

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: ALL

Output Group: ALL

DEST Question Nos. E512_04 to E516_04

Senator Carr asked on 11 November 2003

Questions:

- 1) What has been the department's response to the MAC report to date?
- 2) What issues identified in the MAC report have been identified as priority areas for the department?
- 3) What family friendly and work-life balance initiatives:
 - a) exist in the department;
 - b) are available to staff through the certified agreement; or
 - c) are contained in the certified agreement, but the granting of them in individual cases is discretionary?
- 4) What family friendly or work-life balance initiatives has the department introduced in, or since, the implementation of the department's most recent certified agreement?
- 5) With respect to certified agreement-based family friendly and work-life balance provisions:
 - a) What number and proportion of departmental staff are making use of such provisions in areas including:
 - i) purchased leave (also known as 48/52 schemes);
 - ii) negotiated part-time work arrangements;
 - iii) parental leave;
 - iv) use of information, advice or counselling services made available by the department;
 - v) departmental provision of facilities (such as family care facilities);
 - vi) home based work?

Answers:

Work-life balance

1) DEST is well positioned in relation to many of the key findings from the MAC report. As one of the eleven Agencies to participate in the research, the report provides useful data and supporting evidence that the department's efforts in addressing the report's key findings are directed in the appropriate areas. Specific responses are set out below.

Workforce Planning

The department undertakes systematic workforce planning and analysis of workforce demographics each year.

Mature-Aged Workers

DEST's Mature-Aged Worker Strategy is a multi-pronged programme aimed at ensuring the department optimises the contribution of its mature-aged employees.

Attraction and Retention

The department has commenced a project to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its attraction and retention processes to meet future capability requirements and changing demographics.

Graduates

The department has a specific Graduate intake each year in addition to ongoing recruitment.

Agreement Making/Flexible Working arrangements

DEST's Certified Agreement (CA) and Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) provide flexibility to attract and retain key employees including through access to flexible working patterns.

Management and Leadership

DEST has a number of initiatives in place to enhance management and leadership skills including DEST's Leadership Protocol for SES and Executive Level 2 employees; Executive Coaching; participation in a range of external development programs; and a tailored leadership programme for Executive Level employees.

Learning and Development

In addition to the specific leadership programmes mentioned above, DEST has a suite of learning and development programmes based around identified Corporate Learning Priorities.

Knowledge Management

In addition to DEST's Mature-Aged Worker Strategy, considerable work continues to be undertaken in the department to enhance knowledge management. The department has recently implemented 'DiRECT' – the DEST information and records tracking system which integrates into the desktop environment to manage corporate information, now and into the future.

2) Of the issues identified in the MAC report, the department's key priority areas for 2003-04 are:

- Workforce Planning;
- Mature-Aged Workers;
- Attraction and Retention; and
- Management and Leadership.

3)

FAMILY FRIENDLY AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE INITIATIVES (existing in the Department and not included in the CA or AWAs)	
Employee Assistance Programme	Provides employees and their families with access to counselling and support services. Issues addressed through these services may be personal and/or work related.

Note:

An employee may automatically access five sessions. Further sessions are subject to Delegate approval.

FAMILY FRIENDLY AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE INITIATIVES (existing in the department and available to all staff through the CA or AWAs)	
Initiative	Description
Part Time work	Allows employees to reduce their hours.
Flextime – below DEST EL1 level	Allows employees to vary working hours and patterns.
Executive Level Employees - Flexible Working Hours	Executive Level employees are able to work flexible hours.
Working from Home	Allows employees to work from home on either an ongoing or occasional basis to meet specific needs.
Time Off In Lieu	Allows employees to receive recognition for additional work.
Recognition of Travel Time*	Allows APS1-6 employees travelling on official business recognition of travel time between the 7.00am to 7.00pm bandwidth.
Family Care Expenses when Travelling**	Is available to cover additional commercial costs when an employee with family care responsibilities is required to travel away from home for official purposes.
Studies Assistance**	Is available for employees attending an approved course of study identified in their Performance and Development Plan.
School Holiday Care Allowance*	Provides \$10 per child per day up to \$100 per week per family to assist with the cost of school holiday care for primary school children when the employee is at work.
Personal Leave	Allows employees to take personal (sick) or carer's leave for occasional, non-enduring situations.
Purchased Annual Leave**	Employees may elect to purchase up to an additional eight weeks leave each year.
Career Interval Leave	Allows employees who have completed at least 5 years service in the APS to take up to 30 working days without pay for the purposes of refreshment and renewal.
Adoption Leave*	Allows six weeks paid leave when adopting a child.
Maternity Leave**	12 weeks full pay or 24 weeks half pay available to female employees before and after confinement.
Paternity Leave*	1 week full pay or 2 weeks half pay, following the birth or adoption of a child.
Annual Leave	20 days paid leave per year allows employees to take a break from work.
Annual Leave Buy Back	Allows employees to cash out part of their annual leave credits (if they have accumulated more than 40 days), when they take an equivalent amount of annual leave. A minimum of 10 days continuous annual leave must be taken with the cash out.
Ceremonial Leave	Allows Indigenous Australian employees up to 20 days without pay in any two calendar years.
Long Service Leave	Allows employees to take a substantial break from work after a period of service of 10 years or longer.
Miscellaneous Leave	Increases DEST's flexibility in relation to approving absences which are not covered by other specified types of leave.
Christmas Closedown*	All DEST workplaces close for business from 25 December to the first working day following 1 January each year.
Health Related Allowance*	An amount of \$200 paid to all employees in September each year to be used for health related items or activities.

Note:

All initiatives in the table above are subject to Delegate approval and/or require supporting evidentiary material, with the exception of the Health Related Allowance which is paid each September.

4) Initiatives in the table above marked with an * were new initiatives in the most recent Certified Agreement. Those marked ** were existing initiatives enhanced in the most recent Certified Agreement.

5) As at 30 June 2003:

Total staff in DEST – 1617*	Number of staff who made use of provision	Percentage of total staff
i. Purchased Leave	44	2.7%
ii. Negotiated Part-Time Work Arrangements	105**	6.5%
iii. Parental Leave#	38	2.3%
iv. use of information, advice or counselling services made available by the department	334^^	20.6%
v. departmental provision of facilities (such as family care facilities).	17	1.0%
vi. home based work (ongoing arrangements only recorded)	8	0.5%

* DEST Annual Report 2003

** DEST Annual Report 2003 - ongoing part-time employees

^^Services accessed between 1 May 2002 – 30 April 2003 for personal and/or work related issues (based around contract start and end dates)

This type of leave includes Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave and Adoption Leave.