

## **Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment**

### **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017**

#### **Outcome 1 - Employment**

**Department of Employment Question No. EMSQ17-003971**

**Senator Marshall provided in writing.**

#### **Question**

##### **Work for the Dole Aggregated Safety Report**

The Ernst and Young aggregated safety report found that 48 per cent of provider sourced Work for the Dole activities did not meet the average score for safety scores. How was that allowed to happen?

Has the department shut down those provider sourced activities that don't meet the average safety score?

The report found 64 per cent of activities did not meet the requirements for the risk assessment undertaken for the place/location they occur. Why has that happened? What has been changed?

The report found only 67 per cent of the activities where electrical equipment was used had the current tagging and testing in place on that equipment. How was that allowed to happen? What has been changed?

The report found that 50 per cent of activities where participants were exposed to hazardous waste or dangerous goods didn't have Safety Data Sheets on site or did not have them up to date. How was that allowed to happen? What has now changed?

#### **Answer**

The Ernst and Young (EY) audits of Work for the Dole activities were undertaken as part of program assurance and to identify opportunities for practice improvement. The audits have provided valuable insight into the management of work health and safety and have also identified examples of work health and safety better practice.

The approach taken to the EY audit process is consistent with the approach of work health and safety regulators nationally. Work health and safety regulators recognise that no workplace is risk free and that workplaces continually need to review and revise safety practices to ensure the highest standards possible. Work health and safety regulators also monitor organisations, such as those hosting Work for the Dole activities, to ensure compliance with legislative requirements. Organisations hosting Work for the Dole activities have benefited from the EY audit process by helping to ensure they meet their statutory requirements under State and Territory work health and safety legislation.

The 200 activities subject to the EY audits had an average compliance score of 91 per cent. This is not a safety benchmark but was calculated based on the average score for all 200 on-site audits, with some sites achieving a score greater than 91 per cent and others below 91 per cent, as would always be the case for an average score. The audit process was rigorous and comprehensive and EY noted in their report that non-compliances against their audit tool were expected. It is important to note that EY observed that lower compliance scores do not automatically translate to participants being exposed to higher risk.

The Department of Employment did not shut down activities that achieved a score below 91 per cent. Immediate feedback was provided on the day of each site visit with two activities escalated for immediate corrective action. Jobactive providers and Work for the Dole Coordinators that participated in the audits were required to provide written advice to the Department of the steps taken to address all audit findings.

In relation to risk assessments, EY found that risk assessments (Place) were not always reviewed to take account of changes to the activity. EY noted in their report that deficiencies in risk assessment processes are commonly observed in audits that they conduct. Since the audit, the Department has updated the Work for the Dole Guideline to clearly outline the responsibility of the Lead Provider to monitor, review and update the risk assessment (Place).

For activities involving electrical equipment, machinery and/or hand tools, EY found that the main reason activities did not meet the requirements for this section of the audit tool was due to 33 per cent using equipment that was not tested and tagged. EY found over 98 per cent compliance with ensuring tools, equipment and electrical leads are in good condition, power boards being used in place of double adaptors, and rotating and moving parts of equipment were guarded to prevent physical contact. Since the audit, the Department has expanded the Work for the Dole Guideline to explicitly refer to the need for all electrical equipment to be tested and tagged.

The hazardous substances identified during the audits included substances such as paint, household cleaning materials and concrete. The non-compliances found by EY for this section of the audit tool primarily related to documentation deficiencies. Since the audit, the department has reminded all jobactive providers and Work for the Dole Coordinators of the requirement to maintain documentation such as hazardous substances registers and Safety Data Sheets and to ensure that all relevant training is provided to job seekers. The Work for the Dole Guideline has also been updated to specifically reference hazardous substances as a consideration when undertaking risk assessments.

Refer to EMSQ17-03969 for further information about changes that have been made to the program since the audits were conducted.

A further round of on-site work health and safety audits of Work for the Dole activities is being undertaken by EY during May to July 2017.