

Inquiry into Auditor-General's Report No. 4: 2012 – Managing Employee Unplanned Absence

Report No. 41

Finance and Administration Committee

March 2014

Finance and Administration Committee

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Acknowledgements

The Committee thanks those who briefed the Committee, gave evidence and participated in its inquiry. In particular the Committee acknowledges the assistance provided by the Public Service Commission; Department of Education, Training and Employment; Department of Housing and Public Works; Department of Community Safety and the Queensland Audit Office.

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Abbreviations

ACT	Australian Capital Territory
APS	Australian Public Service
AV	Ambulance Victoria
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DCS	Department of Community Safety
DET	Department of Education and Training
DEHP	Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
DETE	Department of Education, Training and Employment
DHPW	Department of Housing and Public Works
DHS	Direct Health Solutions
DJAG	Department of Justice and Attorney-General
DPC	Department of Premier and Cabinet
DPW	Department of Public Works
DSITIA	Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts
DTMR	Department of Transport and Main Roads
EIC	Education and Innovation Committee
FAC	Finance and Administration Committee
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
MFESB	Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board
MOHRI	Minimum Obligatory Human Resource Information
NES	National Employment Standards
NSW	New South Wales
PSC	Public Service Commission
QAO	Queensland Audit Office
QAS	Queensland Ambulance Services
QCS	Queensland Corrective Services
QFRS	Queensland Fire and Rescue Services
QPS	Queensland Public Service
QTT	Queensland Treasury and Trade
VicPol	Victoria Police

Glossary

Absenteeism	Includes sick leave, miscellaneous special leave, and leave to claim workers' compensation, carers' leave and time absent due to industrial disputes. Excludes casual employees.
Full-time	An employee who works full-time hours as specified in the award or agreement under which the employee is engaged.
Full-time Equivalent (FTE)	The hours worked by several part-time or casual employees, added together, may be required to make one full-time equivalent employee.
Minimum Obligatory Human Resource Information (MOHRI)	<p>MOHRI data is provided by agencies from their individual human resource information systems to the Public Service Commission on a quarterly basis. This approach was adopted to facilitate strategic management of human resources across the Queensland Public Service.</p> <p>Workforce details of agencies are reported to Government and included in other statistical reports. Public Service Commission Directive 03/2013 specifies the data set which agencies are required to submit to the Public Service Commission. Headcounts and FTE's of employees whose employment status is A (Active) or P (Paid leave for a period greater than eight weeks) are included in the figures.</p> <p>It is important to note that the MOHRI collection is only concerned with employees of agencies and not private sector contractors and/or consultants who may be engaged to undertake specific work and who are not employees.</p>
Queensland Public Service (QPS)	Includes those agencies and departments who submit MOHRI to the Public Service Commission on a quarterly basis.
the Committee	Finance and Administration Committee

Chair's Foreword

Under the Parliament of Queensland Act, parliamentary committees may perform its role in relation to examination of the public accounts related to its portfolio area. The Committee has responsibility to assess the integrity, economy, efficiency and effectiveness of government financial management by examining government financial documents; and considering the annual and other reports of the auditor-general. The Committee examined Auditor-General's Report No.4: 2012 – Managing Employee Unplanned Absence and agreed to examine the issues raised in the report in further detail.

During the course of its inquiry, the Committee held a joint private briefing with the Education and Innovation Committee, sought written feedback from the departments regarding the implementation of the Auditor-General's recommendation and held a public hearing with officers from Public Service Commission (PSC), Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE), Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW), Department of Community Safety (DCS) and the Queensland Audit Office.

This report presents a summary of the results of the inquiry. The Committee has made six recommendations aimed at addressing concerns identified by the Committee as requiring further attention.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank to thank the Queensland Audit Office and departmental officers for meeting with the Committee and for their cooperation in providing information to the Committee on a timely basis.

Finally, I would like to thank the other Members of the Committee for their hard work and support.



Steve Davies MP
Chair

March 2014

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 **18**

The Committee recommends that the Public Service Commission continue to monitor and obtain unplanned absence data from the Queensland Public Service with a view to utilising the data to provide relevant information, analysis and assistance to agencies.

Recommendation 2 **21**

The Committee recommends that the Public Service Commission explore the possibility of obtaining more comprehensive data sets.

Recommendation 3 **21**

The Committee recommends that the Public Service Commission conduct employee surveys in departments where absenteeism rates have been above the Queensland average rate to identify reasons for any increase.

Recommendation 4 **21**

The Committee recommends that the Public Service Commission examine data collection at a whole of government level to accurately incorporate agencies whose absenteeism rates have been previously overstated because of their rostering records.

Recommendation 5 **39**

The Committee recommends that the Public Service Commission undertake further in-depth analysis of correlations between unplanned absence and possible reasons.

Recommendation 6 **39**

The Committee recommends that the Public Service Commission obtain an update on the trends in departments where absenteeism rates were above the Queensland average following the implementation of strategies.

1 Introduction

1.1 Role of the Committee

The Finance and Administration Committee (the Committee) is a portfolio committee established by the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly on 18 May 2012.¹ The Committee's primary areas of responsibility are:

- Premier and Cabinet; and
- Treasury and Trade.

One of the functions of the Committee, as prescribed in section 95 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* is to consider the annual and other reports of the Auditor-General. In reviewing the reports the Committee invites the Auditor-General to provide briefings to highlight the key findings and issues.

The Committee assesses issues together with agency responses and, if considered beneficial to the public interest, will examine the matter further. This examination may take the form of written responses, briefings/meetings or public hearings.

1.2 Auditor-General report reviewed

The Auditor-General tabled the report on 19 June 2012. The report detailed the results of the performance audit to assess whether public service departments are effectively managing unplanned absence. It reviewed the role of central agencies, including the Public Service Commission (PSC), and examined more closely the following departments:

- Department of Community Safety (DCS)
- Department of Education and Training (DET)
- Department of Public Works (DPW)

Each department provided a response to the report and included their proposed action plan, where available, to address unplanned absence.

The Auditor-General's report is available from the Queensland Auditor-General (QAO) web site: <http://www.qao.qld.gov.au/reports-tabled-in-2012>

1.3 Machinery-of-Government changes

The audit was conducted between September 2011 and February 2012 which was prior to the March 2012 State election. Subsequent to the election significant machinery-of-government (MOG) changes occurred.

For the purpose of this report, two departments will be referred to by their current responsibilities except in relation to the audit report's finding; these are:

- Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE)
- Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW)

¹ *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s88 and Standing Order 194

As of November 2013, DCS ceased to exist as a result of the Police and Community Safety Review. The new departments and responsibilities are outlined in Table 1.

The information provided by the (former) DCS relates to the management of unplanned absence by that department prior to 1 November 2013.² For the purpose of this report, information and correspondence from DCS as well as correspondence from the new entity, Public Safety Business Agency will be used.

Table 1: Departmental structures and responsibilities following Police and Community Safety Review

	Past agency responsibility	Current agency responsibility
Queensland Ambulance Service	Department of Community Safety	Division of Queensland Health
Emergency Management Queensland	Department of Community Safety	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service	Department of Community Safety	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

Source: Correspondence from Chief Executive Officer, Public Safety Business Agency, to FAC dated 14 November 2013: 1

1.4 Inquiry Process

The Legislative Assembly referred the report to the Committee for its consideration on 13 February 2013. The Committee resolved to conduct an inquiry to consider the results of Auditor-General's Report No. 4 for 2012 – *Managing Employee Unplanned Absence* on 19 June 2012.

As the Department of Education, Training and Employment was one of the agencies examined in the audit, the Committee wrote to the Education and Innovation Committee (EIC) on 19 July 2012 inviting them to provide input into any or all of the topics examined in the report. The Committee also wrote to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee and the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee on 19 July 2012 inviting them to provide input as the Department of Community Safety and Department of Housing and Public Works were examined in the same audit.

The Committee, jointly with the EIC, held a private briefing with the Auditor-General and officers from the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) on Wednesday 22 August 2012 to discuss the report.

The Committee agreed to allow departments time to consider the report and to implement the Auditor-General's recommendations. In June 2013, the Committee wrote to seek an update on their responses to the Auditor-General's recommendations from the following departments:

- Public Service Commission (PSC)
- Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE)
- Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW)
- Department of Community Safety (DCS)

The Committee held a public hearing with officers from PSC, DETE, DHPW, DCS and QAO on Wednesday 16 October 2013. A list of officers who gave evidence at the public hearing is contained in Appendix A. A transcript of the briefing has been published on the Committee's website and is available from the committee secretariat.

On 31 October 2013, the Committee wrote to all the departments seeking further clarification on a number of matters discussed in the public hearing.

² Correspondence from Chief Executive Officer, Public Safety Business Agency, to FAC dated 14 November 2013: 1

1.5 Report

The committee's report draws attention to the main issues raised in its examination of the Auditor-General's Report No. 4 for 2012. Where appropriate, the committee has commented on unresolved or contentious issues and has made recommendations.

The recommendations in this report are addressed to the Premier as the responsible minister.

2 Background

As at June 2013, 192,003 full time equivalent (FTE) staff was employed in the Queensland Public Service (QPS).³ There are 16 departments and 11 public agencies. Over 81 per cent of the QPS workforce staff was employed by four departments – Queensland Health, DETE; DCS and Queensland Police Service (QPS). Queensland Health and DETE employ around 68 per cent of total FTE of total public service.⁴ Figure 1 shows the break-up of the workforce by department. Around 60 per cent of staff in the public service is employed under the *Public Service Act 2008*.⁵

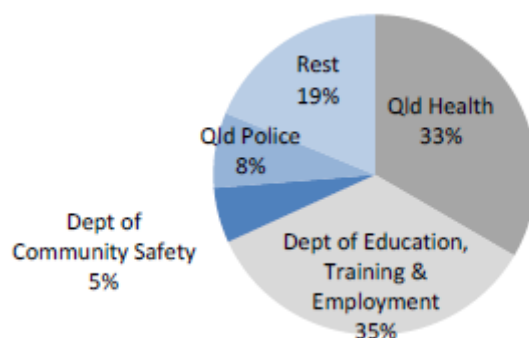


Figure 1: FTE by department as at June 2013

Source: Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 3

Public sector employees have a range of leave entitlements under the *Industrial Relations Act 1999* (IR Act) and the National Employment Standards (NES) set out in the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cwlth). These entitlements include a minimum of eight days per annum sick leave after completing one year of service (section 10 of the IR Act), at least four weeks annual leave and parental leave.

The audit report identified that 88 per cent of public service employees are entitled to:

- 10 days per annum sick leave
- carer's leave and bereavement leave relating to immediate family of two days, which is unpaid and additional to the sick leave entitlement (section 39 of the IR Act)
- annual leave (section 11 of the IR Act)
- long service leave (section 43 of the IR Act) and
- maternity and paternity leave (section 18 of the IR Act).

Leave entitlements are also usually included in various industrial awards and agreements. These entitlements have remained essentially unchanged over the past 10 years.⁶ Leave for activities such as voluntary emergency management activities although unpaid are also available and entitlement for jury service is paid for up to 10 days.⁷

³ Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 4

⁴ Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 3

⁵ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 6

⁶ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 7

⁷ Australian Government Fair Work Ombudsman, *Introduction to the National Employment Standards*, December 2013: 1 <http://www.fairwork.gov.au/factsheets/FWO-Fact-sheet-Introduction-to-the-NES.pdf> [10 February 2014]

A list of leave entitlements is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Leave types

Leave Type	Entitlement conditions	Additional information
Sick	10 working days sick leave for each completed year of service and a proportionate amount for an incomplete year of service.	Leave taken when the employee is ill or incapacitated.
Carer's	2 days (unpaid)	Leave to give care and support to immediate family or household members during illness or unexpected emergencies.
Bereavement	2 days (paid)	Leave to assist employees when there is a death in their immediate family or household
Long service	Long service leave accumulates at the rate of 6.5 working days or 1.3 calendar weeks for each year of continuous service. Employees are also entitled to a proportional amount of long service leave for an incomplete year of service.	A period of paid leave given to an employee in recognition of a long period of service to the employer.
Special	Includes leave taken for floods, cyclones or bushfires. The number of days granted is dependent on the type of special leave required.	A form of leave for special circumstances which may be discretionary or non-discretionary and maybe granted on full salary or without salary, depending on the circumstances.

Source: Department of Justice and Attorney-General, *Work-Life Balance Quick Reference Guide for Queensland Public Sector Managers*, March 2010

The public sector comprises of various occupational groups including medical professionals, engineers, security officers, clerical workers, tradespeople and the education sector.⁸ There are varying work conditions so unplanned absences can affect divisional and business units in different ways.

