

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

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Budget Estimates 2012-2013**

**Agency - Fair Work Ombudsman**

**DEEWR Question No. EW0179\_13**

**Senator Abetz asked on 28 May 2012 , Hansard page 49**

**Question**

**FWO - Submission by National Farmers Federation to Fair Work Act review panel**

Senator ABETZ: For what it is worth, this is a submission of 17 February 2012 by the National Farmers Federation to the Fair Work Act review panel. They make the commentary at page 16 of their submission but then they have a special section, Appendix C, which traverses all the email traffic. Rather than canvassing all that now, given that you seem to be at a substantial disadvantage in not knowing about this, could I invite you to take on notice an examination of Appendix C and the National Farmers Federation's concerns and advise as to whether you think or believe that there is some valid criticism there or whether the criticism is unjustified? If it is justified, please tell us what has been done, if anything, to ensure that the possibility of conflicting advice does not occur again. I will just leave you with a relatively large brief on that. If you can come back to us rather than canvassing it all in detail now, given that you do not have that documentation in front of you, that would be appreciated. Mr Wilson: Even after that prompting, I cannot recall that particular submission. I am afraid it may have slipped between the cracks in our research. Senator ABETZ: There are a stack of submissions and I am willing to tell you that I would not have become aware of this but for a particular person specifically drawing it to my attention. There were a whole host of submissions and I am not being overly critical that you are not aware of that one. Mr Wilson: We will come back to you.

**Answer**

*The Fair Work Ombudsman has provided the following response.*

In a submission to the Fair Work Act Review Panel, the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) stated that 'industrial relations representatives from around Australia had experienced difficulties when seeking clarification and at times conflicting advice, from the FWO office'.

Whilst the Fair Work Ombudsman concedes that, at certain times, some conflicting advice may be provided over the Infoline, the Agency is working hard to ensure that examples of this are minimised.

To ensure the quality of the Fair Work Ombudsman's Infoline service, Fair Work Infoline Advisers participate in an intensive four week induction program when they commence with the organisation, as well as on average 15 days per year of ongoing technical training and coaching to ensure that their technical expertise is maintained.

When interacting with customers, contact centre Advisers use the Fair Work Ombudsman's suite of pay tools to calculate rates of pay while simultaneously assisting the customer to use the pay tool. This helps to ensure that information provided about modern awards and rates of pay are accurate, and provided in an efficient manner.

The Fair Work Infoline also has a robust quality program in place which provides a framework for the assessment of enquiries received. The following average quality results were achieved:

- 2009-2010 financial year – 88.4%
- 2010-2011 financial year – 91.3%

The above figures are a result of assessing various components of an enquiry, including but not limited to accuracy of information provided, whether the Adviser was client-focused, and whether the Adviser asked sufficient probing questions to enable an understanding of the enquiry. Accordingly, these figures represent an indication of the quality of the entire interaction rather than accuracy alone.

Further, the accuracy of the information provided by the Fair Work Infoline is reflected by the rate of complaints received. The proportion of complaints received has been no more than 0.06% of total enquiries received in the 2011-2012 financial year.