

Question on Notice
No. 552
Asked on 24 March 2010

MR MALONE asked the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services (MR ROBERTS) -

QUESTION:

With respect to the Queensland Ambulance Service and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (reported separately)—

1. How many employees pursued psychological/psychiatric injury (PPI) claims in 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10 to date?
2. Of those identified in (1) how many claims were successful (each year reported separately)?
3. What was the total and average statutory payment and common law payment (reported separately) on PPI claims?

ANSWER:

The Bligh Government has a proud history of supporting our emergency services. This includes ensuring staff and volunteers are properly supported and assisted.

The Department of Community Safety has implemented its Workplace Health and Safety Strategy 2007-2010. Under this strategy, workplace hazards and risks are targeted with an ultimate goal of zero harm to departmental personnel. The performance of the 'ZEROharm' initiative is assessed against two key performance indicators in the Department's Annual Report: lost time injury frequency rate which is the number of lost time injuries (one day or greater) per million hours worked and injury downtime rate which is the hours lost to injury as a factor of the total hours worked in the department. The lost time injury frequency rate was 26.73 in 2008-09 and the injury downtime rate was 0.71 per cent in 2008-09. This is a decrease from the lost time injury frequency rate of 28.64 in 2007-08 and the injury downtime rate of 0.77 per cent in 2007-08.

Vital support services like Priority One and FireCare and a peer support network are available to support QAS and QFRS staff and their families. These services provide early specialist intervention, trained peer supporters to provide debriefs following incidents and specialist counselling services.

The QAS encourages staff and immediate family members to utilise the professional services of 'Priority One' Staff Support Program. Ambulance officers and their immediate family are provided with counselling sessions for both work-related and non-work-related matters. Local counsellors' names and contact details are available from QAS stations or by contacting Priority One.

The QAS Staff Support Services have also developed a range of other initiatives to help support ambulance officers and their immediate families.

These include a 24-Hour Telephone Counselling Service which is available both to officers and their immediate family members. Telephone counselling is confidential and is available for both work-related and non work-related matters. Other services include Peer Supporter Officers who have volunteered to undertake special training to assist their work colleagues cope with personal and job-related difficulties. There is a network of Peer Supporter Officers throughout the State who provide a first line of contact following an incident or when QAS officers may need them.

FireCare is the counselling and support program designed specifically for Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFRS) staff, volunteers and their immediate families. The Peer Support Program provides a team of specially selected and trained co-workers across the state to help staff cope with personal and/or work-related difficulties. Confidential Professional Counselling is provided to staff and their immediate families. A 24-Hour Telephone Crisis Counselling Service is also provided. Telephone counselling is confidential and is available for both work-related and non work-related matters. QFRS offices and stations have a list of Peer Support Officers and list of FireCare counsellors throughout Queensland.

The Member has recently asked a similar Question on Notice relating to psychological/psychiatric injury claims. In particular, I refer the Member to my answer to his Question on Notice No. 401 asked on 10 March 2009 which provided him with the number of psychiatric/psychological claims reported to WorkCover in 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10 for ambulance officers and firefighters.

The Member has now asked a further Question on Notice relating to psychological/psychiatric injury claims involving all QAS and QFRS employees.

In 2007-08, 43 QAS employees pursued psychological/psychiatric injury claims. In 2008-09, 23 QAS employees pursued psychological/psychiatric injury claims. In 2009-10 (as at 28 February 2009), 22 QAS employees pursued psychological/psychiatric injury claims. Of these claims 24 were successful and 19 unsuccessful in 2007-08, 11 were successful and 12 were unsuccessful in 2008-09 and seven were successful and 15 were unsuccessful in 2009-10. This data can be compared with a QAS workforce of around 3,300.

In 2007-08, 23 QFRS employees pursued psychological/psychiatric injury claims. In 2008-09, 11 QFRS employees pursued psychological/psychiatric injury claims. In 2009-10 (as at 28 February 2010), 19 QFRS employees pursued psychological/psychiatric injury claims. Of these claims 14 were successful and nine were unsuccessful in 2007-08, five were successful and six were unsuccessful in 2008-09 and 11 were successful and eight were unsuccessful in 2009-10. This data can be compared with a QFRS workforce of around 2,800.

Please note that while a claim may be registered by WorkCover in a given financial year it does not mean that injury occurred in that same financial year.

In 2007-08, the total statutory payment for QAS was \$925,299 and the average statutory payment was \$28,915. In 2008-09, the total statutory payment for QAS was \$474,441 and the average statutory payment was \$29,652. A single common law payment of \$90.00 was made by QAS in 2008-09. In 2009-10 (as at 28 February 2010), the total statutory payment for QAS was \$176,099 and the average statutory payment was \$13,546.

In 2007-08, the total statutory payment for QFRS was \$450,601 and the average statutory payment was \$23,715. In 2008-09, the total statutory payment for QFRS was \$14,998 and the average statutory payment was \$2,999. In 2009-10 (as at 28 February 2010), the total statutory payment for QFRS was \$94,816 and the average statutory payment was \$6,772.