The responsibility of effective management of unplanned absences is shared between central agencies, the respective executive and business unit management as well as employees.⁹

⁸ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 7

⁹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 8

3 Auditor-General Report No. 4: Managing Employee Unplanned Absence

3.1 Audit objective and coverage

The objective of the Auditor-General's Report was to assess whether public service departments were effectively managing unplanned absence. The audit reviewed the role of central agencies, and examined more closely DCS, the former DET and the former DPW. The Committee was advised that the topic was selected because unplanned absence is a major cost on the Queensland public sector.¹⁰

The Auditor-General advised the Committee that:

*As a cost and a liability it is something that needs to be managed. I think the lesson we draw from this report is that this is a classic case of if it is measured it is able to be managed and if it is not being measured and monitored it is not being managed.*¹¹

The audit evaluated whether:

- potential savings would occur with better management of unplanned absence
- appropriate priority has been given to unplanned absence management
- unplanned absence data was being analysed to identify patterns and hotspots and inform management decisions
- appropriate benchmarks had been established and targets set
- policy, guidance and support was provided by central agencies to enable line agencies to effectively manage unplanned absence.¹²

The Auditor-General also explained that it was important to analyse absenteeism data to identify reasons behind 'hot spots' and patterns of unplanned absences, and implement intervention activities.¹³

The audit of managing employee unplanned absence was conducted between September 2011 and February 2012 and incorporated:

- interviews with key staff at the PSC and DJAG as central agencies, and DCS, DET and DPW, QSuper, Workcover, and former 10 Queensland Public Service departments;
- analysis of key documents with particular attention to policies and procedures, strategies, performance measures and collaboration; and
- analysis of available unplanned absence data from 2006-07 to 2010-11.¹⁴

In 2006, the PSC published its 'Guide to promoting attendance in the Queensland Public Service'. This document sets out the processes for the management of attendance and absence.

¹⁰ Ms Heidrich, Transcript 16 October 2013: 2

¹¹ Mr Greaves, Transcript 16 October 2013: 2

¹² Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 45

¹³ Ms Heidrich, Transcript 16 October 2013: 2

¹⁴ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 45

The Auditor-General noted that employers can manage unplanned absence by:

- establishing a work environment that promotes attendance
- collecting and analysing data to identify anomalous patterns and 'hot spots'
- discouraging non-genuine absenteeism
- setting realistic benchmarks and targets.¹⁵

Unplanned absence as a result of sick leave, illness or death of close family members, or other reasons such as workplace injury or absence due to industrial disputes can have an impact on any workplace.

The largest component of unplanned leave, which is sick leave, is most able to be influenced by proactive management. Leave types less able to be influenced by management action include bereavement leave, emergent and compassionate leave, leave due to natural disasters, industrial disputes, and carer's leave to provide care and support to members of immediate family or household.¹⁶

3.2 Summary of audit results

The Auditor-General identified the three key findings in the report related to:

- absence rates;
- the cost of unplanned absence; and
- management of unplanned absence.

The audit report outlined that unplanned absence rates per employee had increased by nine per cent across the public service sector between 8.28 days (2006-07) to 9.02 days (2010-11) with 78 per cent of unplanned absence reported as sick leave.¹⁷

The report identified that there is no publicly available data that brings together and compares unplanned absence rates for the public sector across jurisdictions. Whilst the report identifies rates for both the Australian Public Service (APS) and the New South Wales public sector, it notes that it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions or make direct comparisons due to the differences in definitions, award conditions, standard working hours and entitlements across jurisdictions.¹⁸

The data examined revealed that the rates of unplanned absence can vary across departments and between divisions and business units within each agency.¹⁹

The Auditor-General's report cites the Public Service Commission's report '*The Queensland Public Service Workforce Profile – Sick Leave Report 2011*' which showed:

- male employees on average have taken more sick leave than females
- sick leave increases with age
- higher paid employees took less sick leave than lower paid employees and
- employees in far north and western parts of the State took less sick leave than those in the rest of the state, with employees in South East Queensland taking the most.²⁰

¹⁵ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 1

¹⁶ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 1

¹⁷ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 12

¹⁸ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 13

¹⁹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 14-15

²⁰ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 16

In relation to the cost of absence, the report noted that the annual direct costs of unplanned absence for the QPS had risen by 55 per cent, from \$328 million in 2006-07 to \$509 million in 2010-11 and of this 78 per cent (\$397.6 million) related to sick leave.²¹ The Auditor-General considered that the cost of unplanned absence is increasing more than can be attributed to wage increases and the growth in staff numbers.²²

The report highlighted that a reduction in the average rate of unplanned absence by one day across the public service could save \$56 million each year in direct costs and up to \$200 million annually when estimated indirect costs are taken into account.²³

The Auditor-General explained that an understanding of the unplanned absence data will assist departments in recognising their situation and targeting specific strategies to promote attendance and address absence. A lack of analysis meant that departments were unable to prioritise appropriate strategies, plans and actions to effectively manage employee unplanned absence.²⁴

The audit identified ten from 13 departments had not undertaken substantial analysis of unplanned absence data to identify patterns of unplanned absence and to identify where excessive leave taking is occurring or to examine possible correlations with other Human Resources programs.²⁵

The exception was DCS who undertook detailed analysis of patterns or 'hot spots' of unplanned absence in three of its six divisions, which enabled them to target corrective actions.²⁶

None of the departments audited attempted to quantify indirect costs such as overtime and relief staff or the impact on staff morale and reduced service delivery, all of which flow from unplanned absence. As a result, the full cost of unplanned absence is not known.²⁷

The Auditor-General also noted that there was no standard benchmark or a single comparison of absence rate across the Public Service sector, and management of unplanned absence was delegated to lower levels of management. There was also no formal reporting channel to executive management and no consistency as to how it is managed.²⁸

3.3 Key recommendations in the audit report

The Auditor-General made the following recommendations:

1. It is recommended the Public Service Commission include in its publicly available reports:
 - the absenteeism rates and trends for all departments
 - the annual direct and estimated indirect costs of absenteeism in the Queensland Public Service
 - appropriate comparative benchmarks of the Queensland Public Service absenteeism rates with other jurisdictions and sectors.²⁹

²¹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 17

²² Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 17

²³ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 2

²⁴ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 20

²⁵ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 20

²⁶ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 8

²⁷ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 2

²⁸ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 25

²⁹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 17

2. It is recommended that all departments:
 - analyse their unplanned absence data to identify patterns and ‘hot spots’ that require management intervention
 - determine the criteria that will trigger management intervention, and how this will be monitored and reported.³⁰
3. It is recommended that all departments:
 - identify relevant benchmarks and establish targets for acceptable levels of unplanned absence
 - implement appropriate strategies and practical management tools for improving attendance and achieving acceptable levels of unplanned absence.³¹

3.4 Departmental responses in the audit report

Section 64(2) of the *Auditor-General Act 2009* provides that the Auditor-General must give written advice of the matter that is proposed to be included to:

- if the matter relates to a department - the accountable officer of the department and any other person whom the auditor-general considers to have a special interest in the report; or
- if the matter relates to a controlled entity that is subject to the control of a department - the chief executive officer or chairperson of the entity, the person responsible for the financial administration of the entity and the accountable officer of the department and any other person whom the auditor-general considers to have a special interest in the report; or
- if the matter relates to another public sector entity – the chief executive officer or chairperson of the entity and the person responsible for the financial administration of the entity and any other person whom the auditor-general considers to have a special interest in the report.

A copy of the audit report was provided to the PSC, DCS, DETE and DHPW. The departmental responses are contained on pages 34 – 43 of the Auditor-General’s report.

The PSC agreed with the Auditor-General’s recommendations. In particular, the PSC considered that there was merit in the recommendation to monitor absenteeism and implement proactive management strategies as identifying ‘hot spot’ areas will result in better management of unplanned absences. They noted however, that recommendation with respect to comparative benchmarking between different jurisdictions may take time to implement. PSC highlighted the difficulties in comparing jurisdictions in that there are differences in definitions, award conditions and standard working hours across jurisdictions.³²

The DETE explained that while there is ongoing monitoring and reporting of unplanned absence, more could be done in taking action to improve unplanned absence rates in the department. The department also undertook to refine their data analysis to focus on areas that require attention and take more proactive action to bring the analyses to the attention of the relevant managers.³³

³⁰ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 23

³¹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 31

³² Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 34-35

³³ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 36

The Director-General of DETE partially agreed with recommendations relating to trigger management intervention, identification of relevant benchmarks and establishing targets for acceptable levels of unplanned absence and implementing strategies and management tools to improve attendance. DETE considered that they already had targets and benchmarks but would explore what constitutes an 'acceptable' level of unplanned absence and incorporate into the reporting of unplanned absence data to managers. The department further explained that the range of their policies and support programs that address staff wellbeing and attendance were appropriately noted in earlier drafts of the report.³⁴

DCS acknowledges that the unplanned absence rates for the department was higher than the Queensland public sector average, but notes that benchmarking with QPS was not sufficient to assess and determine appropriate levels of unplanned absence. This is because the DCS has over 80 per cent of its workforce as frontline services and the shift work undertaken can span 24 hours a day, seven days a week and differing sick leave entitlements.³⁵

DCS also explained that their current human resource information system was being replaced to integrate with other sources of data and information to enhance its analysis and reporting capability.³⁶

DHPW advised that they had introduced a Workforce Attendance Strategy and Action Plan 2011-13 with the benefits from this initiative expected to become evident over the ensuing 12 months. The DPHW explained that the machinery-of-Government changes have had significant impact on the demographics of the department and the department was in the process of the impacts of specific business areas.³⁷

3.5 Committee Comments

The Committee is aware that the Auditor-General intends to conduct a follow-up audit during the 2014-15 financial year. The Committee will be interested in the results of this order to re-assess the implementation of the audit recommendations and the impact on employee unplanned absence in the Queensland public sector.

³⁴ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 37-38

³⁵ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 40

³⁶ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 41

³⁷ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 43

4 Absenteeism rates and costs

4.1 Absence rates

All departments collect unplanned absence data and report it through the Minimum Obligatory Human Resource Information (MOHRI) system to the PSC. MOHRI data provides a starting point to ascertain absence rates.³⁸ Agencies are individually responsible for providing the PSC with accurate and quality MOHRI data.

The Auditor-General highlighted that there has been an increasing trend in unplanned absence rate per employee, particularly since 2006-07 where the average rate was 8.28 days (Figure 2).³⁹

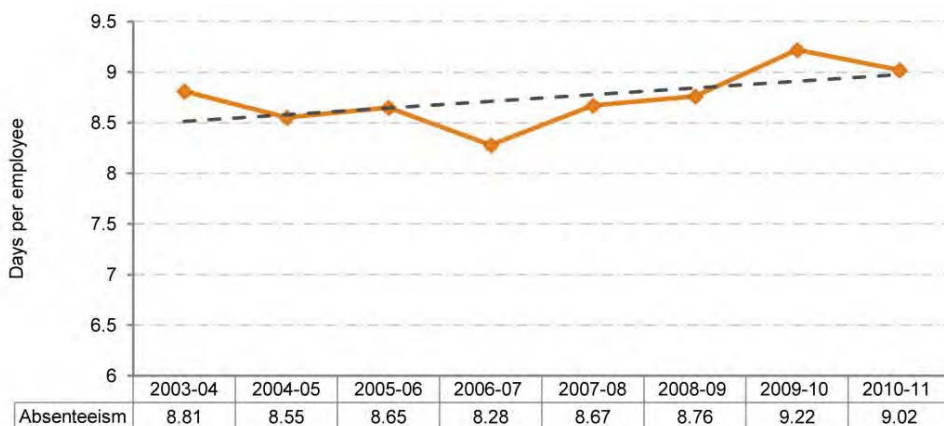


Figure 2: Service-wide eight year trends in unplanned absence rate per employee
Source: QAO, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 12

PSC's 2012-13 report also shows an increase in overall unplanned absence rate to an average of 9.69 days taken per employee, with nearly 77 per cent of total unplanned absence reported as sick leave (Figure 3). The PSC explained that the rates have been increasing over the last ten years with 2012-13 being the highest to date.⁴⁰

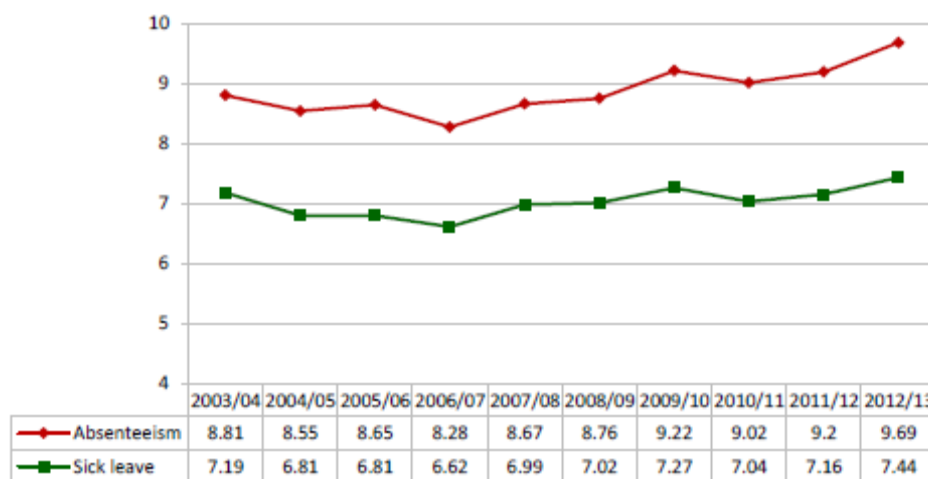


Figure 3: Average full time days taken per employee
Source: Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 13

³⁸ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 12

³⁹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 12-13

⁴⁰ Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 13

The Committee sought clarification from the PSC on how the average full time absenteeism rates are calculated and was advised:

The Annual Workforce Characteristics Report used the following:

*Total absent hours for an employee divided by available award hours per day for the employee; expressed as “days”. Casuals are excluded from the calculation.*⁴¹

The PSC advised that absenteeism is defined to include sick leave, miscellaneous special leave, leave relating to workers’ compensation claims, carers’ leave and time absent due to industrial disputes.⁴²

Both PSC and QAO use absenteeism rates (i.e. overall unplanned absence rates) in their respective reports. The absenteeism figures in the PSC report are comprised of several different types of unplanned absenteeism with sick leave comprising about 80 per cent.⁴³ Figure 3 highlighted that sick leave has increased from 7.19 average full time days in 2003-04 to 7.44 average full time days in 2012-13, which is an increase of 0.25 average full time days. PSC advised that:

*The difference of 2.25 average days between absenteeism rate and sick leave rate comprises 1.19 average days of carers’ leave with the balance (1.06 days) coming from several unscheduled leave types (i.e. workers’ compensation; industrial dispute and miscellaneous special leave.*⁴⁴

The Auditor-General reported that rates of unplanned absence varied across departments; ranging between 7.96 days to 11.25 days per employee in 2011 (Figure 4).

