

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

31 May – 2 June 2011

Question No: BET 69

Topic: ATO workplace absences – compared to Centrelink

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Senator Cormann asked:

Senator CORMANN: Would Centrelink be a comparable organisation that should be equally decentralised—

Ms Granger: We do look at Centrelink. There are some aspects that do compare, but, at the other end of the scale, we also have in this area, as you know, large numbers of auditors and large numbers of law professionals. We have a very mixed organisation compared to others.

Senator CORMANN: Are you saying that auditors and lawyers are more frequently absent than—

Ms Granger: No, in fact I am not; it is the opposite.

Senator CORMANN: So you should be doing better than Centrelink.

Ms Granger: What I am saying is that it is difficult to benchmark the entire organisation against another one, because we have a range of functions. It would be more typical for us to, for example, look at the call centre industry and compare it to our call centre in some ways. We do try to measure ourselves against others but, because of that very diverse range of functionalities, it is a bit difficult.

Senator CORMANN: So you try, but do you know where you sit compared to Centrelink in terms of workplace absences?

Ms Granger: I think Centrelink's figures were slightly better than ours the last time I looked, but, again, I can take that on notice and get back to you.

Answer:

Centrelink has a lower rate of workplace absence than the ATO. The 2009-10 State of the Service Report shows Centrelink sitting in the 12.0 to <14.0 days median bracket, while the ATO falls within the 14.0 to 23.5 bracket.¹

Comparing the ATO's workplace absences to the APS generally is difficult as absence behaviour is variable and complex. The ATO undertakes a range of functions, some similar to Centrelink and some unlike other Australian Public Services agencies.

¹ Source: Australian Public Service Commission, *2009-10 State of the Service Report*

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