

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES 2016-17**

Finance Portfolio  
18 October 2016

**Department/Agency:** Department of Finance

**Outcome/Program:** 3/3.1

**Topic:** Numbers of staff in the office of the Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills

**Senator:** Farrell

**Question reference number:** F39 and F40

**Type of question:** Hansard Proof, F&PA Committee, Pages 101-102, 18 October 2016

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** Friday, 2 December 2016

**Number of pages:** 3

**Question reference number:** F39

**Senator FARRELL:** I want to turn to some different items. I want to refer to the staffing for Karen Andrews. Can somebody give me some assistance?

...

**Senator FARRELL:** How many individuals have been employed in her office since the election of 2013? Are we able to find out that figure?

**Ms McGregor:** We can take it on notice and find out.

**Senator FARRELL:** The figure that we have been provided with is a figure of 36 over the three years.

**Ms McGregor:** Do you mean turnover?

**Senator FARRELL:** Yes.

**Ms McGregor:** We will have a look. I do not think that figure is accurate.

...

**Ms McGregor:** We will check for you. My vague recollection is that that 36 figure is incorrect.

**Senator FARRELL:** Is that because you have done a check, or—

...

**Ms Huxtable:** But we cannot recall the exact figure, so we will take it on notice.

**Ms McGregor:** We can find out for you.

**Senator FARRELL:** That is much appreciated. Can you tell us how many people in that figure—whatever the figure is, if it is not 36—actually formally resigned from her staff? I take it you have something that tells you what the reason for—

**Ms McGregor:** I will have a look. We normally would not comment on individual staff arrangements and how they do or do not leave an office. But we are happy to—

**Senator FARRELL:** I am not asking you to identify individuals; I am just asking whether half of them—let us take the figure of 36 for the moment—were resignations.

**Senator Ryan:** We will take it on notice and provide information consistent with past practice.

**Question reference number: F40**

**Senator FARRELL:** ... can you tell us whether any of the employees were dismissed as distinct from resigning?

...

**Senator FARRELL:** I ask that you do everything in your power not to identify individuals.

**Senator Ryan:** No but, for example, events might identify an individual. I will take it on notice and I will hopefully be back here next February when I can be quizzed again if you are unhappy with the information I provide.

**Senator FARRELL:** You will provide the information much sooner than next February, I am sure.

**Senator Ryan:** No—I might provide it in the next two weeks and you might not like the answer; you might want to ask me questions. I will provide information consistent with past practice where there are longstanding conventions about how such matters are dealt with at estimates.

...

**Senator FARRELL:** ... perhaps you could also tell us how many staff have taken leave in her office.

**Senator Ryan:** ... Leave I will consider but, again, I think that it is trickier.

...

**Senator Ryan:** ... I will start from the point that I would need a lot of convincing to provide that answer.

**Senator FARRELL:** I am putting these questions to you and I am happy to get whatever information you are willing to provide. While you are looking at that, can you indicate whether there are any claims of bullying in this particular office?

**Senator Ryan:** Matters for the management of each member's or senator's office and what—let us say, for example, there is a difficult circumstance to manage. I will look at past practice and, if I do not provide you with the specific information you would like, I will provide an explanation as to why.

**Senator FARRELL:** While you are doing that, could you indicate who the bullying claims have been made against?

...

**Senator Ryan:** I am not confirming, because I am not aware of the detail. I will provide an explanation for what I provide and what I do not.

...

**Senator FARRELL:** Can you tell us whether there have been any unfair dismissal claims?

**Senator Ryan:** Again, as I said before, I will provide information as is consistent with past practice. The officials have just advised me that broad information—that is not identifying—is provided to the workplace health and safety committee.

**Senator FARRELL:** This information has already been provided?

**Senator Ryan:** No, generally.

**Ms McGregor:** As a general rule, information in relation to the sorts of things you are talking about is provided to the WHS committee—but not identifying information.

**Answers:**

1. *“How many individuals have been employed in her office since the election of 2013?”*  
22, including a number of casuals.

2. *“How many people in that figure ... actually formally resigned from her staff?”*

3. *“I am just asking whether half of them ... were resignations?”*

4. *“Can you tell us whether any of the employees were dismissed as distinct from resigning?”*

5. *“How many staff have taken leave in her office?”*

6. *“Can you indicate whether there are any claims of bullying in this particular office?”*

7. *“Could you indicate who the bullying claims have been made against?”*

8. *“Can you tell us whether there have been any unfair dismissal claims?”*

2 – 8. Due to the small number of staff in this office and the possibility of individuals being identified, it is not appropriate to provide further detail on privacy grounds.