

Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2011-2012

Agency - Comcare

DEEWR Question No. EW0107_12

Senator Abetz provided in writing.

Question

Refers to previous DEEWR Question No [EW0720_11](#)

Follow up questions: 1.Comcare's answer to this question says that "Comcare engaged with Safe Work Australia and other regulators to determine whether a national HSR training scheme would be progressed". Please explain when and how this was done. What meetings took place, where and on what dates? Can you please provide the minutes of those meetings? 2.Comcare's answer says "Comcare decided to accept the recommendations of the Review". One of the recommendations (no. 10 in the summary on p. 3 of the Stoker and Wright 2009 document) is that HSR training be "predominantly" face to face. So it seems that Comcare agrees that HSR training should be "predominantly" face to face? Is that because most people preferred that model? 3.Was it true that prior to this review that most training courses were face to face and that one or two courses were different (also face to face but with practical elements)? Would the number of completely face to face courses have been 10-20? Versus one or two that were different? Thus it would seem that HSR training was already "predominantly" face to face? And you agree that it should remain that way as you accept the recommendation? 4.Do you see then that the action by the SRCC in fact shifted HSR training from being "predominantly" face to face to being "exclusively" face to face? However, that is not what was recommended. 5.Now, regarding the original question EW0720_11, it was asked what is the relevance of stopping a course prior to harmonization if harmonization is the reason for the change. Unfortunately the question was not answered. Please explain what relevance is it to stop a course being conducted prior to harmonization? Clearly there are all types of courses happening right now in many other jurisdictions that do not match the new Comcare model. That does not seem to bother anyone in those places or bother Comcare. So, is there in fact no reason stop a course on this basis?

Answer

Comcare has provided the following response.

1. This question relates to Comcare's response to previous Question on Notice [EW0720_11](#). The context of the question asked whether the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission's (SRCC) 2010 Guidelines were a pre-cursor to a harmonised approach to OHS laws. Comcare responded that when the review by Stoker & Wright commenced in March 2009, there were three main objectives of the review, but by the time it was completed in September 2009, the issue of harmonisation also needed to be considered. Comcare stated that it had engaged with Safe Work Australia and state and territory OHS regulators in relation to harmonisation, including a harmonised approach to HSR course accreditation.

This discussion was through the Strategic Issues Group on Occupational Health and Safety (SIG-OHS). The SIG-OHS was established in 2009 by the Safe Work Australia Council (the

Council). The role of the SIG-OHS is to assist the Council in performing its functions as outlined in the *Safe Work Australia Council (Establishment and Constitution) 2009* and Strategic and Operational Plans. Specifically, the SIG-OHS: oversees the work on the model Act and regulations; considers other occupational health and safety matters as required; assists the Council to identify and obtain input from relevant stakeholders; and makes decisions on certain matters on behalf of the Council. The SIG-OHS comprises: a Chair; one representative from each of the Commonwealth/State/Territory jurisdictions; one representative from employee representatives; one representative from employer representatives; and one representative of Safe Work Australia.

The SIG-OHS meeting relevant to the answer in *EW0720_11* is the period between March and September 2009 (when the review took place). The meeting was held over two days (meeting 02) from 24-25 August 2009. At that meeting, members agreed that health and safety representative training should consist of five days face-to-face training and be non-competency based. Issues about the release of the minutes of SIG-OHS would need to be directed to Safe Work Australia.

A SIG-OHS technical advisory group is currently looking at national content requirements of training courses and is due to report in August 2011.

Comcare also responded in answer to *EW0720_11* that, irrespective of harmonisation, Comcare and the SRCC decided to accept the recommendations made in the review by Stoker & Wright as best for the jurisdiction.

2. Yes.

3. All but one course was face-to-face (noting that a supervised workplace inspection is considered to be face-to-face).

4. There seems to be a misunderstanding of the recommendation. The question seems to imply that of all courses accredited some should be delivered face to face and others not. To clarify, the recommendation was with regard to the assessment of a course for accreditation and within that course the extent to which there was face to face training.

5. The Commission endorsed the new guidelines in April 2010 as best for the jurisdiction. All courses found not to comply with the requirements of the current guidelines have been given an opportunity to revise their courses.