

"The committee will look into the costs of computer hardware, software, downloads and e-books to name a few," said committee chair Nick Champion (Wakefield, SA). "We look forward to hearing from the companies who set these prices and the consumers and businesses that purchase their products."

Committee member Ed Husic (Chifley, NSW) stressed the economic importance of the issue. From the evidence received by the inquiry, he expects the committee will be able to make recommendations for the market to operate in a way that is fair to businesses and to consumers.

"The internet itself has been estimated to add between \$50 billion and potentially up to \$70 billion to our economic growth," Mr Husic said. "As many jobs are created as a result of the internet in Australia as they are by mining. Within business these days IT is a major capital and operating expense."

Another committee member, Jane Prentice (Ryan, Qld), expressed concern about price disparities faced by consumers.

"Why in this day and age does it cost us more to download an Australian artist on iTunes than it does in the US? That's the sort of thing we need to get to the bottom of," she said.

Deputy chair Paul Neville (Hinkler, Qld) said the inquiry will help to "flush all the issues into the open" and make the market more transparent.

"We've become an easy mark in Australia," he said. "I hope we can drill down to the wholesale levels to find out what the real costs are and come out with a report that hopefully will be a benchmark around which the parliament can base their future work." •

## LINKS

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**HARASSED:** Millions of workers face bullying during their careers

## Rising costs of bullying prompt review

**W**orkplace bullying is costing Australia between \$6 billion and \$36 billion annually, according to estimates from the Productivity Commission. It contributes to decreased productivity, increased staff absenteeism and poor morale.

Research cited by the Australian Human Rights Commission estimates that between 400,000 and 2 million Australians will be harassed at work and 2.5 to 5 million will experience workplace harassment at some time during their careers.

To help tackle the problem, the House of Representatives Education and Employment Committee is examining the nature, causes and extent of bullying in the workplace, and will look at ways to combat the workplace cultures that allow bullying to thrive.

Committee chair Amanda Rishworth (Kingston, SA) said workplace bullying can have a profound effect on all aspects of a person's health as well as their work and family life.

"Bullying has serious consequences for individuals and the wider community," Ms Rishworth said.

"Every Australian has a right to feel safe and respected at work."

The experiences of workplace bullying victims will be considered during the inquiry and the committee will also examine the adequacy of existing education and support services.

"While it is not the role of the committee to intervene in or consider individual cases, we welcome submissions from employers, employees and their representative organisations regarding proposals and suggestions for securing workplaces against bullying at a national level," Ms Rishworth said.

The inquiry will also review the effectiveness of existing anti-bullying regulatory frameworks, and investigate how coordination between agencies and research on workplace bullying can be improved.

Public hearings for the inquiry have begun and will continue throughout August in Adelaide, Perth and Canberra. •

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