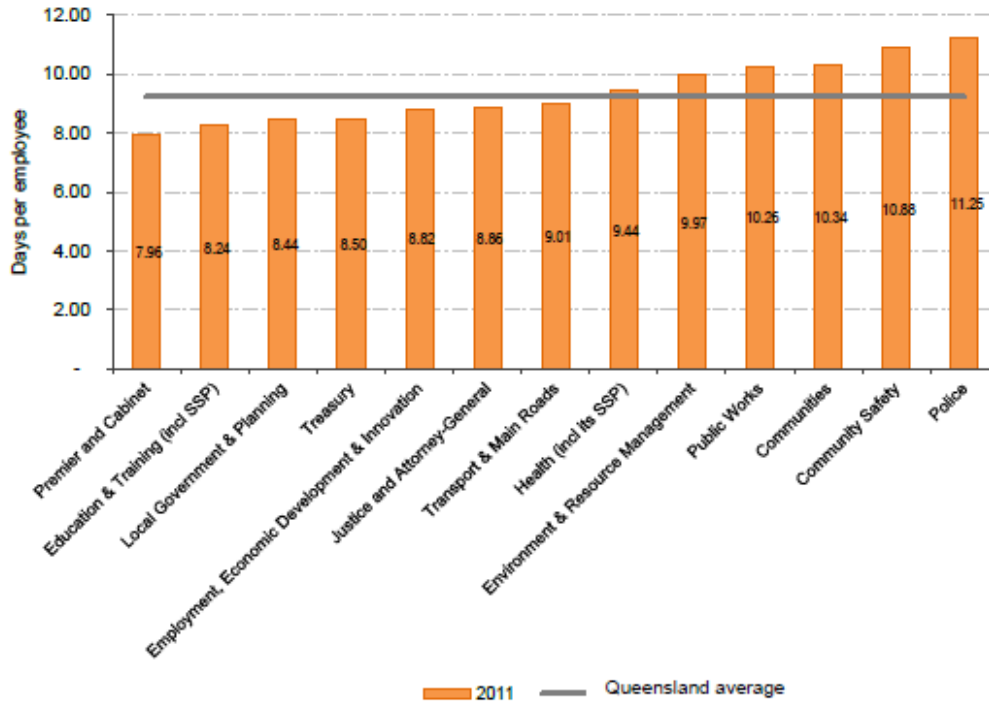


Figure 4: Departmental absence rates in the 2011 calendar year
 Source: QAO, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 14

⁴¹ Correspondence from Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission, to FAC dated 6 March 2014: Attachment 3
⁴² Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 25
⁴³ Correspondence from Commission Chief Executive and Deputy Commissioner, Public Service Commission, to FAC dated 1 November 2013: 1
⁴⁴ Correspondence from Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission, to FAC dated 6 March 2014: 1

Some departments examined in the audit. The Committee notes that DPC (7.96 days per employee) and QTT (8.5 days per employee) were below the Queensland average of 9.02 days, but the DPW (10.25 days per employee) and DCS (10.88 days per employee) recorded above average absence rates.⁴⁵ DETE advised the Committee that their measurement is based on unplanned absence rate per 100 days calculated for staff in each organisational unit. DETE also create benchmark comparison measures against the department's own average rather than against overall state-wide results.⁴⁶

As the data in the audit was constrained by using the MOHRI data, which is highly aggregated and with some departments not having systematic data, a comparison across agencies is difficult.⁴⁷

The PSC pointed out that it is difficult to draw specific conclusions between absenteeism rates between departments when referring to the annual full time days taken in 2012/2013:

*The other one I guess as an illustration of how complex is this figure 30 on page 19. If I just look at three offices -my own included, the Public Service Commission, which is figure 30 on the left at 5.96, Queensland Audit Office, 7.88 which is a similar type of workforce and right up to the right-hand side, the Health Quality and Complaints Commission, 13.58, without me understanding all of the ins and outs, you would say white collar, office based, hopefully highly engaged, yet you have such a distribution. Contrast that with Education, Training and Employment, 80,000-odd employees, highly dispersed, 1,200 schools, 8.45. It is very complex. I guess that is just an illustration that there is no single answer.*⁴⁸

4.2 Sickness presenteeism

One definition of presenteeism is the productivity that is lost when employees come to work unwell and, as a consequence of illness or other medical conditions are not fully productive.⁴⁹ Being at work whilst unwell may have a detrimental effect on colleagues, employees' own recovery, as well as resulting in productivity loss.

Sickness presence can be hidden and therefore difficult to monitor as it is not captured by absence management systems.⁵⁰ The APS State of the Service report outlined that nearly 50 per cent of the APS workforce reported that they attended work while suffering health problems.⁵¹ Medibank's research outlined that an average of 6.5 working days of productivity was lost per employee annually as a result of presenteeism.⁵²

Interviews with three teams of employees together with an online survey of 510 employees in a UK company found that *'sickness presence was more prevalent than sickness absence'*. Their study showed that 45 per cent of employees reported one of more days of being at work whilst unwell compared with 18 per cent reporting sickness absence over a four-week period.⁵³

⁴⁵ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 14

⁴⁶ Correspondence from Director-General, Department of Education, Training and Employment, to FAC dated 30 July 2013: 1

⁴⁷ Mr Greaves, Transcript 16 October 2013: 10

⁴⁸ Mr Chesterman, Transcript 16 October 2013: 7-8

⁴⁹ Medibank Private, Econtech, *Sick at Work. The cost of presenteeism to your business and the economy*. Medibank research series, July 2011: 3

⁵⁰ Ashby, K and Mahdon, M. *Why do employees come to work when ill? An investigation into sickness presence in the workplace*. The Work Foundation, April 2010: 10

<http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Assets/Docs/AXA%20event/FINAL%20Why%20do%20employees%20come%20to%20work%20when%20ill.pdf> [19 February 2014]

⁵¹ Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2012-13*: 2 December 2013: 86

⁵² Medibank Private, Econtech, *Sick at Work. The cost of presenteeism to your business and the economy*. Medibank research series: July 2011: 1

⁵³ Ashby, K and Mahdon, M. *Why do employees come to work when ill? An investigation into sickness presence in the workplace*, The Work Foundation, April 2010: 8

<http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Assets/Docs/AXA%20event/FINAL%20Why%20do%20employees%20come%20to%20work%20when%20ill.pdf> [19 February 2014]

A survey of 12,935 employees from the Danish work force indicated that more than 70 per cent went to work unwell at least once during a 12-month period.⁵⁴ Other studies also revealed that over half i.e. 53 per cent of survey respondents reported that they attended work while sick more than once, with 38 per cent reporting that they did so two to five times and 15 per cent more than five times.⁵⁵

A study in a New Zealand hospital revealed that doctors were more likely to continue to work despite having an infectious illness compared with other occupational groups surveyed. Overall sickness presenteeism occurred in 48.7 per cent of respondents with almost 70 per cent of participants having had at least one episode of acute infectious illness over the 12-month period.⁵⁶

4.3 Cost of absenteeism

The Auditor-General explained that *'based on 2010-11 costs, a reduction in the average rate of unplanned absence by one day across QPS would save \$56 million each year in direct costs, and up to \$200 million annually when estimated indirect costs are taken into account.'*⁵⁷

The PSC advised that direct costs of unplanned absence is calculated by combining MOHRI data elements of 'hours absent' and 'hourly rate of pay' collected from all departments.⁵⁸

The audit reported that in 2010-11, direct costs of unplanned absence for the public service were reported as \$508.8 million, of which \$397.6 million (78 per cent) was for sick leave.⁵⁹

The latest *'State of the Service'* Report produced by the PSC agrees that the costs of absenteeism in the Queensland Public Service are substantial. The direct costs of absenteeism have increased from \$272.4 million in 2003-04 to \$568.7 million in 2012.13. This equates to 4.47 per cent of total direct payroll costs in 2012-13, and these costs are influenced by the growth in workforce size, the ageing workforce, enterprise bargaining increases and the rate of absenteeism.⁶⁰

The DHS survey also reported that the cost of absenteeism to respondents' businesses was \$2741 per employee per annum.⁶¹

Indirect costs are difficult to calculate and may include:

- the costs of replacement or relief staff
- overtime related to unplanned absence
- retraining costs
- workers' compensation premiums
- QSuper income protection payments.⁶²

⁵⁴ Hansen, C. D. and Andersen, J. H. *Going ill to work – What personal circumstances, attitudes and work-related factors are associated with sickness presenteeism?* Social Science & Medicine, 2008: 956

⁵⁵ Johns, G. *Presenteeism in the workplace: A review and research agenda.* Journal of Organizational Behavior, 2010: 519

⁵⁶ Bracewell, L. M. et al. *Sickness presenteeism in a New Zealand hospital.* The New Zealand Medical Journal, May 2010 <http://journal.nzma.org.nz/journal/123-1314/4106/> [26 February 2014]

⁵⁷ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 2

⁵⁸ Correspondence from Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission, to FAC, dated 29 July 2013: 3

⁵⁹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 17

⁶⁰ Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2013. A state of change: better value for the people of Queensland*, December 2013: 19

⁶¹ WorkplaceInfo: Absenteeism – the latest Australian Trends 20 September 2013

<http://www.workplaceinfo.com.au/payroll/leave/absenteeism-the-latest-australian-trends> [24 January 2014]

⁶² Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 12

Agencies may also absorb some of the costs of absenteeism via temporary reductions in productivity.⁶³ According to the PSC, indirect costs are estimated, taking into account information from departments as the costs, are dependent on the occupation in which the absenteeism occurred.⁶⁴ Calculating indirect costs can therefore be challenging. The Commission Chief Executive advised:

*Following discussions with all departments, it has been agreed that indirect costs will be estimated by applying a percentage of payroll costs.*⁶⁵

They consider that an estimate of around 6.1 per cent of payroll is a reasonable basis for that calculation.⁶⁶

The APS Commission outlined that the overall direct salary cost arising from workplace absences across the APS is estimated to be \$295 million, with the total costs of absence at three times the direct costs of the salaries of the absent employee.⁶⁷

4.4 Cost of presenteeism

Attending work whilst suffering from an illness or health problems can also add to costs; employees who are unwell and at work are not fully productive.

Medibank's study in 2007 investigated the direct and indirect costs of presenteeism. They found that the overall cost to the Australian economy in 2009/10 was \$34.1 billion and concluded that the impact of presenteeism far outweighed the cost of absenteeism.⁶⁸ Their study outlined presenteeism costs comprised of:

- *the direct costs faced by employers due to the on-the-job productivity losses caused by presenteeism;*
- *the indirect costs to the Australian economy due to lower labour productivity levels caused by presenteeism; and*
- *the indirect costs to the Australian economy arising from changes in terms of capital intensity and other second round effects.*⁶⁹

The APS emphasised that the research '*has shown that the productivity losses from presenteeism across the economy can be up to four times as much as losses from absenteeism*'.⁷⁰

The projected effects of presenteeism in 2050 after accounting for age specific prevalence rates and demographic change revealed that presenteeism will continue to have a negative effect on the economy. Medibank's research showed that the total cost in 2050 is estimated to rise to \$35.8 billion, which equates to a decrease in GDP of 2.8 per cent.⁷¹

⁶³ Public Service Commission, State of the Service Report 2013. *A state of change: better value for the people of Queensland*, December 2013: 19

⁶⁴ Correspondence from Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission, to FAC, dated 29 July 2013: 3

⁶⁵ Mr Chesterman, Transcript 16 October 2013: 3

⁶⁶ Public Service Commission, State of the Service Report 2013. *A state of change: better value for the people of Queensland*, December 2013: 19

⁶⁷ Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, June 2006: 9

⁶⁸ Medibank Private, Econtech, *Sick at Work. The cost of presenteeism to your business and the economy*. Medibank research series, July 2011: 4

⁶⁹ Medibank Private, Econtech, *Sick at Work. The cost of presenteeism to your business and the economy*. Medibank research series, July 2011: 3

⁷⁰ Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2012-13*, December 2013: 86

⁷¹ Medibank Private, Econtech, *Sick at Work. The cost of presenteeism to your business and the economy*. Medibank research series, July 2011: 3

As with absenteeism, indirect costs of presenteeism are difficult to define. An individual when unwell may only have the same output as their healthy colleagues if he/she invests more time and effort. Furthermore, collective performance may decline if other colleagues are involved in helping a sick colleague or if infectious illnesses are passed on to colleagues.⁷² There are also reports where sickness presenteeism caused the spread of viral infections in a long-term care facility⁷³ so the cost in health care industries may be multi-fold.

