

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

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

Agency - Fair Work Ombudsman

DEEWR Question No.EW0957_10

Senator Fisher asked on 10/02/2010, Hansard page 42.

Question

FWO - EMPLOYERS IN THE CLEANING SERVICES SECTOR

Senator FISHER—Is it possible that for some employers in the cleaning services sector today you would not be able to tell them their obligation in terms of payment to a particular employee because you are still working towards an answer? Mr Wilson—Senator, that is a matter of detail about the particular award and we would need to take that on notice as well. If I can amplify it a little bit further. The contact centre has escalation processes within it when the question that the caller is asking is beyond the capability of the officer or the databases that they have available to them. So there is an escalation service within their group and also within Ms Smith's group. Over and above that, we have very active liaison with the major industrial relations parties, including the ACTU, ACCI and the Australian Industry Group. We also have very active liaison with other industry and union bodies. The purpose of that is to deal with those circumstances where there is, either on our part or on the part of others, some stated uncertainty about the application of particular clauses. Those processes are designed to try and sort through exactly what the agreed interpretation of particular clauses might be. As soon as we get those agreements or clarifications, we then feed that back through our contact centre, obviously, to improve the speed with which we can answer things.

Answer

The Fair Work Ombudsman has provided the following response:

The Fair Work Infoline has been able to provide a rate of pay for all queries.

Where an Infoline advisor is unable to provide a response at the first stage of contact, the call may be referred to a senior advisor in the first instance, and a quality assessor in the second.

It is noteworthy that as at 31 December 2009 97% of all calls made to the Fair Work Infoline were able to be responded to at the first stage of contact.

For complex queries requiring further research, the customer will be provided with a call-back service. The Fair Work Infoline endeavours to provide the return call within two working days. However if the question is one requiring advice from the Fair Work Ombudsman's Legal and Advice Branch, the customer will be informed of the likely timeframe for the provision of a response.