

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2005-2006 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: All
Output Group: All

DEST Question No. E003_06

Senator Mason asked on 1 June 2005, EWRE Hansard page 12.

Question:

I appreciate the background. You mentioned that sick leave is starting to trend down, but it was 7.92 for personal leave, which is larger than sick leave, in 2001-02 and in the calendar year 2004, which is two and a half years later, there has been a massive increase—a 40 per cent increase. Why?

Answer:

Personal Leave and Sick Leave

Details of total unscheduled absences (7.92 days per employee), for the ANAO Absence Management in the Australian Public Service report, were based on information manually extracted and calculated for the 2001-2002 financial year. Staffing numbers used in this calculation were based on ASL (Average Staffing Levels) for the final pay period of the financial year.

Details of total sick leave for 2004 were automatically extracted and calculated, using DEST's HR Benchmarking programme InfoHRM, based on the 2004 calendar year (please note 9.77 days per employee provided at the Budget Estimates hearing has been updated by InfoHRM to 9.15 days per employee). Staffing numbers used in this calculation were based on Average FTE (Full-time equivalent) employees for the full 2004 calendar year.

As these two sets of information were extracted and compiled in a different way it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons.

DEST's HR Benchmarking programme, InfoHRM, shows only marginal variation in total unscheduled absences over the last three financial years, with results trending lower in 2005.

DEST acknowledges the importance of ensuring the efficient and effective management of unscheduled absences and has adopted a planned and systematic approach.

Strategies have been designed to address the issue from an organisational-wide perspective (for example, DEST's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy) as well as providing tools and information to assist managers to target strategies at the local (line) level. DEST believes that people who are sick should stay home rather than come to work to reduce the likelihood of passing their illness onto others.

It is also important to note that it only takes a relatively few individuals to have long term periods of leave (for long term chronic illness or a major event for example) to significantly effect the department's total unscheduled absence results.