

**2 September 2003**  
**General Purpose Standing Committee No. 1**

**Portfolio**

**Special Minister of State, Commerce, Industrial Relations, Central Coast**

**QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING HEARING**

**“WorkCover”**

**QON 1      Mr Gallacher asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC—**

What are the differences in the WorkCover premiums paid by Queensland and New South Wales businesses across industries and job categories? (Hansard, p.2)

**ANSWER**

No Australian workers compensation authority applies premium rates according to “job categories”. All schemes levy rates on an employer’s industry sector.

Differences in the way industry groups are classified, injury rates and the mix of profiles within industry groups complicate direct comparisons between basic tariff premiums under the New South Wales and Queensland workers compensation systems.

Injured workers in NSW are significantly advantaged by the superior benefits and support offered by the NSW scheme.

**QON 2      Mr Clarke asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC—**

What sort of work is performed by the seven employees of WorkCover within the pay bracket \$27,606 to \$36,258? (Hansard, p.3)

**ANSWER**

The information sought is detailed in the following table. In several cases, the officers described are no longer employed by WorkCover.

<b>Position</b>	<b>Duties</b>
General Assistant	General Maintenance and preparation of test samples
Stores Officer	Maintainance of stores and stocks (no longer employed by WorkCover)
Driver General Assistant	Driving (no longer employed by WorkCover)
Clerical Officer Grade 1	General/basic clerical work
Clerical Officer Grade 1	General/basic clerical work(no longer employed by WorkCover)
Clerical Officer Grade 1	General/basic clerical work
Electrical Fitter	General/basic repair and maintenance work

**QON 3 Mr Clarke asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC—**

I understand that there are no junior clerical staff employed on the pay bracket below \$27,606. Could you advise ;

- a. Does WorkCover employ any junior clerical staff?
- b. Is there any work within WorkCover of a junior clerical nature? (Hansard, p.4)

**ANSWER**

- a. No.
- b. WorkCover employs clerks under the Crown Employees (Administration and Clerical Officers) Award. The award does not distinguish tasks on the basis of age.

**QON 4 Mr Clarke asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC—**

What is the salary bracket for a receptionist? (Hansard, p.4)

**ANSWER**

WorkCover does not employ receptionists, this role is outsourced.

**QON 5**      **Mr Clarke asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC—**

Between 2000-01 and 2001-02, the number of major claims coming to WorkCover increased by 1.1 percent. Why did the number of clerical and administrative staff increase by 14 percent for the same period? (Hansard, p.4)

**ANSWER**

Workers Compensation Scheme claims are handled by insurance companies that are licensed by WorkCover (except for a relatively small number of claims made by volunteers or those whose employer is uninsured). There is, therefore, no direct correlation between the number of major workers compensation claims and the number of clerical staff that WorkCover employs.

**QON 6**      **Mr Gallacher asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC—**

- a.      How many staff are currently employed in the fraud investigation unit in Gosford?
- b.      How many convictions for fraud were recorded in 2002-03 financial year? (Hansard, p.5)

**ANSWER**

- a.      There are 10 positions in the fraud unit.
- a.      Since the Fraud Prosecution Unit was created (June 2003), 23 prosecutions have been commenced and there have been 4 successful prosecutions. A further 19 matters are awaiting hearing.

For the 2002/2003 financial year there were 3 convictions for fraud. Of these, 2 were for claimant fraud and 1 was for employer fraud.

**QON 7**      **Revd Nile asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC—**

- a.      Are you aware that NGO's are having particular difficulty with the Premium Discount Scheme?
- b.      Do you have any proposals to make that scheme more suitable for NGOs? (Hansard, p.11)

**ANSWER**

The Health and Community Services Sector is a major beneficiary of the Premium Discount Scheme. 490 employers that operate in this industry have received discounts totalling \$10.9M. This is the second highest industry take up of the Premium Discount Scheme after manufacturing.

In addition, the government made a commitment to extending the Premium Discount Scheme (Small Business Strategy) to not for profit community organisations. An Expression of Interest process has been conducted by WorkCover and a lead non-government organisation has been selected to assist other not-for-profit organisations to access the Premium Discount Scheme. It is expected that these organisations will have the assistance they require to improve systems and safety, and access the premium discount scheme through the lead organisation shortly.