4.5 Unplanned absence in other jurisdictions

The audit found that there was no publicly available report that compares unplanned absence rates for the public services across Australian jurisdictions.

DHS' survey showed that Queensland and South Australia had the highest level of sick leave at 11.1 and 10.9 days respectively. In the ACT, employees averaged 10.6 days sick leave per year, with NSW and Victoria recorded 8.3 and 8.7 days respectively.⁷⁴

PSC advised the Committee that they have been discussing the lack of published data from the public sector with other jurisdictions and have been successful in obtaining some information from NSW and the APS.⁷⁵

The APS Commission publishes the 'State of the Service' report annually.⁷⁶ Their 2011-12 report indicated that median unplanned absence rate for APS agencies was 11.1 days per employee, and the median sick leave rate was 8.5 days. This compares to 9.2 average days of unplanned absence, incorporating 7.16 days of sick leave for the QPS in 2011-12.⁷⁷

The APS also reported that the median unscheduled absence rate across all agencies in 2012-13 had increased by 0.5 days to 11.6 days per employee. There was a relatively consistent trend for the APS as a whole since 2009-10 (Figure 5).⁷⁸

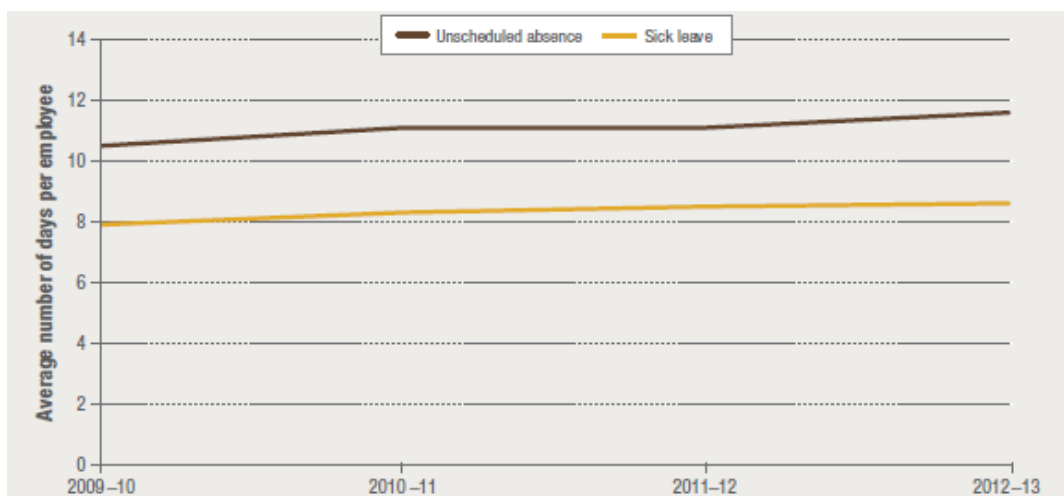


Figure 5: Unscheduled absence and sick leave rates 2009-10 to 2012-13 Source: APS Commission, *State of the Service Report 2012-13*, December 2013: 270

⁷² Demerouti, E., Le Blanc, P. M., Bakker, A. B., Schaufeli, W. B. and Hox, J, *Present but sick: a three-wave study on job demands, presenteeism and burnout*, Career Development International, 2009: 51

⁷³ Widera, E., Chang, A and Chen, H.L., *Presenteeism: A public health hazard*, Journal of General Internal Medicine, November 2009: 1244 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2947637/> [26 February 2014]

⁷⁴ WorkplaceInfo: *Absenteeism – the latest Australian Trends*, September 2013 <http://www.workplaceinfo.com.au/payroll/leave/absenteeism-the-latest-australian-trends> [24 January 2014]

⁷⁵ Mr Chesterman, Transcript 16 October 2013: 3

⁷⁶ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 13

⁷⁷ Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2013. A state of change: better value for the people of Queensland*, December 2013: 20

⁷⁸ Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2012-13*, December 2013: 270

There were however substantial variations across APS agencies, where unscheduled absence ranged from 4.2 days per employee to 19.9 days per employee.⁷⁹ Individual agencies demonstrated variation in changes to their unscheduled absence rates from 2011-12 to 2012-13, so explanations for changes in the data will be agency specific.⁸⁰

The median sick leave rate in the APS for 2012-13 was 8.6 days, which is a slight increase from the previous year (8.5 days in 2011-12). It was reported that some agencies had higher than average sick leave rates; these were:

- ComSuper (13 days)
- Human Services (11.8 days)
- Australian Research Council (11.6 days)
- National Health and Medical Research Council (11.6 days).⁸¹

Carers' leave in the APS has been steadily increasing since 2009-10 (Figure 6).⁸²

	Sick (%)	Carer's (%)	Compensation (%)	Other (%)	Unauthorised (%)
2012-13	72.6	15.1	7.4	4.6	0.4
2011-12	74.7	14.7	6.5	3.7	0.4
2010-11	75.0	15.4	5.9	3.4	0.3
2009-10	76.3	13.9	5.6	3.8	0.4

Figure 6: Composition of total unscheduled absence

Source: Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2012-13*, December 2013: 280

However, there are differences in the way the data is reported; APS reports on the median including paid and unpaid leave, while QPS reported the average based on paid leave only.⁸³

The Victorian Auditor-General Office conducted an audit of unplanned leave in the Emergency Service agencies such as Ambulance Victoria (AV), the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFESB) and Victoria Police (VicPol). They reported that the number of the number of shifts lost due to unplanned leave for operational staff at AV, MFESB and VicPol was 10.6, 11.6 and 9.6 per full-time equivalent (FTE) respectively in 2011-12. The level of unplanned absence at AV was a slight decline from previous year, whilst data for VicPol has remained constant. Their audit also found that the unplanned leave for MFESB has increased steadily since 2000.⁸⁴

A 2010 report by the New South Wales Auditor-General on sick leave found that the average public sector sick leave per person (FTE) in 2009-10 was 56.90 hours or 8.13 days. By comparison the sick leave rate per person in the QPS was 7.04 days for 2010-11.⁸⁵ The 'State of the Service' report also compiled some comparative data between New South Wales and Queensland and figures suggest that less sick leave was generally taken in Queensland in the six year comparison period (Figure 7).⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2012-13*, December 2013: 270

⁸⁰ Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2012-13*, December 2013: 280-281

⁸¹ Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2012-13*, December 2013: 282

⁸² Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2012-13*, December 2013: 280

⁸³ Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2013. A state of change: better value for the people of Queensland*, December 2013: 20

⁸⁴ Victorian Auditor-General, *Report 2012-13:23 Management of Unplanned Leave in Emergency Services*, March 2013: viii

⁸⁵ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 13

⁸⁶ Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2013. A state of change: better value for the people of Queensland*, December 2013: 19

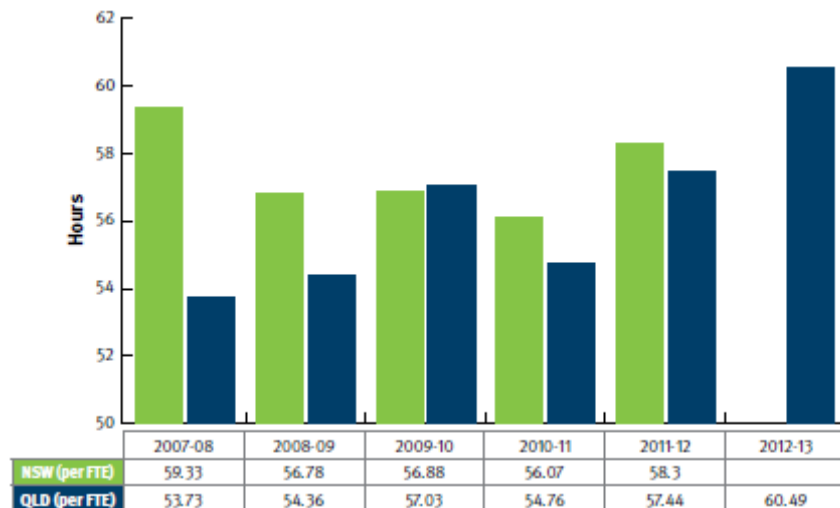


Figure 7: Comparison of average hours' sick leave per FTE in New South Wales and Queensland public sectors
 Source: Queensland Public Service Commission; NSW Public Service Commission. Taken from Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2013. A state of change: better value for the people of Queensland*, December 2013: 19

However as with the APS data, there are some differences in in the method in which the data was compiled in NSW, so there are limitations in making definitive comparisons. For example, the NSW data includes all departments, Government owned corporations and statutory authorities and some government offices, bodies and commissions, whereas the Queensland data excludes Government owned corporations and statutory authorities.⁸⁷

There is limited or out-dated data on unplanned absence for other states, therefore a full comparison cannot be made.

4.6 Committee comments

The Committee notes that while previous absenteeism rates have been unacceptably high, it understands that the audit report was conducted at a time when many departments and agencies were undergoing organisational changes when there was a period of uncertainty in the QPS.

The PSC advises that absenteeism rates have since declined and the Committee is pleased to note that current absenteeism rates have returned to levels pre-2012. The Committee encourages the PSC to continue to monitor the rates and provide necessary assistance and feedback to relevant departments.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Public Service Commission continue to monitor and obtain unplanned absence data from the Queensland Public Service with a view to utilising the data to provide relevant information, analysis and assistance to agencies.

⁸⁷ Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2013. A state of change: better value for the people of Queensland*, December 2013: 19

5 Data collection and analysis

5.1 How data is collected and analysed in the Queensland context

Effective management of unplanned absence requires collection and analysis of data at sector-wide, departmental and business unit levels. Analysis of data collected could show that management practices could be introduced or revised to address high unplanned absence rates.⁸⁸ The identification of 'hot spots' in departments or agencies would enable them to implement strategies or better management intervention practices.

All Queensland departments collect unplanned absence data and report it through the Minimum Obligatory Human Resource Information (MOHRI) system to the Public Service Commission.⁸⁹ MOHRI was developed to ensure Government has access to human resource information which is required for strategic management of the QPS.⁹⁰ The standard MOHRI data subsets include age, gender, location, tenure and occupation. The information or data subsets allow access to the QPS workforce profile, identify trends and develop different management actions for unplanned absences and other human resource policies.

The identification of patterns and 'hot spots', combined with clearly articulated trigger points, enables the department to target corrective actions. The audit found that *'departments were not undertaking appropriate analysis of absence patterns and identifying 'hot spots' at unit or agency level, or of the absence behaviour of individual employees'*.⁹¹

Ten of the 13 departments audited did not undertake substantial analysis of unplanned absence data, including the ability to:

- identify patterns of unplanned absence
- identify 'hot spots' where excessive leave taking is occurring
- examine possible correlations with other Human Resources interventions (e.g. accessing employee assistance programs), excess annual leave balances, shift conditions, private and public events or holidays etc.⁹²

The audit report explained that reasons for 'hot spots' could include individuals with ongoing health issues, systemic problems such as job design or bullying within a workplace or a broader 'entitlement culture' as mentioned in the earlier section of this report.⁹³

Within Queensland, the PSC monitors and reports absenteeism rates for all departments on a quarterly and annual basis. The Auditor-General noted that the data collected is not being used effectively to identify absence trends, distribution patterns across demographics and business units, and patterns in the timing and frequency of absence. The only exception was the DCS which undertook detailed analysis in three of its six divisions: QAS, QCS and QFRS.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, June 2006: 16

⁸⁹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 19

⁹⁰ Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 2

⁹¹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 19

⁹² Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 20

⁹³ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 20

⁹⁴ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 19-21

The audit report used the QAS as an example of where data analysis was used to determine patterns to initiate discussions with employees. The QAS uses the *Bradford Factor Score System* to help identify staff whose sickness or absenteeism required reviewing. The score is calculated by identifying absence over a period (often a year, but could be any time period) and counting the number of sickness days, and the number of sickness episodes (a consecutive period of sickness).⁹⁵

5.2 Departmental actions (subsequent to audit)

All departments acknowledged that there needed to be more work done on data collections as there is some difficulty in setting a standard measurement across all Queensland agencies.

