

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2015 - 2016

Outcome 1 - Employment

Department of Employment Question No. EMSQ16-000093

Senator Simms asked on 11 February 2016 on proof Hansard page 45

Question

ABS statistics - working hours

Ms Leon: We monitor the underemployment statistics on a regular basis with the ABS, and that deals with the people who would like to work more hours, and so the work that is done to create jobs and stimulate the economy goes to assisting people who work not enough hours—who want to work more hours. In relation to people who are working more hours than they want to, those matters go more to questions of management in individual workplaces rather than matters that the government regulates. So certainly, under award payments, people have regulated hours, but I think the people who are working more hours than they want to are mostly not on award payments; they are more often on more informal arrangements or on enterprise agreements.

Senator SIMMS: Yes, I understand that. Has any work been done looking at the broader structural issues, though, around that disconnect between what people are working and what they would prefer to work and the impact that might have on things like productivity?

Mr Hehir: I am not aware of any research around the impact of people working more than they want to. In fact, I am not sure whether the survey says 'more than they want to' or whether the survey says 'working more than the standard hours'—I would need to actually check the actual survey, because there is a value judgement in the way you have phrased it.

Answer

In the ABS Labour Force Survey, participants are asked to provide information in relation to underemployment but not overemployment. In the current questionnaire (which is available from ABS Catalogue Number 6232.0), respondents are asked if they would prefer to work more hours than they usually work, but does not provide recourse for whether they would prefer to work fewer hours in a week.

There are, however, statistics available from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (HILDA) that can be used to determine estimates of underemployment and overemployment.