

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Additional Estimates 2006-2007, 13th and 16th February, 2007

Question: HS70

Agency: Centrelink

Outcome 1, Output 1.1

Topic: Staff Safety

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written Question on Notice

SENATOR MOORE asked on 16/02/2007:

1. What specialist advice has Centrelink sought or is seeking to assess the risk controls used to prevent assault?
2. When was the last time Centrelink reviewed in conjunction with employees and the union, the adequacy of the controls used in Centrelink's open plan offices to prevent the assault of Public Servants?
3. When was the last time Centrelink had its health and safety management systems independently audited to ensure they are properly implemented and sufficient to meet its duty of care obligations?
4. Centrelink policy (OHS Handbook for Team Leaders and Managers) calls for managers to demonstrate 6 OH&S competencies in order to achieve compliance with the Act. How many managers, by Area and workplace, have had these competencies assessed?

ANSWER:

1. Centrelink retains internal expertise in risk management, occupational health and safety and security to assess the risk controls used to prevent assault in and around the workplace. In June 2006 the Australian Federal Police conducted a security assessment of Customer Service Centre accommodation designs. The recommendations from this assessment have been incorporated into Centrelink's office design standards.
2. The review of control measures for the prevention of assault by customers is part of Centrelink's ongoing health and safety risk management. Centrelink Team Leaders and Managers are required to undertake six monthly site safety inspections with the employee health and safety representatives. Records of inspections are maintained and the rate of compliance is measured every six months. Managers are required to review site security every two years, using a checklist, and regularly review local response guidelines. Safety control measures are reviewed after serious customer aggression incidents.
3. Comcare audited Centrelink's health and safety management systems in 2003-04 as part of Comcare's Planned Investigation Programme. In February 2006, Comcare conducted an audit (Targeted Investigation) into Centrelink's compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment)(National Standards) regulations* on Manual Handling. Centrelink is implementing the recommendations made by the investigator.

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4. Centrelink's *OHS Handbook for Team Leaders and Managers* identifies the relevant occupational health and safety competencies for Centrelink Team Leaders and Managers. The competencies are not a mandatory requirement of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* but reflect guidance provided by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (now the Australian Safety and Compensation Council).

Information about the number of Team Leaders and Managers, who have been assessed against occupational health and safety competency standards, is not readily available.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 2 hours and 21 minutes at an estimated cost of \$144.