

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Parliament Portfolio

Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff

Supplementary Estimates 2003-04, 3 November 2003

Question: P18

Topic: Family friendly or work-life initiatives.

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: N/A

Senator Carr asked:

In light of the MAC report, the following questions are asked of each department:

- 1) What has been the department's response to the MAC report to date?
- 2) Which issues identified in the MAC report have been identified as priority areas for the department?
- 3) What family friendly or 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 on the part of the organisation.
- 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 or 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); and
 - vi) home based work.

Question 1 – What has been the department’s response to the MAC report (on Organisational Renewal) to date?

The department has considered the MAC report and its implications for staffing matters in the department. As the department will be abolished on 31 January 2004 (to be replaced with a new Department of Parliamentary Services which will incorporate the current Department of the Parliamentary Library, Joint House Department and the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff) this department has not taken any long term decisions based on the report.

Question 2 – Which issues identified in the MAC report have been identified as priority areas for the department?

No long term issues have been pursued by the department (see above answer). However the department had already addressed many of the work/life balance issues identified in the report.

Question 3 – What family friendly or work/life balance initiatives:

(a) exist in the department?

Enhanced Maternity Leave arrangements, Parental Leave, Adoptive Leave, Purchased Leave, Flexible Working Hours, Part-time Work, Employee Assistance Program, Christmas Shut-down, Personal Leave (including provision for Carer’s Leave) and a scheme whereby staff can take a fifth year off work having contributed towards its salary for the previous four years (Deferred Salary Year Scheme).

(b) are available to staff through the Certified Agreement?

All measures shown in the above answer are available through the department’s Certified Agreement. While there is a statutory scheme for Maternity Leave, the department’s Certified Agreement provides both for an additional two week’s paid leave and for the capacity to take the fourteen weeks total leave at half pay – giving a total of 28 weeks.

The granting of these conditions are all either subject to the discretion of the department or agreement between the employee and the department.

Question 4 – What family friendly or work/life initiatives has the department introduced in, or since, the implementation of the department’s most recent Certified Agreement?

The department’s most recent Certified Agreement came into effect on 9 October and, as indicated above, carries the suite of work/life measures. All but the additional Maternity Leave and the Deferred Salary Year scheme were also in the previous Certified Agreement.

Question 5 – In respect to Certified Agreement based family friendly or work/life balance provisions, what number and proportion of departmental staff are making use of provisions in areas including:

(i) purchased leave

As at 20 November 2003, 14 staff (being 4.3% of eligible staff) participate in the Purchased Leave Scheme.

(ii) negotiated part-time work arrangements

As at 20 November 2003, 22 staff (being 6.7% of eligible staff) work negotiated part-time hours.

(iii) parental leave

As at 20 November 2003, 4 staff (being 1.2% of eligible staff) were on Parental Leave (including Maternity Leave). In the previous three financial years, parental leave was used by nine staff (2002-2003), six staff (2001-2002) and four staff (2000-2001). All of this was taken as maternity leave.

(iv) use of information, advice or counselling services made available by the department

In the six months up to 30 June 2003, there were 17 Employee Assistance Program counselling appointments for departmental staff and/or their families. As some of these may have been repeat appointments and the department does not know the size of staff's families, it is not possible to provide a percentage usage rate of the eligible pool.

(v) departmental provision of facilities (such as family care facilities)

There are no formal family care facilities in Parliament House.

(vi) home based work

While there are no formal home based work arrangements in the department, senior managers have home office computing equipment provided by the department.