

# Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Additional Budget Estimates Hearing—February 2011

## Answers to Questions on Notice

### Parliamentary Portfolio, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Workplace Bullying**

Question: **29**

Written **Senator Siewert**

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 April 2011**

1. How many of the five reported bullies in 2009-10 have histories of being difficult to work with within work teams? Has the Department addressed their behaviour with performance improvement plans before moving them to other work sections?
2. How many of the five have been promoted or are acting in higher positions since 2009-10?
3. How many of the five were informed they were indicated as bullies in exit surveys? If not why not?
4. Will the Department introduce a 'two strikes and you're out' policy for reported bullies to encourage them to change their behaviours before they are asked to leave the Department?
5. What is the current length of time it takes for the Secretary, Assistant Secretary of DPS HR to be informed of reported bullies?
6. Does DPS follow-up to see how staff are going after they leave the Department because of bullying? Do bullied staff who leave the Department get informed as to what actions were taken to change the reported bullies behaviour?

#### **Answer**

1 The reports of bullying referred to in 2009–10 were made in Exit Interview Records completed by five employees leaving DPS. Of these five reports, two named individuals. There is no other indication of the individuals named being difficult to work with, and DPS has not moved them to other sections.

2 Neither of the two individuals named has been promoted or has been acting in higher positions since 2009–10.

3 In both the cases where individuals were named, DPS was already aware of the circumstances prior to the Exit Interviews being completed. In one instance, DPS was aware that it was a personality-based conflict between the two employees. In the second instance, the matter had already been raised with the individual.

4 The Parliamentary Service Code of Conduct requires that all employees treat everyone with respect and courtesy, and without harassment. As bullying is not consistent with that requirement, action to deal with a suspected bully could take the form of an investigation into a breach of the Code. Sanctions for a proven breach can vary from a reprimand through to termination of employment.

5 Where bullying behaviour is reported through an Exit Interview, it is reported to the relevant Assistant Secretary within a week. Other formal complaints are dealt with as soon as possible.

6 DPS follows up with former employees where they have made a formal complaint on any aspect of their employment with DPS. This includes informing former employees of the outcome of an action taken in respect of adverse comments made by them through an Exit Interview.