

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2008-09 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome 9

DEEWR Question No. EW587_09

Senator Abetz asked on 2 June 2008, EEWHR Hansard page 103.

Question

Homeworkers Code of Practice

Have you provided advice specifically in relation to the numbers of home workers, which we believe exist in Australia?

Answer

The Department's submission to the *Review of Australia's Textile Clothing and Footwear Industries* notes that as 30 June 2007 there were 9,483 businesses in the textiles, clothing and footwear sector, providing approximately 53,000¹ identified jobs, with potentially many hundreds of thousands of outworkers or homeworkers. The Department's submission notes that estimates of the number of outworkers in Australia vary significantly, ranging from 23,650 (1997²) up to 329,000 (1995³). The reasons for these variations include different 'definitions' of outworkers or homeworkers, the informal and/or hidden nature of the work, the reticence of workers to be identified, many outworkers with limited English capabilities and the practice of extended family helping to meet deadlines. The Senate Economics Reference Committee Inquiry (1996) concluded that it is impossible to state accurately the number of people involved in home-based manufacture in Australia.

¹ ABS data – unpublished labour force Australia, Feb 2008, 2 digit ANZSIC 93 level

² Industry Commission Inquiry 1997, The Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Industry

³ The Hidden Cost of Fashion: Report on the National Outwork information Campaign, March 1995, by the Textile Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia.