

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

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2012-2013**

Agency - Safe Work Australia

DEEWR Question No. EW0618_13

Senator Abetz asked on 17 October 2012 , Hansard page 46

Question

SWA - Report on number of bullying claims

Senator ABETZ: Are you able to give us a percentage? Ms Grey: I can give you the whole report if you like, which is from the CPM, which includes that data. I do not have it to hand, but I am happy to provide that to you. Senator ABETZ: If you could, via the secretariat, in due course. Ms Grey: Yes, absolutely. Mr Hoy: It is actually on our website. Ms Grey: But I am happy to provide it to you in hard copy now.

Answer

Safe Work Australia has provided the following response.

1. Between 2002-03 and 2010-11, the number of all accepted workers' compensation claims for workplace bullying/harassment across Australia increased from 1361 to 1854. This compares to a total of more than 300 000 accepted claims for all injuries/illnesses each year. Over the nine years there was an average of over 1450 accepted bullying/harassment workers' compensation claims each year, with these claims accounting for between 0.33 per cent and 0.67 per cent of all accepted claims.
2. The data presented above is an estimate of the extent of workplace bullying but not a measure of true prevalence of bullying in Australian workplaces for a number of reasons:
 - i. Workers' compensation is only available to about 88 per cent of workers and is not available to the self-employed.
 - ii. Workers' compensation is only available to people with a compensable 'injury'. In the case of workplace bullying, workers' compensation data would only include information on workers diagnosed with an 'injury' like anxiety or depression resulting from the bullying.

- iii. There is evidence that groups of people including casual employees, part-time workers and especially part-time shift workers are less likely to apply for and receive workers' compensation for any type of illness or injury¹.
- iv. There is evidence that workers may be reluctant to apply for compensation for an injury or illness arising from workplace bullying, with those reporting an injury or illness due to 'exposure to mental stress' the least likely of any group to apply for and receive workers' compensation².
- v. Not all jurisdictions code claims relating to workplace bullying/harassment in the same way.

¹ Data from the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Work-related injury survey (WRIS)* found that female employees without leave entitlements (casual employees) are the least likely to apply for and receive workers' compensation with only 26% applying for compensation of which only 80% actually received it. The group most likely to apply for compensation was male employees with leave entitlements with 52% applying for compensation of which 90% received it. Refer to Safe Work Australia (2011) *Work-related injuries in Australia: who did and didn't receive workers' compensation in 2009-10* for more information.

² WRIS data show that those who reported an injury or illness due to 'exposure to mental stress' were the least likely of any group to apply for and to receive workers' compensation. Refer to Safe Work Australia (2011) *Work-related injuries in Australia: who did and didn't receive workers' compensation in 2009-10* for more information.