

Question on Notice
No. 621
Asked on Tuesday, 29 April 2008

MR MALONE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES (Mr Roberts) — With respect to each of the Queensland Ambulance Service, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and Emergency Management Queensland—

QUESTION:

- (1) How many employees were successful in pursuing compensation claims for work-related stress for 2004–05, 2005–06, 2006–07 and 2007–08 to date?
- (2) What were the total and individual amounts of compensation claims paid to these employees?
- (3) How many employees who pursued compensation claims for work-related stress for 2004–05, 2005–06, 2006–07 and 2007–08 to date were unsuccessful?
- (4) How many employees have work-related stress compensation cases still pending?

ANSWER:

- (1) The Department of Emergency Services is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment. The Department actively supports the Queensland Government's Safer & Healthier Workplace goal to reduce psychological and psychiatric injuries.

As the Honourable Member would know, the role of our emergency services workers can involve attending very traumatic incidents. The Department of Emergency Services has developed a Workplace Health and Safety Strategy 2007-2010 called ZEROharm focussing on the mission that *all injuries are preventable*.

The rate of accepted Psychological/Psychiatric Injury (PPI) claims has remained relatively stable in recent years. The following figures relate to paid employees of the Department across all divisions and are based on financial years. Corporate Services staff are distributed across the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) divisions.

For QAS in 2004-05 the total number of full time equivalent staff (FTE) was 2891 and the number of accepted claims was 21; in 2005-06 the total FTE was 3033 and the number of accepted claims was 20; in 2006-07 the total FTE was 3197 and the number of accepted claims was 14 and as at 31 March 2008 the total FTE for 2007/08 was 3367 and the number of accepted claims was 18.

For QFRS in 2004-05 the total FTE was 2809 and the number of accepted claims was 5; in 2005-06 the total FTE was 2910 and the number of accepted claims was 9; in 2006-07 the total FTE was 2971 and the number of accepted claims was 7 and as at 31 March 2008 the total FTE for 2007-08 was 2977 and the number of accepted claims was 13.

For Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) in 2004-05, in 2005-06 and in 2006-07 there were no accepted claims and as at 31 March 2008 there were no accepted claims.

(2) The total statutory payments on accepted claims are:

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08 YTD
QAS	\$760,219.70	\$929,644.94	\$267,584.71	\$136,774.44
QFRS	\$345,377.64	\$345,724.27	\$230,474.59	\$281,838.27
EMQ	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

To ensure the privacy of individual members of staff who have had PPI claims, the department is unable to provide individual payments, as such information may potentially identify individual members of staff.

(3) The total number of unsuccessful PPI claims was 29 in 2004-05, 25 in 2005-06, 24 in 2006-07 and, as at 31 March 2008, 22 in 2007-08.

(4) As at 31 March 2008, there are 7 pending PPI claims.

The Department has developed a range of strategies to reduce the incidence of PPI injury and the related impact on employees, volunteers and the Department.

The Department has four targeted employee assistance programs for operational and public service staff and volunteers. These are:

- Priority One
- FireCare
- Langmont Advantage
- Embrace

In addition to statewide professional counsellors and psychologists, a network of trained peer support officers are in place to support employees who require assistance. The Department has established an early intervention fund which enables access to appropriate treatment for employees who are identified with work related physical or psychological injury.

Other strategies employed by the Department have included:

- Effective supervisor/manager training such as Supportive Leadership;
- Development and implementation of workplace bullying and harassment strategies; and
- Enhanced consultative forums to address workplace health and safety issues.