

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018

Outcome: Skills and Training

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000975

Senator Cameron, Doug provided in writing.

Australian Apprenticeships Support Network (Exploitation)

Question

- 1) What instructions or guidance does the Department provide to AASNs when they see or become aware of underpayment or any other form of exploitation of apprentices and trainees?
- 2) Do AASNs have any provision within their contracts that requires them to deliver services to protect apprentices and trainees from exploitation? If so, what are they?
- 3) How does the Department monitor AASN delivery of services designed to protect apprentices and trainees from exploitation?

Answer

- 1) The Australian Apprenticeship Support Network provides quality end-to-end advice and support services to Australian Apprentices and their employers.

Under the terms of their contract, Apprenticeship Network Providers are required to advise the department as soon as practical after becoming aware of any instances of suspected exploitation of apprentices and trainees. The Department of Education and Training works collaboratively with all State and Territory governments and other relevant stakeholders to identify and manage any such instances. Where an issue is not within the Department's jurisdiction (for example, payment of apprentice wages) the department will liaise with, and refer issues to, the relevant body to deal with appropriately.

- 2) Apprenticeship Network Providers are contracted to deliver a range of support to apprentices, trainees and employers, including engaging with relevant stakeholders regarding workplace, dispute resolution or regulatory matters. Apprenticeship Network Providers are contracted to make regular contact with employers and Australian Apprentices throughout the lifecycle of the apprenticeship. This regular contact assists in identifying any instances of potential exploitation of apprentices and trainees.

Apprenticeship Network Providers are required to conduct a sign-up at the commencement of the apprenticeship. It is at this point that both the employer and apprentice are made aware of their legal obligations under the training contracts. The training contract sets out the legal obligations binding the employer and apprentice in the conduct of the apprenticeship. Both parties enter into the employment and training arrangement with a commitment to mutual respect, honest and fairness.

- 3) The department has a structured Performance Management Framework to assess Apprenticeship Network Provider compliance with the requirements of the contract. The framework includes a number of monitoring methods to assess performance across the wide range of services required to be delivered.

The department may undertake targeted and system desktop monitoring at any time to examine any issue. Targeted and desktop monitoring may include direct contact with employers and apprentices.

Structured file monitoring is undertaken every six months to examine a range of administrative issues. This monitoring also provides an opportunity to identify any other issues that may be present in relation to the conduct of an apprenticeship.

Apprenticeship Network Providers are also required to have a structured complaints handling process, which includes the requirement to refer complaints to the department where necessary. All Apprenticeship Network Providers must maintain a complaints register which can be accessed by the department at any point to assess.