

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

BUDGET ESTIMATES - 2 JUNE 2011 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Staff Misconduct

Question reference number: HS 12

Senator: Fifield

Type of question: Hansard pages 73-74

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 22 July 2011

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator FIFIELD: Have any staff been formally disciplined in the year to date?

Ms Campbell: I do not have the details. Ms Chapman may have those details with us on those who have been investigated.

Ms Chapman: I have the details for the misconduct investigations during this financial year to date. This is not just specifically around privacy breaches; it is under the code of conduct, which can cover a range of things. This is across Centrelink, Medicare and DHS. We have had a total of 84 investigations in browsing, that is, where you suspect that someone is looking at records that they should not need to look at; that there is no business need for.

Senator FIFIELD: 'Browsing' is an interesting euphemism.

Ms Chapman: It is the term that is used in these matters. The other one is the improper use of the internet or email, which can involve a range of things—sending off spam email and that kind of thing. We have had 25 cases of that across Centrelink, DHS and Medicare to 31 March.

Senator FIFIELD: That is emails and internet use. Any other categories?

Ms Chapman: There is a range of categories to do with misconduct more generally, but not relating to the use of the internet or access to records.

Senator FIFIELD: What are the other categories of misconduct?

Ms Chapman: The other categories are improper use of resources; inappropriate behaviour, which excludes harassment and bullying as they are a separate category; unauthorised disclosure of information; theft; the behaviour of an employee outside of work; misuse of drugs or alcohol; conflict of interest; improper use of position or status of the individual public servant.

Ms Campbell: It is worth noting that they are investigations—they are not proven—and that we have a portfolio of over 38,000 staff throughout Australia.

Senator FIFIELD: It is a large organisation containing people with all the human foibles. So, 84 investigations for browsing. How many of those investigations have been concluded?

Ms Chapman: I cannot give you that number. I have a total number of investigations across the code of conduct that have been finalised this financial year, but it is not broken down into the specific categories.

Senator FIFIELD: Could you take that on notice and break it down by the specific categories, what the result was, and if it was concluded and everything was clear or there was disciplinary action, that would be useful.

Answer:

As at 10 June 2011, there were 197 Code of Conduct investigations in 2010-11 that had been concluded.

The following table provides a break down of cases by category.

Type of Breach	Cases Finalised
Browsing (improper access to personal information)	67
Improper use of resources (other than email)	6
Inappropriate use of Government vehicles	2
Inappropriate behaviour other than bullying or harassment	29
Harassment and or bullying	10
Unauthorised disclosure of information	5
Theft	0
Behaviour of the employee outside of work	7
Fraud other than theft	23
Misuse of drugs and or alcohol	0
Conflict of interest	18
Improper use of positional power	5
Improper use of internet or email	25
TOTAL	197

Of the 197 cases concluded 128 were found to have breached the code of conduct. For 31 cases there was no breach found, for 35 cases the employee resigned prior to the case being finalised, and for three cases the employee's contract expired prior to the case being finalised.