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# Wheel clamp on mats

**Matt Johnston**

FEDERAL public servants can't get plastic mats under their desks until work stations have ergonomic assessments to ensure chair wheels won't slip.

The bureaucratic intervention has been branded a waste of taxpayer money by one senator but was defended by a government department as a wise health-and-safety initiative.

Victorian Liberal Senator Scott Ryan raised the issue in a Senate Estimates hearing after he was told a staff member couldn't order a mat to protect the carpet in his office.

He was told the plastic could not be delivered "without a full ergonomic assessment ... for the chair, computer and workstation".

A Department of Finance and Deregulation official said the matter would be looked into.

"We've had in our area generally, some of those mats — the chairs and wheels on them can be quite dangerous," the official said.

"The wheels can skid from underneath you."

Another department representative said the cost of occupational injuries far outweighed the cost of ergonomic assessments.

"If the chairs do not have brake-loaded castors to prevent this slipping on plastic mats, it can contribute to injuries and has done so on a number of occasions."

Tender documents show some departments have spent tens of thousands of dollars on "ergonomic workstation assessments".

The Department of Agriculture spent \$44,000 in 2008 and Centrelink spent \$16,500 in 2009-10.