For example, some divisions within DCS do not record the shift details of employees. DCS advised the Committee that shift details of employees in QAS are not recorded in the payroll system.⁹⁶ Similarly, the QFRS' payroll system '*does not record the shift or station a staff member has worked at*'.⁹⁷

The Director-General explained:

*.... we need to do a lot of work on this – it is about how we do agree measures. For example, when you look at the measures we have, they simply count a day off. Our shifts are either 12 hours, 14 hours, nine hours or 10 hours. As you start to aggregate that up, if we then go to an hourly rate you would need to work out what that means in terms of a shift. If we do a revised set of data using an hourly rate, you will find our absenteeism or unscheduled leave actually comes down if you use it on an hourly rate. So there is more work to be done about the data collection and reporting I think.*⁹⁸

The majority of staff in DCS work on a roster with hours greater than a normal day for most public servants i.e. 12 hour shift instead of 7 hours 15 minutes. The Committee was advised that in these cases, the calculation of an employee's 'average absent full time day', a full 12 hour shift taken is reported as over 1.5 days which can result in overstating absence rates. This highlighted the limitation of the current data set collection on a whole of government level.⁹⁹

The Committee has also been advised of the commencement of a project to replace outdated payroll systems and to investigate data collection and analysis capabilities for any new human resource information system solution. Rostering solutions that would enable further data collection and analysis would also be part of the project.¹⁰⁰

Significant organisational changes and restructuring that occurred in some departments during 2012 -13 also presented challenges to the provision and analysis of the unplanned absence data. In particular, the movement of employees across organisational units and the reduction in employees by 1,717 full time equivalents since 1 July 2012 have created issues with the provision of accurate trend data and analysis under the current government methodologies.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 21

⁹⁶ Correspondence from Director-General, Department of Community Safety, to FAC dated 13 August 2013: Attachment 1: 2

⁹⁷ Correspondence from Director-General, Department of Community Safety, to FAC dated 13 August 2013. Attachment 1: 3

⁹⁸ Mr Anderson, Transcript 16 October 2013: 6

⁹⁹ Correspondence from Chief Executive Officer, Public Safety Business Agency, to FAC dated 14 November 2013: 3

¹⁰⁰ Correspondence from Chief Executive Officer, Public Safety Business Agency, to FAC dated 14 November 2013: 3

¹⁰¹ Correspondence from Director-General, Department of Housing and Public Works, to FAC dated 22 July 2013: 1 & 2

DHPW advised the Committee that their Workforce Attendance Strategy and Action Plan had been revised to outline a number of strategies for reducing absenteeism for 2013-14. The revised plan also included objectives such as *'reducing unplanned absenteeism by 10% across HPW'* to be monitored monthly by senior HR consultants and *'raising awareness of available health and wellbeing programs for employees'* (e.g. employee assistance service and flu vaccinations). DHPW also advised that they had commenced the delivery of the 'Developing Healthy, Safe and Productive Workplaces' training module in the Managing 4 Results training program since the audit.¹⁰²

5.3 Committee comments

It is clear that definitive explanations for the increase in absenteeism and correlations could not be drawn from the existing data.

The Committee is also concerned that there has been a limitation in the current data collection at a whole of government level where the calculation of an absent full day has overstated the absence rates in some departments and agencies.

The Committee also considers that there is merit for employee surveys to be conducted in departments where absenteeism rates have been above the average Queensland rate.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Public Service Commission explore the possibility of obtaining more comprehensive data sets.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Public Service Commission conduct employee surveys in departments where absenteeism rates have been above the Queensland average rate to identify reasons for any increase.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Public Service Commission examine data collection at a whole of government level to accurately incorporate agencies whose absenteeism rates have been previously overstated because of their rostering records.

¹⁰² Correspondence from Director-General, Department of Housing and Public Works, to FAC dated 22 July 2013: 3 - 4

6 Managing absence

6.1 Possible reasons identified for absenteeism

Absence behaviour is variable and complex. The causes of unplanned absence are therefore also unlikely to be straightforward. The APS Commission considers there to be three major influences on attendance. These are:

- Ability – illness or injury.
- Barriers – non-work related factors such as carer responsibilities, emergencies etc.
- Motivation – attitudes and behaviours associated with a lack of motivation to attend; for example, low job satisfaction, non-commitment to the organisation, workplace tension or individual work ethic.¹⁰³

The Committee was concerned about the increase in absenteeism rates and asked the PSC whether they had identified any reason for the increase. The PSC explained that the increasing trend has been occurring for nearly ten years but there was no ‘*specific analysis*’ done. The PSC explained:

*There has been some discussion about whether the recent trend, which has continued beyond 2012-13, has been as a result of workforce change – some of the changes that have happened across the public sector in the last 12 months – but in fact it has been going for some time. It has just continued that trend.*¹⁰⁴

The Committee sought further clarification from PSC as to whether any analysis had been undertaken for sick leave rates only. PSC advised that:

*Separate sick leave data is not generally publicly reported by PSC, as the absenteeism figures are largely comprised (approximately 80%) of sick leave, so the absenteeism trends which are reported publicly are generally indicative of the sick leave trends.*¹⁰⁵

According to the PSC, one possible factor affecting increasing absenteeism rates may be the aging current workforce. In 2013, over one-third (36.31 per cent) of the permanent workforce were aged 50 years and over. The PSC reported that the average age of permanent QPS employees retiring was increasing from 59.97 years in 2005-06 to 61.33 years in 2011-12.¹⁰⁶

*The age of the workforce continues to increase. The data that we have in the workforce characteristics report shows that correlation that has been a consistent pattern over the 10 years—that is, that as we age we do tend to take more of our sick leave.*¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, June 2006: 11

¹⁰⁴ Mr Chesterman, Transcript 16 October 2013: 5

¹⁰⁵ Correspondence from Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission, to FAC dated 6 March 2014: 2

¹⁰⁶ Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 20-21

¹⁰⁷ Mrs Cooper, Transcript 16 October 2013: 5

The average full time days taken by age distribution shown in Figure 8 shows that the average full time days taken increases with age.¹⁰⁸

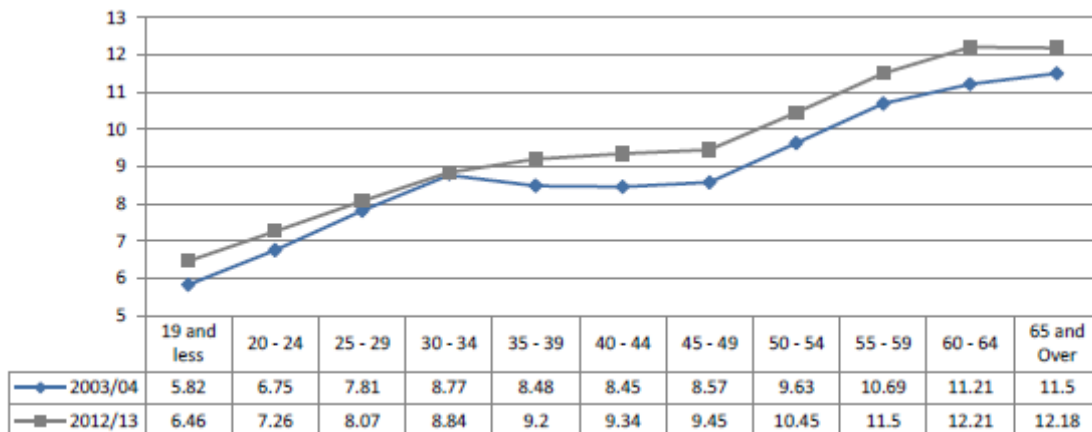


Figure 8: Average absenteeism (full time) days taken per employee by age distribution
 Source: Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 15

Given that sick leave comprises approximately 77 per cent of total unplanned absence, the PSC advised that there may be a seasonal nature to absenteeism and it is reasonable to expect that factors such as cold and flu seasons would significantly affect the absenteeism rate.¹⁰⁹

This is explained by the peaks in Figure 6, but as absenteeism data is collected only on a quarterly basis, there is a time lag in the data shown. Therefore, quarter 4 data (Figure 9) are based on absenteeism data from the previous three months (June-August).¹¹⁰ The PSC clarified:

*... there is a seasonal variation there. Those graphs may well indicate a particularly bad or better flu season because that is, I think, the main driver in those peaks.*¹¹¹

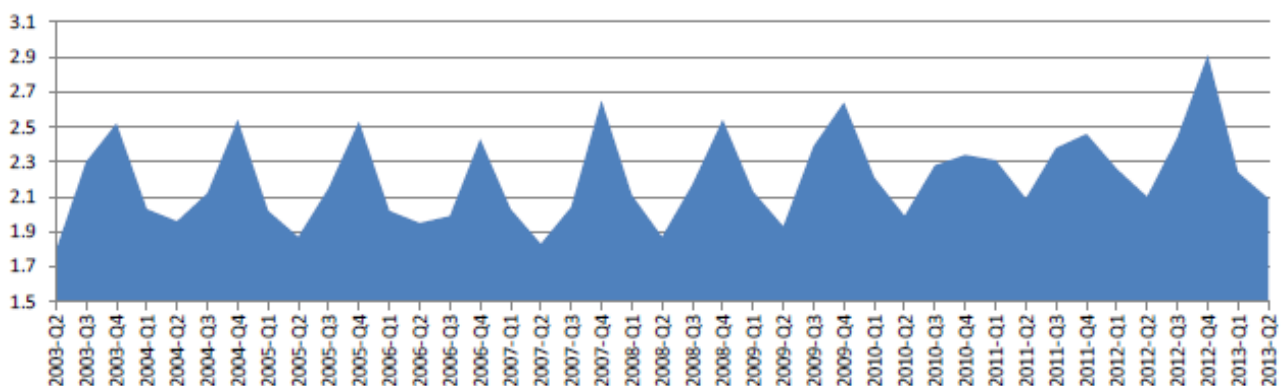


Figure 9: Average full time absent days taken
 Source: Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 14

¹⁰⁸ Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 15

¹⁰⁹ Correspondence from Commission Chief Executive and Deputy Commissioner, Public Service Commission, to FAC dated 1 November 2013: 1

¹¹⁰ Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 14

¹¹¹ Mr Chesterman, Transcript 16 October 2013: 11

The Committee was advised that there are no current mechanisms for reporting absenteeism data more frequently as collecting monthly absenteeism data at the whole of government level would be a large administrative workload with little additional information likely to be gained when monitoring trends. In addition, monthly data collection could introduce further seasonal impacts and complicate data analysis.¹¹²

The PSC explained that school holiday periods could likely produce seasonal impacts given the thousands of temporary teachers who come in and out of the Department of Education, Training and Employment workforce.¹¹³

The APS Commission considers minor illness to be the number one cause of short-term absences, and illnesses or injury can arise as a result of work conditions.¹¹⁴

Departments or front-line service agencies are usually more affected by seasonal factors. DCS advised they would see an increase in absenteeism during those periods:

*... being a front-line service agency in either guise we would expect to be a high user of sick leave. The first issue is that we would never expect to have zero absenteeism for an unscheduled reason. For example, we do touch the public and we find periods of the year where flu is something that we have to deal with and goes through our workforce and it is a legitimate reason for people to be away. Around Ekka time is a nightmare for us. It just happens that way. There are other people who unfortunately injure themselves either fighting fires or taking on corrective services kinds of functions in a custodial sense.*¹¹⁵

DCS stated that July to September peak (noted as Q4 in Figure 9) is 'primarily associated with flu season' and their 'rates are compounded by operational employees having high frequency contact with members of the public or prisoners on a daily basis, and therefore have more exposure to contagious conditions during this time'.¹¹⁶

DCS also suggested that there may be a correlation between the sick leave availability and the use of sick leave. In 2010, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission increased the sick leave availability to ambulance officers from 80 hours to 96 hours per annum, and there was a subsequent increase in the use of sick leave.¹¹⁷

Other factors such as organisational changes may also have an effect on absenteeism trends. The PSC reported that overall QPS unplanned absence rate had increased in the first six months of the 2012-13 financial year following organisational change and renewal across the QPS and the announcement of the budget in September 2012. However, the unplanned absence rate for the quarter ending 31 March 2013 has been lower than the rate in comparable quarters in 2011 and 2012.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Correspondence from Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission, to FAC dated 6 March 2014: 3

¹¹³ Correspondence from Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission, to FAC dated 6 March 2014: 3

¹¹⁴ Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, June 2006: 11-12

¹¹⁵ Mr Anderson, Transcript 16 October 2013: 6

¹¹⁶ Email correspondence from Director, HR Services Unit, Department of Community Safety, to FAC secretariat dated 9 September 2013: 1

¹¹⁷ Mr Anderson, Transcript 16 October 2013: 6

¹¹⁸ Correspondence from Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission, to FAC, dated 29 July 2013: 4

A survey of 108 (public and private sector) organisations employing 450,000 employees conducted by DHS in 2013 identified ‘a strong relationship between rising turnover and rising absenteeism, indicating higher levels of motivated absence when job fit or satisfaction is low’.¹¹⁹ DPHW advised that significant organisational change and restructuring of their organisation during 2012-13 resulted in an increase in absenteeism to 13.08 days from 10.72 days in 2011-12.¹²⁰ They explained that employees in work areas that have been undergoing the most significant organisational change have had the largest increase in unplanned absence.¹²¹

DCS experienced an increase in their absenteeism rate from 4.81 per cent in 2011-12 to 5.3 per cent in 2012-13.¹²² They explained that factors such as the 2011 voluntary separation packages being made available and the 2012 staffing reduction and resulting enterprise bargaining negotiation for most of their agencies contributed to higher than normal levels of absenteeism.¹²³ The department advised the Committee that ‘there had been significant staffing impacts during the financial year which resulted in 304 staff being impacted by FTE reductions across the Department’.¹²⁴

PSC explained that peaks in absence caused by significant changes are usually atypical and they would usually liaise with managers of the relevant departments or agencies to ensure there is sufficient communication occurring within the department at times of organisational changes.¹²⁵ The DHS survey found that 64 per cent of public sector organisations reported an increase in mental health (stress/anxiety/depression) related absence; this figure is nearly twice the level of the private sector.¹²⁶

It is also worthwhile noting that the overall data across agencies and particularly within small agencies may be skewed by one or a few individuals. The Auditor-General explained:

*As such a small agency, we can have one person who really does skew the results. That is why it is so important for us to understand and dig behind the average to see where the sick leave is being taken and why.*¹²⁷

*I think most of the public servants we come across are very hardworking and are actually concerned to be high performing. But what drags them down sometimes is those pockets where they are not necessarily as committed, and that can then have a flow-on affect to those who are high performing. So unplanned absence can have a whole range of influences, not just on the people who are taking the leave but on the people who are then potentially having to back up for the people who are on leave.*¹²⁸

