

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Budget Estimates Supplementary Hearings 2003-2004, 3-4 November 2003

Question: PM 70 - APSC

Outcome 1

Topic: MAC Organisational Renewal Report and Family Friendly and Work/Life Balance Provisions

Direct on Notice

Answer:

(1) The Commission's response to the MAC report on Organisational Renewal has been at two levels – promoting the report and its implications across the APS and responding to it as an agency.

As Executive Director to MAC, the Commission played a major part in the development of the report itself. The key findings of the MAC report were presented at various fora sponsored by the Commission, including the Corporate Management Network and seminars in all capital cities.

The Commission, in consultation with relevant agencies, has now developed a package of materials designed to assist agencies to adapt their human resource management strategies to retain and attract mature-aged employees. The package includes guidance on leadership for mature-aged workers and material addressing the challenges to provide flexible working arrangements for older workers.

Internally the MAC report has been addressed in a number of ways. These include through:

- the development of a new certified agreement for the period 2003 – 2006 called *Building Capability: People and Performance* that contains provisions for development of a workforce plan, a more structured learning and development strategy and a more robust performance management system;
- all staff having been offered the opportunity, if they wish, to negotiate individual AWAs, with the capacity to address phased retirement preferences;
- the establishment of a Strategic Capability Development Team headed up by a newly appointed workforce planning and learning/development practitioner. This team will be developing the workforce planning framework to guide workforce planning within the Commission;
- the undertaking of a comprehensive capability gap analysis, and analysis of the demographic staff profile; and
- the development of a Commission Capability Model, which focuses on six core capabilities that aligned with the Commission's 2003 – 04 strategic priorities and which will inform a more structured learning and development strategy.

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(2) Priorities include:

- Development of a workforce planning strategy/ framework. The Commission has developed this framework to guide its workforce planning in 2003 – 04. The framework was endorsed by the Commission Management Committee in August and work has commenced to further develop HR strategies and plans.
- Development of a comprehensive and accurate Human Resource Information System; including incorporation of the 360-degree appraisal/feedback process and a regular staff survey. The current information system will be strengthened, for example, to provide monthly workforce planning reports to assist Group Managers with succession planning, recruitment needs and the management of absenteeism and to include better data on learning and development activity and expenditure.

The Commission has been conducting staff surveys since 1997, but has now agreed a new approach that will ensure not only regular feedback, but a basis for comparison over time.

- Review and redesign of the Commission's recruitment processes to model those of the newly launched APS recruitment kit "*Get it Right – A Guide to Recruitment and Selection for Managers*".
- Review and strengthening of the Commission's graduate program.
- Development of a structured corporate learning and development plan which will identify Commission and Group capability requirements and link these to individual development planning.
- Ensuring that the performance management provisions within the certified agreement are implemented effectively. These provisions include improving individual learning and development initiatives.

(3) The Commission's 2002 Staff Survey reported that 82% of staff believed that in general, the Commission was a satisfying place to work and that 91% of staff believed leave and flexibility of working hours decisions were fairly and equitably considered and applied in the Commission.

In its 2002 study, *Managing Work/Life Balance*, (a private work and lifestyle consultancy firm), ranked the Commission eighth of the 195 participating organisations against a range of benchmarks on employment policies and practices.

(3) (a) In addition to the provisions available through the certified agreement that are listed at (3)(b), the Commission provides staff with a Carer's Room and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry school holiday program is promoted within the Commission. The program provides on site child-care facilities to the staff working in Canberra during the school holidays.

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(3) (b)

- Reimbursement of reasonable expenses arising from additional family care arrangements due to work
- Annual Health and Lifestyle program
- Employee Assistance Program
- Hours of Work and Standard/Extended Bandwidth
- Flextime / Flexbank
- Working Arrangements for Executive Level 1 employees
- Regular Part Time Employment

- Working Away from the Office
- Christmas Close down
- Personal Carer's leave – 5 days
- Additional Carer's leave – 5 days
- Sick leave including at half pay
- Recreation leave including at half pay
- Bereavement leave
- Purchased leave (48/52, 49/52, 50/52 or 51/52)
- Discretionary leave – various reasons including – paid or unpaid
- Maternity leave including 24 weeks at half pay
- Performance appraisal provisions for staff returning from leave (eg Maternity leave, leave to care for children, illness)

(3) (c)

While the majority of the provisions contained in the certified agreement require approval from the employee's manager, provisions where particular discretion may be exercised include:

- Reimbursement of reasonable expenses arising from additional family care arrangements due to work
- Flextime / Flexbank
- Working Arrangements for Executive Level 1 Employees
- Regular Part Time Employment
- Working Away from the Office
- Discretionary leave – various reasons including – paid or unpaid

(4)

Nil. (The Commission's certified agreement was certified in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission on 11 June 2003).

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(5) (a)

- i) Since January 2002 16 employees have utilised the purchase leave provisions
- ii) As at 30 June 2003 11% of Commission employees were working part-time
- iii) Since January 2002 1 employee has utilised the discretionary leave provisions for an extended period of time for adoption purposes. In that same period 20 employees have utilised discretionary leave for short periods, although it is not possible to determine the reasons for the leave.
- iv) For the period 1 October 2002 to 30 September 2003 the Commission's utilisation rate of its EAP service was 7.53%. The program is also available to family members and the utilisation rate including family members was 8.06%.
- v) In 2002 the Commission's Carer's Room was used on 17 occasions. In 2001 it was used on 29 occasions.

Commission staff regularly make use of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry school holiday program.

- iv) Under the Commission's policy home based working arrangements can be ad-hoc / temporary arrangements (ie 1 day only, or 1 week only or 2 days/week for 2 – 4 weeks only) or long term / regular arrangements. Ad hoc or temporary arrangements are not centrally recorded.

The Commission currently has 3 staff on long term / regular home based work.