

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 2009-10**

Outcome **5**

DEEWR Question No. **EW768_10**

Senator Humphries asked on 22 October 2009, EEWL Hansard page 137.

Question

Negotiations with states

Is it possible to get a schedule or a diary of the occasions where those negotiations have occurred with the individual states and with whom they are conducted—whether they are minister to minister or public servant to public servant?

Mr Kovacic— We will take that on notice. I will just mention that it has been at a combination of levels, both officials to officials as well as ministers to ministers.

Answer

Workplace Relations Ministers' Council (WRMC)

The Workplace Relations Ministers' Council (WRMC) is a non-statutory body comprising Commonwealth, state and territory ministers for workplace relations and occupational health and safety (OHS).

State and Territory workplace relations ministers have been consulted extensively on the development of the Fair Work Act and the establishment of the National System through WRMC. The national system was listed as a discussion item at seven of the eight meetings held since the Government came to power in November 2007.

WRMC meeting dates are as follows:

25 September 2009

11 June 2009

18 May 2009 – Dealt with OHS matters only

3 April 2009

5 November 2008

22 August 2008

23 May 2008

1 February 2008

The establishment of the national system was also discussed at the Senior Officials Meetings held prior to WRMC meetings.

The Deputy Prime Minister has also had meetings on a regular basis, both formal and informal, with individual state Ministers on a range of issues which would have included the national system.

High Level Officials' Group (HLOG)

The HLOG was established by WRMC to facilitate discussion on the development of the Fair Work legislation and to collaborate on the development of the national system and its interface with State workplace relations systems. HLOG membership includes government departmental representatives from all States and Territories.

There have been a total of 17 formal HLOG meetings at which national system issues have been discussed, with four occurring via teleconference on:

16 June 2008

13 March 2008

18 February 2008

7 February 2008

and the remaining occurring as face-to-face meetings on:

11 August 2009

16 July 2009

21 April 2009

27 February 2009

9 December 2008

17 September 2008

29 July 2008

17 July 2008

2 July 2008

30 April 2008

9 April 2008

6-7 March 2008

25 February 2008

Bilateral meetings with states

In addition to the above, the Department held a number of formal bilateral meetings with State and Territory officials concerning the establishment of the national system, either face-to-face or by teleconference.

Victoria

5 May 2009

6 February 2009

8 December 2008

13 October 2008

12 February 2008

7 February 2008

New South Wales

17 April 2009

24 March 2009

22 January 2009

14 February 2008

Queensland

12 October 2009
10 September 2009
8 July 2009
17 December 2008
8 December 2008
18 June 2008
13 February 2008

South Australia

12 August 2009
16 July 2009
21 May 2009
8 May 2009
21 April 2009
17 March 2009
16 December 2008
8 October 2008
7 March 2008

Tasmania

16 July 2009
8 July 2009
31 March 2009
19 December 2008
5 March 2008

Western Australia

5 March 2008
23 June 2008
25 February 2008

Australian Capital Territory

18 March 2009

Northern Territory

12 March 2008

The discussions referred to above at both multilateral and bilateral levels have been supplemented by additional telephone calls and email correspondence.

Committee on Industrial Legislation

In addition, HLOG officials participated in a parallel process to the Committee on Industrial Legislation (CoIL) meeting held from 7-17 October 2008 and on 14 November 2008 to consider the draft Fair Work Bill in detail, and participated in CoIL for the Fair Work (Transitional Provisions and Consequential Amendments) Bill 2009 on 27 February 2009. HLOG officials also attended a parallel process to the CoIL for the Fair Work Regulations 2009 and Fair Work (State Referral and Consequential and Other Amendments) Bill 2009 on 19 May 2009.