¹¹⁹ WorkplaceInfo: *Absenteeism – the latest Australian Trends*, September 2013

<http://www.workplaceinfo.com.au/payroll/leave/absenteeism-the-latest-australian-trends> [24 January 2014]

¹²⁰ Correspondence from Director-General, Department of Housing and Public Works, to FAC dated 22 July 2013: 2

¹²¹ Correspondence from Director-General, Department of Housing and Public Works, to FAC dated 22 July 2013: 1

¹²² Correspondence from Director-General, Department of Community Safety, to FAC dated 13 August 2013: 4

¹²³ Email correspondence from Director, HR Services Unit, Department of Community Safety, to FAC secretariat dated 9 September 2013: 1

¹²⁴ Correspondence from Director-General, Department of Community Safety, to FAC dated 13 August 2013: 4

¹²⁵ Mrs Cooper, Transcript 16 October 2013: 8

¹²⁶ WorkplaceInfo: *Absenteeism – the latest Australian Trends*, September 2013

<http://www.workplaceinfo.com.au/payroll/leave/absenteeism-the-latest-australian-trends> [24 January 2014]

¹²⁷ Mr Greaves, Transcript 16 October 2013: 10

¹²⁸ Mr Greaves, Transcript 16 October 2013: 10

The Auditor-General reported that employees may take leave because they felt ‘entitled’ to the full annual allowance, regardless of whether they have a genuine reason.¹²⁹ The Committee considered whether the attitude of viewing ‘sick leave’ as a sense of entitlement was a major factor in the increase in absenteeism. They were advised that there had been a sense of entitlement with sick leave in the past, but there is a strong move away from this attitude in recent years. For example, the DCS explained that there is an increasing focus on staff having ‘higher tertiary qualifications to be able to work for them’, instead of a being ‘learn-on-the-job’ occupation.¹³⁰

The PSC explained that one of their objectives as part of the public service renewal is to build ‘new and better opportunities’ for the public service. They advised that:

*The issue of employee engagement is one for the Public Service and it is an important one as we undergo a significant program of transformational change throughout the Queensland renewal program Employee engagement at all levels was at the heart of developing the aspirational values and departments and locations contributed to the co-design process.*¹³¹

The PSC’s report also showed that lower paid employees are absent more often than higher paid employees (Figure 10).¹³²

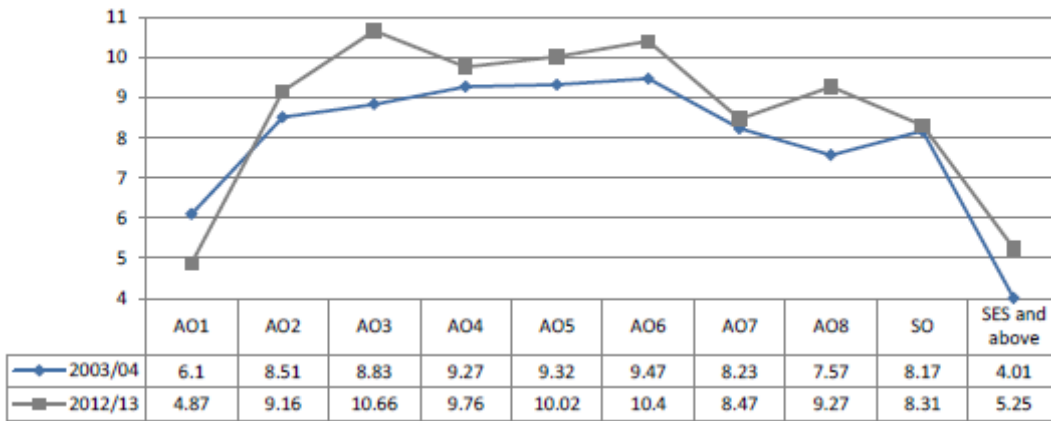


Figure 10: Average full time absent days taken – AO Equivalent Salaries
 Source: Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 16

The Committee asked whether the high rates of sick leave for A03, A04, A05 and A06 levels (Figure 7) was related to those levels being front-line services who are more exposed to illnesses or injuries. The DHPW which incorporates the QBuild blue-collar workforce explained:

*It is not universally true to say that the blue-collar worker will take more sick leave than the white-collar worker. In our experience, it really much depends on the environment that they are working in. Historically, yes, a lot of our blue-collar workers would take closer to their annual entitlement than some people in the same business area working in a white-collar environment but, similarly, a lot of white-collar workers working, for instance, in a call centre operation would take significantly more sick leave than the blue-collar workers again.*¹³³

¹²⁹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 28

¹³⁰ Mr Anderson, Transcript 16 October 2013: 9

¹³¹ Mr Chesterman, Transcript 16 October 2013: 3

¹³² Public Service Commission, *Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13*, September 2013: 16

¹³³ Mr Long, Transcript 16 October 2013: 7

The Committee was concerned that workplace bullying may still be an issue for many employees and employers. The PSC explained that workplace bullying is an area being addressed with the DJAG but is an area that requires further investigation:

*However, it is very fair to say that we need to work in a more concerted way and put more effort into raising the awareness and understanding of what workplace bullying is, and it links very closely with what Mr Chesterman was saying in terms of the culture that exists in our workplaces..... It is a concern and it is something that we need to prioritise and do more work on in the immediate future.*¹³⁴

6.2 Carers' leave

As of 1 January 2010, the National Employment Standards (NES) replace the non-pay rate provisions of the Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard; entitlements under the NES are:

- Paid personal/carers' leave
- Unpaid carers' leave
- Paid compassionate leave¹³⁵

Carers' leave is included in the overall unplanned absenteeism rate and the PSC advised that the total absenteeism rate of 9.69 days in 2012-13 comprises 1.19 average days of carers' leave.¹³⁶

Since 2006-07, there has been an increase in full time days taken as carers' leave by 48.75 per cent from 0.8 days to 1.9 days per employee (Figure 11). Despite being considered as unpaid leave, carers' leave was not reported separately in MOHRI data prior to 2006-07.¹³⁷

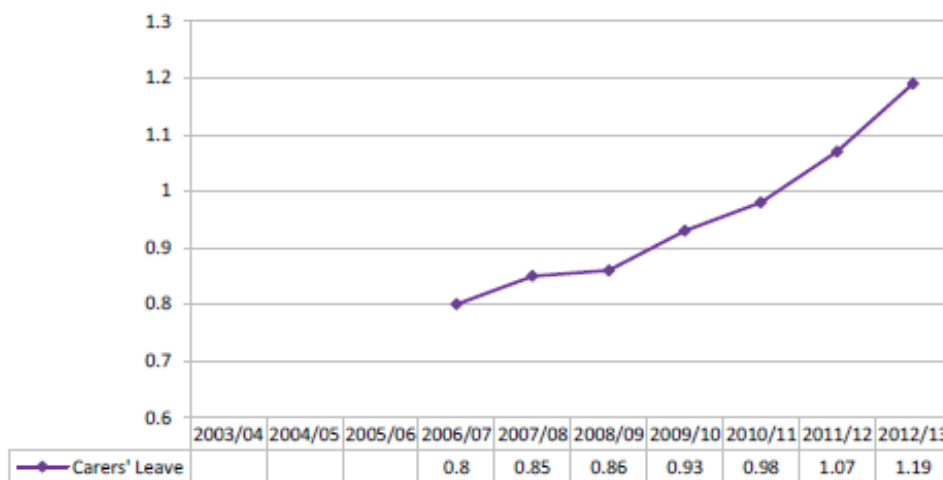


Figure 11: Carers' leave – average full time days taken per employee excluding casuals
Source: Public Service Commission, Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13, September 2013: 20

¹³⁴ Mrs Cooper, Transcript 16 October 2013: 3

¹³⁵ Queensland Government, Employee rights, entitlements and pay: Leave entitlements, January 2014 <https://www.qld.gov.au/jobs/entitlements/pages/leave.html> [13 February 2013]

¹³⁶ Correspondence from Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission, to FAC dated 6 March 2014: 1

¹³⁷ Public Service Commission, Queensland Public Service Workforce Characteristics 2012/13, September 2013: 20

The PSC advised the Committee:

*We are also very conscious of the carers leave trend. Carers leave is an excellent initiative providing support to our workforce to enable them to take carers leave to support family members who might be unwell or need support and care. That is certainly a contributor to the increase as well. That is trending upwards at a more significant rate than any form of leave within absenteeism.*¹³⁸

The increase in carers' leave may also be linked to seasonal factors in that there may be a need to stay home to care for those who are unwell, for example, children or the elderly.

6.3 Managing absence

Preventative measures can be put in place to address illnesses or injuries that have an impact on employees' ability to work. For example, providing yearly flu injections, early intervention and rehabilitation programs for injury related cases, work station assessments, health week activities and other occupational health and safety practices can help reduce absences in a workplace.¹³⁹

The APS Commission's report stated:

*The work context (how the work is organised) and the work content (what the job involves) contribute to stress levels, job satisfaction, commitment and motivation, which in turn impact on attendance. Good working conditions and job design are known to impact positively on morale and engagement, encouraging employees to come to work.*¹⁴⁰

The Auditor-General stated that ongoing management of attendance and absence required commitment from executive and divisional, or business unit, management. The audit report explained that the responsibility of initiating, approving and implementing programs that lead to a safe, healthy and well-attended workplace lies with executive management of each organisation.¹⁴¹

The APS Commission's report emphasised that '*management style, behaviour, management hierarchy and allocation of responsibility are all clearly linked to absence rates. Poor leadership at the senior management level can generate low morale across an organisation. Low morale has been linked to the reason why employees call in sick at the last minute*'.¹⁴²

The DHS' *Absenteeism Management Survey* adds that – '*the management of the organisation set the rules of engagement when it comes to managing absence, and effective management will create a culture of attendance, not a culture of entitlement. Management are responsible for creating the conditions to eliminate a 'sickie' culture and to support employees who are genuinely unwell.*'¹⁴³

The APS Commission reported that '*anecdotally, it appears that there are employees who use all their sick leave, with the view that it is their right to do so*'.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ Mrs Cooper, Transcript 16 October 2013: 5

¹³⁹ Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, June 2006: 19

¹⁴⁰ Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, June 2006: 12

¹⁴¹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 27

¹⁴² Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, June 2006: 14

¹⁴³ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 27

¹⁴⁴ Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, 22 June 2006: 14

Management of an organisation may inadvertently foster the culture of entitlement by failing to intervene in its early stages. The Committee heard that the entitlement culture may not necessarily be widespread but are likely to be more prevalent in some departments; for example:

*... where the nature of the work and the culture of the workplaces do tend to support a workplace where supervisors are not talking to their employees when they have a day off. They are not noticing it and commenting on it and asking if the employee is okay when they return and really just showing that vigilance and supportive management that does help to address it.*¹⁴⁵

DHPW consider that there are 'culture of entitlement' may be attributed to two issues:

*... to what extent are the employees engaged in the business feel like they are being empowered to do their work and to what extent is there a culture in the business where sick leave is just accepted passively or where the supervisor feels like they have should have a discussion with people who are taking more than normal sick leave and trying to show some care for the employee and unpack the reasons and determine whether anything could be done to assist the employee but also to let the employee know that their pattern of unplanned absences be noted.*¹⁴⁶

DETE agrees that 'direct engagement around workplace issues for an individual' is a very important step in the process. They found that the strong culture of quality teachers or front-line service delivery areas have lower absenteeism rate as they are well engaged with their client group.¹⁴⁷

The APS commission reports that practices which encourage an engaged and motivated workforce will have a positive influence on attendance. The three areas in which attendance can be influence are:

- focusing on absence management via a coordinated absence management strategy
- supporting and developing managers to deal with a range of absence scenarios
- implementing a range of people management policies and practices that aim to motivate attendance.¹⁴⁸

The audit report considered that an 'entitlement culture' needed to be addressed at all levels including at the individual employee level. DCS agree that cultural change in regards to the 'entitlement culture' has to occur at a whole of government level as well as departmental level. They advised that significant cultural reform is being facilitated by the PSC through a variety of initiatives.

APS noted that some agencies are now emphasising that leave provisions are an employee's insurance against future illness rather than an entitlement that must be used. Some agencies are also removing the word 'entitlement' from workplace agreements when describing leave provisions.

The Auditor-General reported that the management of unplanned absence of employees had a low priority at whole of agency executive level, and responsibility of this was delegated to lower levels of management. Further, there appeared to be no documented channels of reporting back to executive management which then limits the ability to hold senior management accountable for the actions being taken to reduce the level of unplanned absence.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Mrs Cooper, Transcript 16 October 2013: 5

¹⁴⁶ Mr Long, Transcript 16 October 2013: 7

¹⁴⁷ Mr McKellar, Transcript 16 October 2013: 7

¹⁴⁸ Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, 22 June 2006: 17

¹⁴⁹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 28

The three departments audited had varied information provided for executive management's plans or strategies for managing unplanned absence (Figure 12).¹⁵⁰

Agency	Executive management agenda item?	Information available
Department of Community Safety	Yes, absence management information is a standing agenda item at monthly executive management meetings	Has a whole of department absenteeism management policy
Department of Education and Training	No, absence management information is not a standing agenda item at executive management meetings	Reports absence information annually
Department of Public Works	Yes, absence management information is a standing agenda item at monthly executive management meetings	Reports monthly unplanned absence levels from business units to the executive Has undertaken a review specific to unplanned absence

Figure 12: Information supplied to executive management by the departments audited
Source: QAO, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 28

However, caution must be exercised when implementing practices or policies designed to curtail absenteeism as these could lead to an increase in presenteeism, which in turn will result in reduced productivity.

