

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2009-2010**

Agency - Comcare

DEEWR Question No. EW0946_10

Senator Marshall asked on 10/02/2010, Hansard page 19.

Question

5% REDUCTION IN BENEFITS

CHAIR—In your experience in administering Comcare, have there ever any examples where the five per cent reduction in benefit has miraculously cured someone of their permanent injuries to enable them to return to work? Mr Kibble—I would have to take that one on notice. I would have to look at individual cases.

CHAIR—Have you had any experience where you could say that, again, the reduction in benefit for permanently injured people has in any way encouraged people to return to work? Mr Kibble—We can certainly have a look at that.

CHAIR—Whether it be miraculous or not. Mr Kibble—We can certainly have a look at that. CHAIR—Could you take that on notice for me. Are there any other questions on Comcare? All right. Thank you, Mr O'Connor and Mr Kibble.

Answer

Comcare has provided the following response.

Comcare examined data from premium paying employers relating to the number of injured employees who are in receipt of benefits under sections 20/21/21A of the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* and were retired on the grounds of invalidity from January 1991 to January 2010, as a proxy of an employee 'permanently injured'.

There are 391 invalidity retirees currently in receipt of weekly compensation payments under sections 20/21/21A and therefore have the five per cent reduction applied.

An indicator that an exited employee has returned or is able to return to work at a lesser level than their pre injury earnings would be those employees who have a recorded ability to earn. Of the 391 invalidity retirees, nine have a reported ability to earn after their date of retirement.

Another indicator that an exited employee may have an ability to return to work or wishes to return to work is whether a rehabilitation assessment or a rehabilitation plan has been recorded against such an employee since retirement. Of the 391 invalidity retirees, 13 employees have had a return to work assessment and five have had a rehabilitation plan. Of the four employees with a recorded return to work plan, two invalidity retirees have an ability to earn, as reported above.