

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

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

Agency - Fair Work Ombudsman

DEEWR Question No.EW0953_10

Senator Abetz asked on 10/02/2010, Hansard page 39.

Question

OPERATIONS OF THE FWO HOTLINE

Mr Wilson—It is relatively early in the piece. My own experience is that it is after a couple of minutes. I am not precisely sure when it kicks in, but somehow the service establishes that the call wait time is more than 10 minutes and then a guillotine comes down. Senator JACINTA COLLINS—The likelihood that a call wait is going to be more than 10 minutes. Senator ABETZ—Can you please take on notice how it works and operates without going through all the technicalities now? Mr Wilson—Sure.

Answer

The Fair Work Ombudsman has provided the following response:

During January 2010, the Fair Work Infoline introduced call blocking to prevent callers waiting excessive periods of time. This service was switched off on 1 March 2010.

When a caller rang the Fair Work Infoline during this period, they chose from a set of options based on their enquiry. Once they had chosen their option, the caller then was placed in a queue until an advisor was available to answer the call.

Call blocking was automatically activated if the longest waiting call sitting in the queue exceeded 10 minutes. At that point the system automatically stopped directing any new calls to the queue. Instead, new callers heard the following message:

"We apologise, but we are experiencing extremely high call volumes at this time and cannot attend to your call. The information you seek might be found at www.fairwork.gov.au or alternatively you can email us at contactus@fwo.gov.au or you can call again at another time. Thank you for your patience"

When the longest waiting call in the queue had a waiting time of less than 10 minutes, the system began directing new calls to the queue for an advisor to answer.