**QON 8      Mr Gallacher asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC—**

In relation to the introduction of legislation targeting employee and employer fraud, what has been the trend in convictions for employee fraud over the last two years? (Hansard, p.11)

**ANSWER**

Convictions for claimant fraud have been stable.

**QON 9      Mr Gallacher asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC—**

How much money is being expended on the detection and prosecution of fraud within the workers compensation scheme? (Hansard, p.11)

**ANSWER**

In 2002/03, \$1,297,000 was spent on the detection of fraud.

WorkCover's expenditure on fraud prosecution is not recorded in a manner that allows it to be separated from prosecutions for breaches of occupational health and safety legislation. As such, WorkCover cannot provide prosecution costs specific to fraud within the workers compensation scheme.

**QON 10     Mr Gallacher asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC—**

What is the expenditure on overseas travel:

- a. Within your ministerial office?
- b. Within WorkCover? (Hansard, p.12)

**ANSWER**

- a. Zero.
- b. This information is detailed each year in the WorkCover Annual Report

## **“Industrial Relations”**

**QON 11 Ms Rhiannon asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC-**

- a. Are you planning to intervene in the part-time casual case that has been brought by the Teachers’ Federation in the Industrial Relations Commission?
- b. Is this consistent with the Government’s changes to the Public Sector Employment and Management Act (Hansard, p.18)

### **ANSWER**

- a. The Government intervened in the proceedings before the NSW Industrial Relations Commission in relation to the application by the Teachers’ Federation for pro rata conditions for part-time TAFE casual teachers on 8 August 2003.
- b. Public sector teachers are employed under the provisions of the Education Act, not the Public Sector Employment and Management Act, and the Department of Education and Training is the employer. The changes to the Public Sector Employment and Management Act had no impact on my decision to intervene in these matters.

## **“Commerce”**

**QON 12 Ms Rhiannon asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC-**

- a. How much of the budget of the NSW Government is allocated to software?
- b. How much of the budget is allocated to the support and maintenance of the software? (Hansard, p.16)

### **ANSWER**

As would be appreciated the operation of most software is held under licence. The licence costs are met by the Government in order to operate the software held by each agency.

Without the software that drives the computer programs across the public sector it would not be possible to deliver programs in a cost effective manner.

**QON 13 Mr Gallacher asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC-**

For 2003-2004 how many media or public relations advisers does the Department of Commerce expect to employ? (Hansard, p.21)

**ANSWER**

Four.

**QON 14 Mr Gallacher asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC-**

(a) What is the total anticipated budget for advertising for 2003-04 for the Department of Commerce?

(b) What is the breakdown of the advertising budget? (Hansard, p.21)

**ANSWER**

The budget for advertising for 2003-04 for the Department of Commerce is \$1,291,850. This includes \$451,800 for recruitment and \$840,050 for community and industry awareness programs.

**QON 15 Mr Gallacher asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC-**

What are the budgeted legal fees for the Department of Commerce for 2003-04? (Hansard, p.21)

**ANSWER**

The budgeted legal fees for the Department of Commerce for 2003-04 is \$1,367,500.

**“Central Coast”**

**QON 16 Mr Clarke asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC-**

What are the Government’s plans for the Kincumber Police Station (Hansard, p.21)

**ANSWER**

My colleague, the Minister for Police, the Hon. John Watkins MP, has provided the following response:

The opening hours and staffing allocations at individual police stations are at the discretion of the Local Area Commander, in this case Brisbane Water Local Area Command.

**QON 17 Mr Clarke asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC-**

What are the Government's proposals to re-establish the Erina Fair Police Station? (Hansard, p.23)

**ANSWER**

My colleague, the Minister for Police, the Hon. John Watkins MP, has provided the following response:

I am currently waiting for a statewide audit of NSW Police properties, which will include a complete assessment of current police accommodation and future requirements.

**“Cabinet Office, Office of Drug Policy”**

**QON No 18 Reverend the Hon Fred Nile asked the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for the Central Coast, the Hon John Della Bosca MLC-**

The report evaluating the injecting room discovered 339 errors in the program's "relational data management system". How will the Government ensure the future accuracy of the data management system? (Hansard, p.27)

**ANSWER**

The evaluators advise that most of the errors that occurred were in earlier versions of the database development and any systematic problems were fixed.