

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2013-2014**

Agency - Fair Work Ombudsman

Department of Employment Question No. EM0144_14

Senator Back asked on 27 February 2014, Hansard page 29

Question

FWO - Effectiveness of FWO

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We do need to move on. I have one question following up in this same area. Following on Senator Cameron's call, on notice can you advise us what the agency is doing to make sure that the work it is producing is usable, useful and understandable to small businesses and of course to individual employees—an extension of that question, if you would. Ms James: Absolutely. I will say that we have a dedicated small business team in the Fair Work Ombudsman that has been doing a lot of work engaging both with stakeholders and with small businesses and their representatives. There is a body of work that they oversee that is designed to make sure that all of our communications and engagements are small business friendly and that our staff are attuned to the vast range of workplaces and businesses around the country.

Answer

The Fair Work Ombudsman has recently implemented three key initiatives to provide useful and accurate information to small businesses:

- the Small Business Helpline;
- immunity for small business employers; and
- a Small Business team.

On 6 December 2013, the Fair Work Ombudsman launched the Small Business Helpline which enables small business people to access a priority queue. Advisors provide small businesses with information that is tailored to their needs.

As announced by the Minister on 30 December 2013, the Fair Work Ombudsman has also made a formal commitment that callers to the Small Business Helpline can rely on the Fair Work Ombudsman's advice. We will provide immunity from pecuniary penalty proceedings to small businesses who act upon this advice in good faith.

The Fair Work Ombudsman also has a dedicated Small Business Strategy team with responsibility for ensuring the agency's approach, processes and procedures are appropriate and proportionate and that agency staff understand the context of the small business environment and life cycle.

The Fair Work Ombudsman consults widely with stakeholders, including employer and employee associations, community groups and other government agencies to

ensure that its communication and engagement with small businesses and employees is effective.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has a number of resources designed to assist vulnerable workers, including migrant workers and young people. The Fair Work Ombudsman also has dedicated Overseas Workers and Young Workers teams.