

INQUIRY INTO EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCIES

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION - RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

QUESTION NO.	QUESTION	RESPONSE
1	<p>The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Thank you. Because a lot of this inquiry is about the front line. In fact, I think all the case studies are coming from the front line. I know that in addition to the published information you can give more of a breakdown to the elite agency leadership. <i>Can you assist us to understand, where the bullying allegations are being made, if that is coming from frontline or office staff? Maybe take it on notice if you do not have that information handy, but I understand you can give that breakdown.</i></p> <p>Mr JOHNSTON: We can. We ask a question about whether you are frontline or non-frontline, which is then reliant on the person to make a decision on where they are placed. I can take that on notice and provide more on it.</p>	<p>A table showing, of the employees in emergency services agencies who said they witnessed or experienced bullying, the proportions by frontline and non-frontline staff is provided at Tab 1.</p> <p>Data are taken from the People Matter Employee Surveys that were conducted in 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2017.</p> <p>Employees are categorised as frontline or non-frontline based on a question in the People Matter Employee Survey which asks about the type of work done.</p> <p>The public sector average and the average for the five emergency services agencies, as a group, are also included in the tables as a point of comparison.</p>
2	<p>Ms GRUMMER: Yes. The former commissioner had convened a round table. The round table was made up of a couple of agency heads as well as the unions. The round table has not met for probably about two years or so. <i>The round table ended up offering an action plan which was a list of initiatives to work on trying to address bullying and to focus on creating positive and productive workplace cultures.</i> So the Public Service Commission has taken that list of initiatives and worked with the sector on producing thought leadership and collateral that then the agencies have been using.</p> <p>The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: <i>Is that a document to which we would be able to have access?</i></p> <p>Ms GRUMMER: Yes, we can provide it.</p>	<p>A copy of the Action Plan on bullying (<i>Supporting the government sector to act early and strategically on bullying: The Public Service Commission's Action Plan 2016-17</i>) is provided at Tab 2.</p>

QUESTION NO.	QUESTION	RESPONSE
3	<p>The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: What is driving these questions is to understand whether there are any interstate comparisons and insights to be gained that way?</p> <p>Mr JOHNSTON: It is something I could take on notice to explore more with my colleagues. I think they do ask questions around bullying, sometimes slightly differently, which is often such a challenge with the question—what scope or not.</p> <p>The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: I understand. Comparing the New South Wales emergency services sector with the Victorian emergency services sector is more useful than comparing it with the education sector. Is there an opportunity to explore that as a research tool?</p> <p>Mr JOHNSTON: I am happy to explore that to see what they are willing to share and what is available.</p> <p>The Hon. WES FANG: There is no active collaboration between the States to cross-share information and lessons learned when these surveys and the results are interpreted?</p> <p>Mr JOHNSTON: There is some sharing of data but in the past it has been typically around a matter of interest, such as this might be where we might raise the question, "Is anyone open to sharing their information?" or it is where it is publicly made available. We would be, I believe, the most active in sharing our data openly to the public in this instance. Sometimes in sharing it, it is almost public sector to public sector. I am happy to explore and we might be able potentially to get some further information that might be helpful.</p>	<p>The Public Service Commission contacted our colleagues in other Australian government jurisdictions to determine if relevant comparisons could be made about the prevalence of bullying in emergency services agencies in those jurisdictions.</p> <p>The main factors that inhibit relevant comparisons being made are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. no data was available or was able to be provided within the timeframe 2. the different structure of emergency services agencies in other jurisdictions 3. the different ways in which the bullying question is framed in like surveys. <p>For the Committee's information, publicly available bullying data from the most recent employee surveys conducted in Queensland in 2015 and 2016 ('the Working for Queensland survey') are provided at Tab 4 for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland Fire and Emergency Services • Queensland Police Service • Queensland Ambulance Service • Queensland public sector. <p>The Public Service Commission will continue to explore opportunities for sharing data with other jurisdictions.</p>

QUESTION NO.	QUESTION	RESPONSE
4	<p>The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: We heard yesterday from the fire brigade—the assistant commissioner in charge of this—that they appear to be sending out exit surveys, although some of the former employees sitting in the audience were shaking their heads. Those surveys are coming back to his assistant, and she is the one who is reading them—and then, that is it. I just wondered if that was best practice or if there are any thoughts about having best practice. It just seemed like harvesting. It would be interesting to hear the thoughts of people leaving and somehow feeding that back into your policy processes.</p> <p>Ms GRUMMER: Definitely. We can provide the guidance that the Public Service Commission gives to the sector on exit interviews and exit surveys. In the guidance is that there should be a report to leadership and senior management around what the themes are and what recommendations there should be for how those things should be addressed.</p> <p>The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: There are actual guidelines for that?</p> <p>Ms GRUMMER: Yes, leading practices. We can provide that; I just do not have that.</p> <p>The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Thank you so much.</p>	<p>A copy of the Public Service Commission’s <i>Guide to developing exit interviews</i> is provided at Tab 5.</p> <p>The guide is designed to support public sector agencies to develop and implement an exit interview program that is based on best practice and that suits the agency’s operation and employment conditions. It is available on the Public Service Commission’s website.</p>

QUESTION NO.	QUESTION	RESPONSE
5	<p>Ms GRUMMER: The last time we met was approximately two years ago. We developed an action plan. I have taken an item on notice to provide that action plan. We can also, as part of that, provide an update on the initiatives that are outlined in the action plan.</p>	<p>The <i>Supporting the government sector to act early and strategically on bullying: The Public Service Commission’s Action Plan 2016-17</i> (‘the Action Plan’) describes a suite of actions that the Public Service Commission proposed to take in partnership with the sector. The approach was designed to complement and support the considerable efforts that agencies, unions, sector leaders and employees already make to prevent and mitigate bullying in the workplace. It also aligned with work being undertaken in other Australian jurisdictions.</p> <p>The Action Plan was not intended to be a comprehensive strategy for the sector, or for public sector work health and safety. However it put forward initiatives with potential to shift thinking and practice. The PSC’s work in this area has primarily been focused on lifting sector capability and commitment, and promoting healthy work cultures.</p> <p>Tab 3 shows the outcomes of the Action Plan.</p>