6.4 Reasons for and managing presenteeism

The Committee was however concerned that employees were going to work when they are sick, for example with the flu. The PSC advised:

*I know in my own experience that if I have a colleague who is sick and spluttering with the flu I will send them home. Even if they are on their death bed and they are at work, certainly my own value set is that I do not want them at work if they are truly sick and they need to be at home. That is what sick leave is for—for people who are really sick and need to be in a place where they can recuperate and get better.*¹⁵¹

The respondents in a UK study gave a range of reasons for going into work unwell; these included work-related stress and perceived workplace pressure (from managers and/or colleagues) to come to work despite being sick. Personal factors included their perception of the type and severity of their ill health, personal financial difficulties, sociocultural influences on illness perceptions and job insecurity.^{152,153}

¹⁵⁰ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 28

¹⁵¹ Mr Chesterman, Transcript 16 October 2013: 9

¹⁵² Ashby, K and Mahdon, M. *Why do employees come to work when ill? An investigation into sickness presence in the workplace*, The Work Foundation April 2010: 6
<http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Assets/Docs/AXA%20event/FINAL%20Why%20do%20employees%20come%20to%20work%20when%20ill.pdf> [19 February 2014]

¹⁵³ Sanderson, K and Cocker, F, *Presenteeism. Implications and health risks*. Reprinted from *Australian Family Physician*, Vol 42, No 4, April 2013: 173
<http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Assets/Docs/AXA%20event/FINAL%20Why%20do%20employees%20come%20to%20work%20when%20ill.pdf> [19 February 2014]

Presenteeism is reported as being more common among older workers, women, and those with conscientious personalities.¹⁵⁴ This combined with the pressure of facing a backlog of tasks on return to work influences the decision to attend work whilst unwell.¹⁵⁵

Sickness presenteeism is a major concern in the healthcare industry. The most frequent reason given by healthcare workers for working with an illness was that they did not want to increase the workload of others. In addition, some respondents considered that they were '*not feeling sick enough*' to stay away from work.¹⁵⁶ As indicated by DCS, those in the health or service profession are shift workers and it was reported that '*those who work non-standard hours (e.g. doing shiftwork) may be more likely to come ill to work because they do not want to oblige their colleagues to work at odd hours of the day*'.¹⁵⁷

The correlation between personal financial situation and presenteeism supports DHPW's comment that there was a misconception that blue-collar workers take more sick leave than the white-collar workers.¹⁵⁸ The study reported:

*Many blue collar and unskilled workers, and employees whose wage structure is heavily dependent on pay supplements due to e.g. working at odd hours, are entitled only to sick pay equalling 90% of the minimum wage in their trade. For this group there are financial incentives for going ill to work.*¹⁵⁹

The UK study by Ashby and Mahdon noted that:

*Employees who were unable to adjust their work around their health problem were also more likely to report that their performance was adversely affected by working unwell.*¹⁶⁰

The PSC explained that technology is now readily available for employees who are unwell so as '*to not spread their germs and to interact when they need to on maybe the one or two very urgent things that need to be completed*'.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁴ Sanderson, K and Cocker, F. *Presenteeism. Implications and health risks*. Reprinted from Australian Family Physician Vol 42, No 4, April 2013: 173

<http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Assets/Docs/AXA%20event/FINAL%20Why%20do%20employees%20come%20to%20work%20when%20ill.pdf> [19 February 2014]

¹⁵⁵ Hansen, C. D. and Andersen, J. H. *Going ill to work – What personal circumstances, attitudes and work-related factors are associated with sickness presenteeism?* Social Science & Medicine, 2008: 957

¹⁵⁶ Bracewell, L. M. et al, *Sickness presenteeism in a New Zealand hospital*. The New Zealand Medical Journal: May 2010 <http://journal.nzma.org.nz/journal/123-1314/4106/> [26 February 2014]

¹⁵⁷ Hansen, C. D. and Andersen, J. H. *Going ill to work – What personal circumstances, attitudes and work-related factors are associated with sickness presenteeism?* Social Science & Medicine, 2008: 958

¹⁵⁸ Mr Long, Transcript 16 October 2013: 7

¹⁵⁹ Hansen, C. D. and Andersen, J. H. *Going ill to work – What personal circumstances, attitudes and work-related factors are associated with sickness presenteeism?* Social Science & Medicine, 2008: 958

¹⁶⁰ Ashby, K and Mahdon, M, *Why do employees come to work when ill? An investigation into sickness presence in the workplace*, The Work Foundation, April 2010: 6

<http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Assets/Docs/AXA%20event/FINAL%20Why%20do%20employees%20come%20to%20work%20when%20ill.pdf> [19 February 2014]

¹⁶¹ Mr Chesterman, Transcript 16 October 2013: 10

The Medibank study revealed that the biggest contributors to productivity loss caused by presenteeism are depression, allergies, hypertension and diabetes (Figure 13). Physical conditions that also contribute to presenteeism costs include migraine/headaches, back, neck or spinal problems and arthritis.¹⁶²

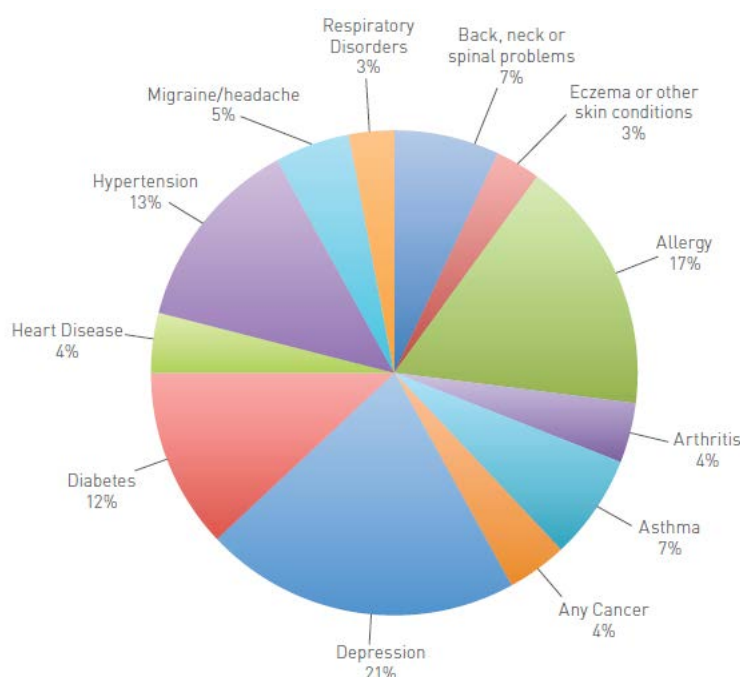


Figure 13: Contribution of medical conditions to overall productivity loss

Source: KPMG Econtech *Sick at Work. The cost of presenteeism to your business and the economy*. Medibank research series: July 2011: 7

Note: percentages refer to the contribution that each medical condition makes to the overall productivity loss of 2.6 per cent in 2009-10

‘Physical’ symptoms of illnesses are easier to manage but mental health remains relatively unaddressed. According to Medibank’s study:

*Employees can feel afraid to speak up due to the fear of being stigmatised, whilst employers are often not able to recognise symptoms and are therefore unable to step in and offer support.*¹⁶³

Bullying is a factor for depression and an employee with depression may also be reluctant to disclose a mental health issue to their employer for the purposes of seeking time off work and, as such, may not see sick leave as an option.¹⁶⁴

Workplace stress is a growing concern and contributes to a loss of 2.14 working days per employee as a result of presenteeism.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Medibank Private, Econtech, *Sick at Work. The cost of presenteeism to your business and the economy*. Medibank research series: July 2011: 7

¹⁶³ Medibank Private, Econtech, *Sick at Work. The cost of presenteeism to your business and the economy*. Medibank research series: July 2011: 7

¹⁶⁴ Sanderson, K and Cocker, F. *Presenteeism. Implications and health risks*. Reprinted from Australian Family Physician Vol 42, No 4, April 2013: 173

<http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Assets/Docs/AXA%20event/FINAL%20Why%20do%20employees%20come%20to%20work%20when%20ill.pdf> [19 February 2014]

¹⁶⁵ Medibank Private, Econtech, *Sick at Work. The cost of presenteeism to your business and the economy*. Medibank research series: July 2011, 6

An Australian study found that long hours worked were associated with higher presenteeism, which is a 'hidden' problem in that other adverse long-term health effects such as burnout could result.¹⁶⁶ Presenteeism should therefore be considered as a pre-cursor to absenteeism as *'it might exacerbate existing medical conditions, damage the quality of working life, and lead to impressions of ineffectiveness at work due to reduced productivity'*.¹⁶⁷ It is important that management actions be put in place to address the issue of presenteeism in conjunction with absenteeism.

Medibank's study concluded that employers can take steps to address presenteeism and improve productivity in the following ways:

- Awareness – recognising the effect of other workplace policies and organisational culture. For example if there is a low tolerance for absenteeism, then presenteeism may present as a problem.
- Identification – understanding particular health issues affecting employees. Anonymous health and wellbeing surveys can assist in measuring presenteeism.
- Education – implementing workplace health and wellbeing programs or employee assistance programs may be beneficial to the business.¹⁶⁸

It is also important that management strategies can play a part in minimising work-related stress and ill health by:

- Noticing symptoms associated with employees experiencing high levels of workplace stress, reduced psychological wellbeing and/or mental health problems
- Having open and supportive conversations with employees about their health (their psychological wellbeing and mental health in particular).¹⁶⁹

Monitoring sickness presence and ensuring employers are aware that attending work when unwell can be an important indicator of poor employee health and wellbeing, which in turn can adversely affect performance. Therefore management strategies for unplanned absence should also take into consideration factors for presenteeism.

Further research into the prevalence of presenteeism amongst healthcare workers is important in order to identify ways in which presenteeism can be reduced, particularly with the emergence of different influenza pandemic.

6.5 Departmental actions for unplanned absence

The audit found that at agency-wide level departments had varying practices. Examples include:

- DCS had produced a workforce performance guide for supervisors to assist them in dealing with a range of employee issues including absenteeism.
- The QCS, QAS and QFRS have also developed practical tools to assist supervisors in managing employees with high levels of absenteeism.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Magee, C., Stefanic, N., Caputi, P. and Iverson, D, *Occupational factors and sick leave in Australian employees*, Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 53 (6): 2011

¹⁶⁷ Johns, G, *Presenteeism in the workplace: A review and research agenda*. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 2010: 521

¹⁶⁸ Medibank Private, Econtech, *Sick at Work. The cost of presenteeism to your business and the economy*, Medibank research series: July 2011, 10

¹⁶⁹ Ashby, K and Mahdon, M, *Why do employees come to work when ill? An investigation into sickness presence in the workplace*, The Work Foundation, April 2010: 12

<http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Assets/Docs/AXA%20event/FINAL%20Why%20do%20employees%20come%20to%20work%20when%20ill.pdf> [19 February 2014]

¹⁷⁰ Queensland Audit Office, *Report No 4: 2012-13 Managing Employee Unplanned Absence*, June 2012: 29

DCS advised the Committee that following the audit report, its HR procedure – *Management of Leave and Unplanned Absences* was released in March 2013. The procedure was specifically designed for each DCS division to continue, develop and/or revise appropriate strategies and practical management tools that are suitable for their workplaces.¹⁷¹

They stated that ongoing work is being done on their strategies:

*The way we do that is that we have an articulated policy that was refreshed in 2013 and the working with Queensland survey that has been just been done. We went through all of the verbatim comments to look at common themes, including bullying and how we deal with our staff. Managers at a station or at a prison level or at a local area ambulance level are charged with the job of interviewing staff members who do take a pattern or seem to be taking a pattern of unscheduled leave that looks odd. They are asked to explain and then we will put in a workplace attendance program to monitor them very closely. That is an awful lot of effort and it is well done and we still have work to do in terms of the accounting of this.*¹⁷²

The Committee was advised that QAS already has detailed strategies and management tool to be utilised when individuals are identified with potential issues in absenteeism rates. Each Local Ambulance Service Network has an Absence Management Committee that reviews all frequent, habitual and chronic absenteeism. Timely management interventions are also initiated to improve staff attendance and/or promote early and successful return to work.¹⁷³

DHPW explained that they have reinitiated their 2013 Workplace Attendance Action Plan and Communication Plan following the completion of their organisational changes. The department advised that their Board of Management has established targets for the level of unplanned absence in each business area. Separate targets e.g. target of an average of 9.8 days per employee or a reduction in the average number of days per employee by 10 per cent based on current performance was introduced and progress against these targets will be monitored through the department's Human Resources Committee on a monthly basis.¹⁷⁴

DHPW has also commenced the delivery of the Developing Healthy, Safe and Productive Workplace training module for managers from A04 to A08, which has a particular focus on performance management and addressing unplanned absence.¹⁷⁵

The PSC advised the Committee that strategies have been implemented in DEHP, DTMR and DSITIA. The DEHP *'has implemented a strategy called 'Working safe, working well' which aims to boost employee involvement, decrease exposure to harm, achieve excellence in organisational health management and facilitate the notion of zero harm'*.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Correspondence from Director-General, Department of Community Safety, to FAC dated 13 August 2013: Attachment 1: 1

