



STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY
MARISA PATERSON MLA (CHAIR), ANDREW BRADDOCK MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), LEANNE CASTLEY MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports and Budget Estimates 2020-21
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
2 March 2021

Asked by MS CASTLEY:

In relation to: Health & Wellbeing program expenditure

MS CASTLEY: Yes, great.

On page 191 of the annual report, it talks about the directorate staff health and wellbeing program. Including, you know, a launch of a healthy breakfast program, an eight-week staff bootcamp, four staff have received a seated massage, yoga is onsite twice a week with 20 staff participating, and 12 staff have attended an Anytime Fitness information session. So apparently 287 staff have accessed this health and wellbeing reimbursement program. How many full-time staff are there in the directorate?

Ms Vassarotti: Okay, I—

Mr Walker: That is a question for us and I will hand straight over to Mr Rutledge.

Mr Rutledge: Thanks, Ms Castley. We have about 660 full-time equivalents at any one time. And we have got a rough headcount of 700 staff. What we have, though, is a very diverse workforce. So if you think about—we have got our conservation research people. So you know, they are scientists. Some of them will be field-based, some of them will be in the office. We have, I suppose, what we would normally think of as bureaucrats behind desks. And then, we have rangers, and as I said, field workers.

So we have a fairly, for a smallish organisation of 700 headcount, we have a very, very diverse risk profile when it comes to workplace health and safety. So when we try to put together a workplace health and safety program, it has to include everything about, you know, the safe use of chainsaws, and then also, safe mental health, so mental wellbeing, when you in a high stress environment.

MS CASTLEY: Yes.

Mr Rutledge: So what we have done, one of the programs is a reimbursement program. It is not uncommon, you know, across government agencies and similar employers, where people are able to choose a health and wellbeing, I suppose, program, and then, get reimbursed up to \$100 in any FBT year, so any one year.



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What we see there is some people might do smoking cessation, some people might do a gym membership, some are runners or a new bike. And what we are trying to say is, a healthier person coming to work is a healthier person at work. So we are quite broad in that. It requires presentation of a receipt, presentation that the delegate—normally their manager things it is a worthwhile wellbeing, or health or wellbeing activity. So that is what that reimbursement program is.

Separately, we have done a number of other programs. And I think in the last 12 months, in a COVID environment, we have had to really try and personalise our wellbeing activities. So where previously, and in this reporting period, we would have onsite yoga and stretching and some of those other—the seated massage, we have had to move, really, to a managing your health and wellbeing at home.

So that is both staying connected to work, making sure people have got a safe work environment, that we are not seeing, sort of, back injuries or stress injuries. And the other thing that we have seen at work, and we have constantly monitored this, is this, sort of, a mental disconnection when you leave the home and go to the workplace. And then at the end of the day, this, sort of, a debriefing time on the way back.

When you are working from home, we are seeing that a lot of people are logging on a lot earlier, and then logging off work a lot later. And so trying to manage that. So we have done a number of surveys throughout the COVID period, because we are not back to normal yet.

And what we are finding is that roughly—the numbers are 68 per cent of people find they are able to turn off. We have done a lot of things about how do you turn off at the end of the workday. How do you separate your work and life balance. And when you compare it again to where we are across the service, I think we are doing okay. But I think we need to run a diverse set of programs, because we have such a diverse workforce.

MS CASTLEY: Well, how much was the program worth for 287 staff?

Mr Rutledge: Look, I will take that particular question on notice.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QTON No. 1

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MINISTER VASSAROTTI: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

Recognising the benefits of a healthy and productive workforce, the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) implemented a Health and Wellbeing Initiative (HWI). Financial assistance is provided to employees who on their own initiative undertake, in their own time, health and wellbeing activities.

Under the HWI employees can be reimbursed up to \$100 per annum for costs associated with approved health and wellbeing activities, including (but not limited to):

- gym membership
- weight loss program
- swimming pool entry fees
- walking/running/hiking shoes
- exercise equipment

For the 2019-20 Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) year the cost of the HWI for EPSDD was \$15,100. A total of 160 claims were received from staff of which 63 were subject to FBT and 97 were not subject to FBT. Of the 160 claims for payment:

- 71 staff were paid the full \$100
- 74 staff were paid in between \$89 to \$99
- 10 staff were paid in between \$50 to \$90
- Five staff were paid in between \$12 to \$49

In addition to HWI, EPSDD also has a Health and Wellbeing Program (HWP). The HWP for 2019-2020 has two components – courses and activities. Set out below in [Table 1](#) are the courses that were available for staff to undertake. The cost of the HWP courses equates to approximately \$47 per staff member in EPSDD.

Table 1: Health and Wellbeing Program – Courses

Health and Wellbeing Program	Expenditure
First Aid Training	\$ 424
Wellbeing Webinars	\$ 9,003
Behavioural De-escalation Training	\$ 5,463
Health and Safety Representative Training	\$ 4,478
Mental Health Awareness Training	\$ 4,350
Disability Confidence Training	\$ 1,650
Leading through Challenging Times Webinar	\$ 9,900
Workplace Resilience	\$ 4,475
Total Health and Wellbeing Training Spend	\$ 39,743



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Set out below in Table 2 are the activities that were available for staff to undertake in 2019-2020. HWP activities equates to approximately \$103 per staff member in EPSDD.

Table 2: Health and Wellbeing Program – Activities

Health and Wellbeing Program	Expenditure
OzHelp Program	\$ 7,600
Safety Month Launch	\$ 1,648
First Aid and Medical Supplies	\$ 417
Mental Health Week Presentation	\$ 150
Workplace Nutrition Seminar	\$ 405
Health Checks October 2019	\$ 2,470
Workplace Breastfeeding Re-accreditation	\$ 689
Employee Assistance Program	\$ 46,635
Flu vaccination Program	\$ 12,177
Total Health and Wellbeing Training Spend	\$ 72,191

In addition to the above there are also some health and wellbeing programs that are employee initiated, and employee funded such as: Bootcamp, onsite yoga and seated massage.

NOTE that QTON No.2 has been answered with QTON No.1.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Signature: 

Date: 11/3/2021

By the Minister for the Environment, Rebecca Vassarotti MLA