

**Senate Economics Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Industry, Tourism and Resources Portfolio  
Budget Estimates 2006-2007, 29 May 2006

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**AGENCY/DEPARTMENT:** DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND RESOURCES  
IP AUSTRALIA

**TOPIC:** SICK LEAVE AND UNSCHEDULED ABSENCES

**REFERENCE:** WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**QUESTION No.BI-48**

**Senator Mason** asked:

With respect to the Department and IP Australia, in the last calendar year or financial year you have records for, what is the total number of days of sick leave and unscheduled leave taken by employees? Over the same period, what was the average number of days of sick leave and unscheduled leave taken per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employee?

**ANSWER**

Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources

During 2005-06 staff in the Department took a total of 12,986.97 days of sick leave and 18,276.07 days of unscheduled leave, which includes sick leave, carer's leave and other types of personal leave. The average number of days sick leave and unscheduled leave per FTE employee is 7.19 days and 10.11 days, respectively.

IP Australia

During the 2005-06 financial year, IP Australia employees took a total of 8,425 days of sick leave and 11,602 days of unscheduled leave, which includes sick leave, carer's leave and other types of personal leave.

The average number of days taken as sick leave and unscheduled leave per FTE employee was 10.39 days and 14.3 days, respectively.

**QUESTION No.BI-49**

**Senator Mason** asked:

What are the sick leave entitlements allowable to the employees of the Department and IP Australia as part of the terms of their employment (under the Certified Agreement or individual contracts)?

**ANSWER**

Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources

Employees are entitled to 20 days personal leave on full pay every 12 months, of which up to 15 days of unused personal leave is cumulative. On-going part-time employees will accrue personal leave on a pro rata basis.

IP Australia

The personal leave entitlement allowable to full-time employees is 20 days on full pay per year, all of which accumulates if not used.

**QUESTION No.BI-50**

**Senator Mason** asked:

Do the Department and IP Australia monitor and review employees' use of sick leave entitlement? Has this procedure changed in the past 12 months?

**ANSWER**

Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources

The Department does monitor the use of unscheduled leave on a regular basis. Reports indicating leave data per FTE employee are presented to the Executive on a quarterly basis. Leave usage comparisons between other APS agencies are also monitored through the Australian Public Service Commission's *State of the Service* reports.

IP Australia

Personal leave usage is monitored and a major review of unscheduled leave was conducted in 2005-06 in accordance with IP Australia's Certified Agreement.

**QUESTION No.BI-51**

**Senator Mason** asked:

What initiatives, if any, have the Department and IP Australia undertaken in the past three years to address absenteeism?

**ANSWER**

Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources

The Department has taken a holistic view in its endeavour to address absenteeism. The Department has increased the monitoring and reporting of unscheduled absences to the Executive and allows for individual intervention where higher amounts of leave are taken.

The Department also supports a number of measures that increase the general health and wellbeing of its employees, including:

- Provision of annual flu shots;
- Nationally recognised quit smoking program, which aims for a non-smoking workforce by October 2006; and
- Flexible working arrangements.

The Department also runs the 'FITR Program'. This initiative aims to increase the health and fitness of all DITR employees and has the following key objectives:

1. Increase staff awareness of issues/facts associated with health and fitness;
2. Increased level of health and fitness in DITR staff; and
3. An ongoing/long term impact on employee lifestyle/degree of behavioural change.

IP Australia

As mentioned in response to question BI-50, a major review of unscheduled leave was recently conducted. The review made the following recommendations aimed at achieving a reduction in unscheduled absence:

- Continuing emphasis on employee health and wellbeing programs;
- Clear expectations of all employees;
- Establishing a target to reduce unscheduled absence by a reduction of two days in the first year and one day per year for the following two years;
- Increased monitoring and reporting to managers and Executive; and
- Individual intervention based on defined trigger points.