

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
Question On Notice

16 NOV 2016

Wednesday, 19 October 2016

4549. Hon Robin Chappie to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

I refer to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) 'Employee perception survey 2016 - agency level report', and I ask:

(a) regarding the staff of DAA, is it true that:

- (i) 26 per cent of staff have reported being subjected to bullying in the workplace, compared to 10 per cent on average across the public sector;
- (ii) under 40 per cent of staff report that senior leaders are effective;
- (iii) satisfaction is low, and that less than half of the staff are satisfied with the DAA as their employer, compared to 73 per cent on average in the public sector; and
- (iv) more than half of staff intend to leave the DAA within the next two years;

(b) regarding the DAA, is it true that:

- (i) only 40 per cent of staff feel the agency is being well managed;
- (ii) that less than 40 per cent of staff feel that change is well managed or that effective senior leadership is provided;
- (iii) less than half of staff feel the agency cares about their health and well being at work, as compared to 70 per cent on average across the public sector; and
- (iv) within their immediate work group, only 39 per cent of staff agree there is adequate opportunity to develop the required skills for being a leader, as opposed to 58 per cent on average across the public sector; and

(c) with regard to ethical behaviour practices, is it true that:

- (i) only 61 per cent of staff believe that their agency actively encourages ethical behaviour, as compared to 87 per cent on average across the public sector;
- (ii) less than half of staff believe that senior managers lead by example in ethical behaviour;
- (iii) 46 per cent of staff have witnessed unprofessional conduct, including bullying, on four or more occasions in the past year, as compared to only 27 per cent on average of staff across the public sector witnessing such conduct four or more times;
- (iv) 26 per cent of staff have witnessed corrupt behaviour over the past 12 months, compared to only 10 per cent on average across the public sector;
- (v) 38 per cent of staff have witnessed discrimination or harassment, compared to only 16 per cent on average across the public sector;
- (vi) despite 89 per cent of staff knowing how to report unethical behaviour within their workplace, only 43 per cent have done so, while despite generally lower rates of witnessed unethical behaviour across the sector, 56 per cent across the sector have reported witnessed unethical behaviour;
- (vii) if yes to (vi), does this suggest a culture within the DAA in which staff feel they cannot, or should not, report witnessed unethical behaviour;
- (viii) only 53 per cent of staff would use the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003* to make a disclosure to the proper authority while 67 per cent of staff across the sector say they would do so; and
- (ix) if yes to (viii), could it suggest a culture of fear within the DAA?

a. – c. (vi) With regard to the Public Sector Commission's Employee Perception Survey 2016 Agency Level Report for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the numbers stated in the question are generally consistent with those contained in the report, with the exception of a (iv) which is incorrect. The report stated that more than half of Department of Aboriginal Affairs staff would leave in the next two years.

However, the results indicate that more than half of the staff intend to remain at the Department in the next two years.

The report also shows that survey participants indicated that:

- 83 per cent agree that co-workers treat employees from all diversity groups with equal respect,
- 74 per cent agree that they are able to access and use flexible work arrangements to assist in work / life balance, and
- 66 per cent agree that the agency uses technological advances to improve service design and delivery to customers / clients, higher than the Public Sector average.

Furthermore, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' key stakeholder survey indicates high levels of satisfaction with agency services and customer service. Workforce indicators reveal the Department is achieving strong results in diversity and low turnover rates with zero complaints, grievances or other ethical reports lodged within the Department in the preceding twelve months.

c. (vii) No. I am advised that the updated Department of Aboriginal Affairs Code of Conduct was released during 2016, requiring staff to return a signed statement that they had read and agreed to abide by the Code of Conduct. Following the release of the Code of Conduct, Department of Aboriginal Affairs staff participated in Accountable and Ethical Decision Making training workshops. Through these forums, Department of Aboriginal Affairs has promoted acceptable and ethical behaviours and standards, and requirements for reporting breaches.

(viii) Yes.

(ix) No. I am advised that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs is progressing a series of organisational transformation activities within the Heritage and Corporate Services directorates at the time of the survey, impacting more than 50 per cent of Department of Aboriginal Affairs staff, whilst implementing efficiency initiatives across the Department. This has placed significant pressure on staff during this period of change. Current Department of Aboriginal Affairs activities such as sub-committee structure, staff driven initiatives, accessible reports, staff celebratory events and staff discussion boards or forums are aimed at improving staff participation and engagement.



Minister for Aboriginal Affairs