¹⁷² Mr Anderson, Transcript 16 October 2013: 6

¹⁷³ Correspondence from Director-General, Department of Community Safety, to FAC dated 13 August 2013: Attachment 1: 2

¹⁷⁴ Correspondence from Director-General, Department of Housing and Public Works, to FAC dated 22 July 2013: 3

¹⁷⁵ Correspondence from Director-General, Department of Housing and Public Works, to FAC dated 22 July 2013: 3

¹⁷⁶ Mr Chesterman, Transcript 16 October 2013: 3

Mr Chesterman further advised:

*The Department of Transport and Main Roads has developed a people strategy which is an integrated approach with programs aimed at recognition, innovation, culture and values. The department has also established a wellness working group which will provide direct employee input into the new and existing wellbeing initiatives. The Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts has implemented a workplace attendance initiative which includes creating clear expectations around workplace attendance, understanding the underlying cause of unplanned absenteeism, improving employee engagement, creating a positive work environment and raising staff awareness of unplanned absences and its impact on productivity.*¹⁷⁷

Five priority areas for the public sector have been identified by the PSC to drive a positive working environment and attendance culture; these are

- building leadership and management capability;
- setting clear expectations and performance conversations;
- renewing the workplace culture and values;
- focussing on workplace health and safety and employee health and wellbeing;
- enhancing, monitoring and benchmarking.¹⁷⁸

PSC explained that *'a range of service-wide initiatives are being implemented against these priority areas, including: the executive capability assessment and development process, a new initiative designed to assess the capability of 400 executives across the public sector by 30 June 2014 and provide targeted development plans'*.¹⁷⁹ They also advised that the data from the *Queensland Public Service's Working for Queensland Employee Opinion Survey* of 80,000 employees is being analysed and used to target and address areas for improvement.¹⁸⁰

The PSC's report *'A state of change: better value for the people of Queensland'* outlines that a number of agencies have implemented proactive strategies to manage and reduce the rate of absenteeism, including preventative health initiatives, setting target and enhancing monitoring and reporting. Their report used the example of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) as a case study, where implementation of a structured process which included consultation and counseling assistance resulted in their daily absenteeism decreasing to two to three per cent from ten per cent.¹⁸¹

DCS advised the Committee that the reform work being done by the PSC is supported through the department's performance management framework which includes:

- *Clear performance and conduct expectations being set and communicated*
- *Employees receiving regular, constructive feedback regarding their performance and conduct*
- *Issues identified promptly and dealt with by an employee's supervisor fairly.*¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ Mr Chesterman, Transcript 16 October 2013: 3

¹⁷⁸ Mr Chesterman, Transcript 16 October 2013: 3

¹⁷⁹ Mr Chesterman, Transcript 16 October 2013: 4

¹⁸⁰ Mr Chesterman, Transcript 16 October 2013: 4

¹⁸¹ Public Service Commission, State of the Service Report 2013. *A state of change: better value for the people of Queensland*, December 2013: 20

¹⁸² Correspondence from Chief Executive Officer, Public Safety Business Agency, to FAC dated 14 November 2013: 2

The framework adopted by the DCS is similar to that recommended by the APS Commission, which consist of the following elements:

- clear statement of the organisational expectations and approach to managing absence
- an understanding of the underlying causes of absence within the organisation, appreciating the impact of culture, practices and leadership
- identification of the short and longer term practices needed to address those causes
- clearly defined roles and responsibilities for line managers, human resource areas, occupational health professionals and employees
- a balanced view (i.e. support for genuinely sick or injured employees whilst deterring discretionary absence)
- developing the capabilities required by line managers to actively address problematic absences.¹⁸³

The APS Commission cautions that there are no quick fixes to problematic workplace absences but highlights the respective responsibilities of any organisation, manager and employee in Figure 14.¹⁸⁴

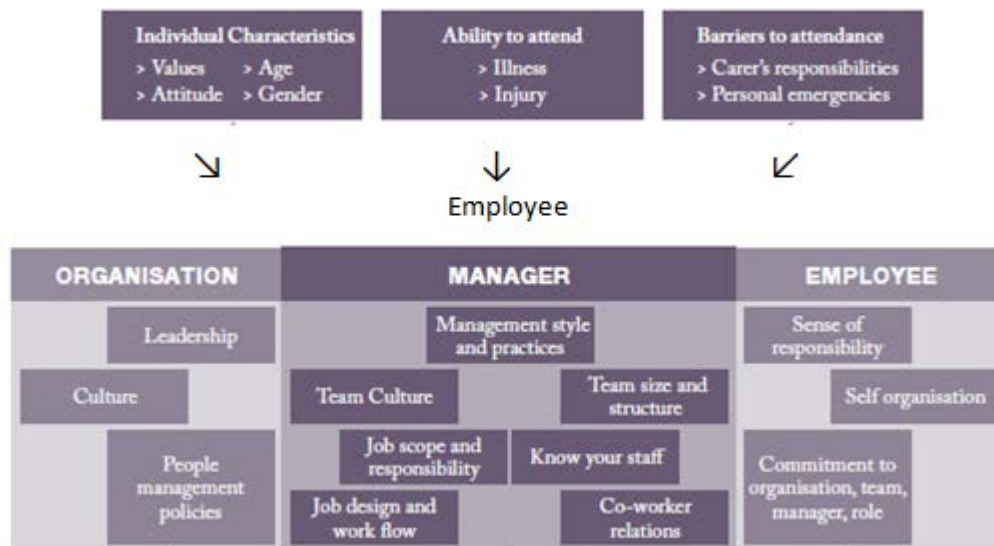


Figure 14: 'Turned Up and Tuned In' model.

Source: Adapted from Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, June 2006: 16

The APS Commission added that problematic absences can continue to exist if managers do not proactively deal with individual cases or lack the confidence to take action where needed.¹⁸⁵ Some agencies may also be restricted in their ability to address absenteeism, for example regional areas may lack some flexibility in job design but the APS Commission considers that investment in good people management practices can overcome a range of issues.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, June 2006: 17

¹⁸⁴ Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, June 2006: 16

¹⁸⁵ Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, June 2006: 14

¹⁸⁶ Australian Public Service Commission, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies*, June 2006: 22

6.6 Comparison of management actions in other jurisdictions

The Committee was aware of some changes to the Brisbane City Council's (BCC) sick leave provisions which included monetary incentives for not using sick leave and sought clarification from the PSC as to the effectiveness of these provisions. The PSC advised that a review of BCC's Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBAs) show:

In 1994, under EBA 1, sick leave entitlement accrued year to year and was paid out on leaving Council.

In 1998, under EBA 2, sick leave accruals were paid and unlimited sick leave was introduced.

In 2003, under EBA 5, unlimited sick leave converted to a Sick Leave Safety Net.

The management of absence due to illness and a rehabilitation process changed each time between EBA 5 and EBA 7.

In 2010, under EBA 7, BCC reverted to accumulated sick leave and income protection was introduced.

In 2013, under EBA 8, there is accumulated personal leave for sick and carer's leave purposes (i.e. accrual of 15 days per year, accruing on a daily basis).¹⁸⁷

Although the PSC is unable to source any publicly available documents which show the impact of those changes on BCC absenteeism rates, they will undertake to contact BCC to discuss the approaches taken and their corresponding impacts.¹⁸⁸

The NSW Auditor-General found that six agencies had absence management protocols which included actions to address excessive sick leave taken by employees. These protocols and actions may include employees being placed on an 'absence management program', or the introduction of follow-up phone calls for people on sick leave.¹⁸⁹ The audit also identified four agencies which had introduced specific 'tools' to assist supervisors manage employees' sick leave; these included:

- Self assessment tools
- Training on sick leave protocol
- Guidance on return to work interviews.

One agency reported that it had saved \$16.8 million between 2004-05 and 2008-09 as a result of those initiatives.¹⁹⁰

The Victorian Auditor-General's report on the management of unplanned leave in the Emergency Services found that senior management in two out of the three agencies regularly consider unplanned leave.¹⁹¹ Ambulance Victoria (AV) successfully implemented alternative arrangements that strengthened the capacity of frontline managers of large teams to lead, manage and support paramedics and other operational staff between 2007 and 2011. However because of financial constraints, there has been a delay in implementing development training for managers in rural areas where unplanned absences have remained higher than those in metropolitan locations.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ Correspondence from Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission, to FAC dated 6 March 2014: 3

¹⁸⁸ Correspondence from Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission, to FAC dated 6 March 2014: 3

¹⁸⁹ Auditor-General New South Wales, *Sick Leave: Department of Premier and Cabinet*, December 2010: 13

¹⁹⁰ Auditor-General New South Wales, *Sick Leave: Department of Premier and Cabinet*, December 2010: 14

¹⁹¹ Victorian Auditor-General, Report 2012-13:23 *Management of Unplanned Leave in Emergency Services*, March 2013: viii

¹⁹² Victorian Auditor-General, Report 2012-13:23 *Management of Unplanned Leave in Emergency Services*, March 2013: xii

Victoria Police (VicPol) conducts reviews of operational groups every six months and the audit found that the frequency of these reviews (which includes managing unplanned absence) limits their ability to respond to systemic unplanned absence in a timely way.¹⁹³ As with the Department of Community Safety, VicPol staff roster is conducted on a station-by-station basis with effectiveness dependent on the officer managing the roster. The lack of a centralised control over rostering and the large number of individual worksites meant that poor rostering could contribute to unplanned absences. VicPol are conducting a trial of practices to improve aspects of rostering as part of their planned corporate actions for 2012-15.¹⁹⁴

There is limited information in other states and some reports are agency specific so comparisons are not relevant.

Agencies in the Australian Public Service that reported the greatest increase in unplanned absence rates had implemented the below strategies:¹⁹⁵

Table 3: Strategies implemented to manage unscheduled absence by large agencies with the highest increase in unscheduled absence

	ABS (1.5 days)	BOM (1.6 days)	FaHCSIA (1.5 days)	DIICSRTE (3.6 days)	SEWPaC (1.8 days)
Promoted a balanced view of workplace absence (i.e. support for genuinely sick or injured employees while deterring any discretionary absence)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Built on an understanding of the underlying causes of workplace absence and the impact of culture, practices and leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Implemented the short and longer term practices needed to address the underlying causes of workplace absence	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Communicated agency expectations and approach to managing workplace absence	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for line managers in managing workplace absence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provided support and training to line managers to build their capability to actively address any problematic absences	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Monitored workplace absence, identified trends and highlighted areas for further investigation	✓	Being developed	✓	✓	✓
Raised awareness of health and safety issues and promoted employee wellbeing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓ Indicates an agency has the strategy in place in all or part of the agency

Notes:

ABS - Australian Bureau of Statistics

SEWPaC - Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

BOM - Bureau of Meteorology

DIICSRTE - Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education

FaHCSIA - Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Source: Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2012-13*, 2 December 2013: 284-5

¹⁹³ Victorian Auditor-General, Report 2012-13:23 *Management of Unplanned Leave in Emergency Services*, March 2013: ix

¹⁹⁴ Victorian Auditor-General, Report 2012-13:23 *Management of Unplanned Leave in Emergency Services*, March 2013: xii

¹⁹⁵ Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2012-13*, 2 December 2013: 284-5

The APS reported that the most widely used strategies were those focusing on raising awareness of health and wellbeing issues, promoting a balanced and supportive culture around workplace absence and included clearly defined roles for managers.¹⁹⁶

6.7 Committee comments

The Committee recognises that there is an increasing unplanned absence trend in the Queensland Public sector, and that there are no definitive explanations for the increase.

The Committee understands that there is no optimum or a standard of acceptable absence across the Queensland Public Service as the sector is diverse in the nature of work. It also accepts that rates of unplanned absence are agency specific but considers that it is important for those agencies to examine their trends and identify 'hot spots' or patterns. However, the Committee considers that these strategies and trends cannot be adequately identified without sufficient relevant and timely data.

The Committee does not wish to see sick leave entitlement reduced or policies put in place to discourage genuine cases for taking sick leave as it is mindful that presenteeism can lead to further unplanned absences and unrecorded reductions in productivity.

The Committee is satisfied that all departments and the PSC are aware of the issue and are undertaking strategies to address absenteeism rates and to implement policies where appropriate.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Public Service Commission undertake further in-depth analysis of correlations between unplanned absence and possible reasons.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Public Service Commission obtain an update on the trends in departments where absenteeism rates were above the Queensland average following the implementation of strategies.

¹⁹⁶ Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2012-13*, 2 December 2013: 284-5

Appendices

**Appendix A – Officers appearing on behalf of departments at the public hearing – Wednesday
16 October 2013**

Mr Kelvin Anderson, Director-General, Department of Community Safety
Ms Christine Axelby, Director HR, Department of Community Safety
Mr Reg Burns, Director, Workforce Modelling, Workforce Services, Human Resources, Department of Education, Training and Employment
Ms Terry Campbell, Assistant Auditor-General, Queensland Audit Office
Mr Andrew Chesterman, Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission
Mrs Sonia Cooper, Acting Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission
Mr Andrew Greaves, Auditor-General, Queensland Audit Office
Ms Sandra Heidrich, Director of Audit, Queensland Audit Office
Mr Stephen Long, Executive Director Human Resources, Department of Housing and Public Works
Mr Duncan McKellar, Executive Director, Workforce Services, Human Resources, Department of Education, Training and Employment
Ms Robyn Turbit, Assistant Director-General, Corporate Services, Department of Housing and Public Works

