

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SOLICITOR (AGS)

Question No. 62

Senator Brandis asked the following question at the hearing on 16 October 2012:

For the years 2009-10; 2010-11 and 2012-13:

1. How many cases of sexual harassment were referred to the Australian Government Solicitor?
2. What was the total amount spent in each individual matter of sexual harassment by the Australian Government Solicitor?
3. How many lawyers were involved in each individual matter of sexual harassment by the Australian Government Solicitor?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

AGS's legal matters are categorised in AGS's centralised legal practice management system according to broad legal matter categories. There is no category for 'sexual harassment'. A number of the categories could include sexual harassment claims, in particular, the categories of 'employment and workplace relations dispute' and 'employment and workplace relations advice'. Over the last 5 years AGS has opened around 550 matters in these 2 broad categories and a subset of them might have involved sexual harassment issues. Sexual harassment claims could also arise in categories involving workers compensation matters. To identify matters falling within the description of 'cases of sexual harassment' would require the individual review of AGS legal files within all these categories and possibly some others. This would be an unreasonable diversion of AGS's resources, noting AGS's role as a government business enterprise operating on a fully commercial and competitive basis in providing legal and related services to government agencies.