date?
- 2) Which issues identified in the MAC report have been identified as priority areas for the department?
- 3) What family friendly or work-life balance initiatives:
 - a) exist in the department;
 - b) are available to staff through the certified agreement; or
 - c) are contained in the certified agreement, but the granting of them in individual cases is discretionary on the part of the organisation.
- 4) What family friendly or work-life balance initiatives has the department introduced in, or since, the implementation of the department's most recent certified agreement?

- 5) With respect to certified agreement-based family friendly or work-life balance provisions:
- a) What number and proportion of departmental staff are making use of such provisions in areas including:
 - i) purchased leave (also known as 48/52 schemes);
 - ii) negotiated part-time work arrangements;
 - iii) parental leave;
 - iv) use of information, advice or counselling services made available by the department;
 - v) departmental provision of facilities (such as family care facilities);
 - vi) home based work;

Answer:

- 1) The department's response to the MAC report has included the implementation of a pilot workforce planning project focussing on the issues identified in the MAC report. Workforce planning data has included an analysis of demographic data including:
 - age, classification and profile of current workforce;
 - identifying current and future capability requirements;
 - analysis of recruitment, retention and separation trends;
 - characteristics of mature-aged workers, including superannuation data;
 - integration of human resource strategies with business and budget planning.
 - 2) Two major issues have been identified as priority areas for the department:
 - Workforce planning; and
 - Mature-aged planning involving more flexible options for employees considering early retirement, including strategies aimed at retention of key employees, re-engagement of former employees on different arrangements; and succession planning.
 - 3) (a) The department has provided a number of flexible working arrangements to assist employees strike a balance between their work and personal life. Provisions include part-time hours, personal leave, flex time arrangements, working from home, and purchased leave
 - (b) See above
 - (c) Working from home.
- 4) Provision of half pay annual leave and the provision for 29 days of leave without pay to count as service.

- 5) Figures provided for employees accessing provisions (1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003) are as follows:
- i) Purchased leave: 72 employees*
 - ii) Part-time work arrangements 157 employees (7.4%), as at 30 June 2003
 - iii) Maternity/Parental Leave 54 employees*
 - iv) The department has contracted for a free counselling service for employees and their family members. The Employee Assistance Programme has been used by 153* employees in the last year.
 - v) Family and sick rooms are available to employees throughout the department, but no central records are maintained on staff use of these rooms.
 - vi) Home based work is available to employees but no centralised records are kept.

** The data provided is over a period of time, not a snapshot, meaning it would be invalid to represent this as a proportion of the total.*