

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2014-2015

Agency - Fair Work Ombudsman

Department of Employment Question No. EM0805_15

Senator Back asked on 2 June 2014 on proof Hansard page 8

Question

FWO - Small business hotline

CHAIR: Can I just go back to the small business hotline? When did it actually commence, and can you tell us how many calls you have received to date? On notice, could you give us some understanding of the nature of the range of calls? Ms James: The small business helpline was launched on 6 December 2013. As of the end of April, we had answered more than 65,000 calls, which represents just under a third of all the calls that come to us. CHAIR: You had responded to 65,000, and that represents a third of the total calls. So that is nearly 200,000 calls. Ms James: It is just under a third of all the calls we received in the same period. Overwhelmingly, the calls are about wages and modern awards. At the moment, that is the primary thing people come to us about. I think we touched on this last time. The second highest matter we received queries about from small business through the helpline was about apprentice and traineeship wages. CHAIR: And feedback please on people's level of satisfaction, or otherwise, with the calls that you have responded to. Ms James: Would you like that now on notice? CHAIR: Well, if it is lengthy take it on notice. Mr Campbell: Generally, the feedback has been very positive. When I speak with industrial parties, whether it be with the employer associations or a firm representing small businesses with workplace relations issues, they appreciate the fact that they get an accelerated service. The average speed of answers for a small business call is two minutes at the moment. So that is a good thing. We have people waiting for less lengthy periods of time on the phone to get through to us, and we can then service them specifically about the issues in the workplace. So it has generally been very positive. CHAIR: Thank you. Percentage figures I would appreciate on notice. Back to you, Senator Cameron.

Answer

The Small Business Helpline was launched on 6 December 2014. Since the launch to 30 April 2014, the Fair Work Ombudsman answered 65,585 calls.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has received very positive feedback from callers to the Small Business Helpline. The agency has also received positive feedback during our regular consultations with employer associations and organisations representing small businesses.

Top 5 Enquiry Types - 16 December 2013 – 30 April 2014

Small Business Helpline

Enquiry type	% of enquiries
Wages and Modern Awards	23%
Apprentice/Trainee Wages	12%
Conditions	6%
Termination of Employment and Notice or Payment in Lieu	5%
Termination of Employment/ General Enquiry	5%