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SENATE

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Estimates

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CANBERRA

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SENATE
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
Friday, 6 June 2014

Members in attendance: Senators Boyce, Carol Brown, Cameron, Kroger, Moore, Peris, Seselja, Siewert.

HUMAN SERVICES PORTFOLIO

In Attendance

Senator Payne, Minister for Human Services

Department of Human Services

Ms Kathryn Campbell, Secretary

Outcome 1: Informed government decisions on, and access to social, health and child support services

Mr Ben Rimmer, Associate Secretary, Service Delivery Transformation Group

Ms Robyn Calder, Acting General Manager, Business Systems Design and Transformation Division

Ms Sheryl Lewin, General Manager, Transformation Projects Division

Mr Kim Terrell, General Manager, Change Management Division

Mr Tam Shepherd, General Manager, Digital Transformation Division

Mr Grant Tidswell, Deputy Secretary, Service Delivery Operations Group

Ms Dianne Fletcher, General Manager, Smart Centres Division

Mr Graham Maloney, General Manager, Service Performance and Coordination Division

Ms Roxanne Ramsey, General Manager, Indigenous, Regional and Intensive Services Division

Mr Bill Volkers, Acting General Manager, Face to Face Service Delivery Division

Mr Bruce Young, Acting General Manager, Child Support Smart Centres Division

Ms Malisa Golightly, Deputy Secretary, Social Services Group

Ms Vicki Beath, General Manager, Service Strategy and Policy Division

Ms Catherine Rule, General Manager, Participation Division

Mr George Thiveos, General Manager, Families Division

Ms Michelle Wilson, General Manager, Disability, Carers and Older Australians Division

Mr Mark Withnell, General Manager, Business Integrity Division

Mr Dennis Mahony, National Manager, Families and Child Support Policy Branch

Mr Barry Sandison, Deputy Secretary, Health and Information Group

Ms Katy Balmaks, Acting General Manager, Strategic Information Division

Mr Darren Box, General Manager, Debt, Appeals and Health Compliance Division

Ms Alice Jones, General Manager, Health Programmes Division

Ms Mary O'Hanlon, Acting General Manager, Health Support and Business Services Division

Mr Jonathan Hutson, Acting Deputy Secretary, Enabling Services Group

Ms Sue Bird, General Manager, Whole of Government Coordination Division

Mr Hank Jongen, General Manager, Communication Division

Mr Phil Lindenmayer, Acting General Manager, Corporate Operations Division

Mr Michael Nelson, Acting General Manager, People Services Division

Mr Jeff Popple, General Manager, People Capability Division

Ms Mandy Ritchie, General Manager, CRS Australia

Ms Jo Talbot, General Manager, Enterprise Agreement Negotiation

Mr Shane Bennett, National Manager, Deregulation and Red Tape Reduction Branch

Ms Alison McCann, National Manager, CRS Australia

Mr Gary Sterrenberg, Deputy Secretary, CIO Group

Mr Mike Brett, General Manager, ICT Infrastructure Division

Ms Sue Kruse, General Manager, Customer Service Systems Division

Ms Melissa McClusky, General Manager, ICT Business Services Division

Ms Emily Canning, Acting Chief Financial Officer, CFO Division

Mr Rohan Wong, National Manager, Internal Budgets and Reporting

Ms Annette Musolino, Acting Chief Counsel, Legal Services Division

Mr Maris Stipnieks, General Counsel, Programme Advice, Legal and Ombudsman, Legal Services Division

Mr Allan Gaukroger, General Manager, Audit Division

Australian Hearing

Mr Bill Davidson, Managing Director

Ms Gina Mavrias, Operations Director

Committee met at 08:32

CHAIR (Senator Boyce): We are resuming the hearing of the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee estimates with the Department of Human Services, and we are into the programs of outcome 1. Good morning, Minister.

Senator Payne: Good morning, Madam Chair. Just before we commence with questions, the secretary does have some information which flows from our discussions yesterday evening, if the committee would be prepared to receive that now.

CHAIR: That would be great, thank you.

Ms Campbell: We have got the information on the single portfolio telephone lines around the budget information that was asked to be tabled. We have that information to be tabled. Also the briefing material provided to our staff just before the budget was announced on how the measures sat together. We have that material as well.

CHAIR: Could I have a motion to have that information tabled. Moved, Senator Cameron, thank you. There being no objection, it is so ordered.

Ms Campbell: Would you like me to read the VR material? It is very quick.

CHAIR: I think that would probably be helpful. Thank you.

Ms Campbell: The question last night was: how many VRs have there been since 7 September? There have been 247 voluntary redundancies and one involuntary redundancy. I think we mentioned that one last night. In the ACT since 7 September there have been 127 voluntary redundancies, and the one involuntary redundancy was in the ACT. There was another question about what was the longest fixed term non-ongoing contract that we have entered into since 7 September. That was for a period of two years. Regarding social workers as at 30 April, there were 675 social workers. We do not have the exact locations. We will provide that answer on notice.

CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Campbell. We will go straight into program 1.1.

Senator CAMERON: Secretary, I am sure you have seen some of the newspaper reports which are really attempting to demonise DHS clients in terms of being dole bludgers and getting too much money. *The Daily Telegraph* on 30 May carried a story called 'The tentacles of welfare'; *The Australian* had a story about a single mum being on \$55,000 in benefits. Have you seen some of those reports?

Ms Campbell: I have seen press reports of that kind.

Senator CAMERON: Can I take you to this issue of a single mum on \$55,000 in pensions and benefits?

Ms Campbell: Are you asking about the service delivery mechanisms around single parents?

Senator CAMERON: Yes. I am asking how this would come about. You are the organisation that makes the determination about what they are entitled to. You do not set the policy; I understand that full well. But you then apply the policy.

Ms Campbell: We do.

Senator CAMERON: So I am talking about the application of the policy that leads to someone achieving \$55,000.

Senator Payne: Okay. Thanks, Senator.

Senator CAMERON: In the report, it says there was a government-wide analysis that said a 'single parent could be in receipt of benefits totalling \$54,417'. Were you asked for advice on this type of payment to that level?

Ms Campbell: No.

Senator CAMERON: You have not had any advice? None from any government minister, government advisers, asking how could someone achieve \$54,000 or \$55,000?

Ms Campbell: Those questions may have been asked of other agencies.

Senator CAMERON: But not DHS?

Ms Campbell: No.

Senator CAMERON: I want to go through this \$54,417. The parenting payment, single, is \$18,192—is that the correct figure?

Ms Golightly: I will check for you.

Ms Rule: Senator, the basic rate of parenting payment for a single person is up to \$713.20 per fortnight. For partnered parents it is up to \$460.90 per fortnight.

Senator CAMERON: So you would have to do calculations here to see whether that was \$18,190.

Ms Rule: I do not have the annual rates here. I am sorry.

Senator CAMERON: So you are saying the parenting payment for a single parent is \$720 a fortnight?

Ms Rule: \$713.20 per fortnight.

Senator CAMERON: And the clean energy supplement? Just let me ask a general question: has anyone in the department had a look at the figures and done an analysis on the figures?

Ms Campbell: The policy behind the payment rests with the Department of Social Services. So they may have done that analysis.

Senator CAMERON: But you are responsible for doing the calculation based on the individual?

Ms Campbell: On an individual.

Senator CAMERON: So the individual comes in—this single mum comes in—and walks out with \$55,000 in pensions and benefits. That is the tenor of this article. It is not as simple as that, is it?

Ms Campbell: Each individual comes to us with their circumstances. We assess them against the legislation and the payments available, and each is a case-by-case assessment.

Senator CAMERON: So there would be two expert areas in this. One would be DSS, who set the policy, and the other would be DHS, who implement the policy—

Ms Campbell: On an individual, case-by-case example.

Senator CAMERON: Do you have any statistics that show maximum benefits and minimum benefits and the spread across the beneficiaries, the welfare recipients—what do you call them—'clients'?

Ms Campbell: Customers.

Senator CAMERON: Your 'customers'—sorry.

Ms Golightly: Not that I know of. But we could check for you.

Senator CAMERON: Would it be safe to say that there would not be a huge amount of customers receiving \$54,417 a year?

Ms Campbell: I do not think we have the information available on what the profile of the customer base is, so we would not be able to make a comment on that statement.

Senator CAMERON: Do you have such a profile?

Ms Campbell: I do not think we do have that profile.

Senator CAMERON: So, if a minister asks you how many single mums are getting \$55,000, you could not tell them?

Ms Campbell: We would have to undertake work with our ICT systems to draw information of that nature out.

Senator CAMERON: Given that this has become a significant issue, a public issue, given that it has been bringing your customers into disrepute in the media, could you provide details based on *The Australian* story and *The Daily Telegraph* story, and advise whether the calculation is correct in terms of the issues that are delineated in those stories—if you were assessing an individual in those circumstances. Can you then tell us how many individuals are in that circumstance within DHS?

Senator Payne: We will take that on notice.

Senator SIEWERT: Just to follow up on that issue, has the government not asked you for this sort of information?

Senator CAMERON: They said not.

Senator SIEWERT: No, they said they had not in terms of the individual, but in terms of the whole of the profile of what customers are receiving?

Ms Golightly: Not to my knowledge. I will check. But they would not necessarily need to ask us, because they may well be able to interrogate their own systems to find that information.

Senator SIEWERT: Which systems? Do you mean DSS?

Ms Golightly: DSS, yes.

Senator SIEWERT: So they have access to your material, and they could have asked them?

Ms Campbell: Yes. So they are able to access these different profiles and they determine what—

Senator SIEWERT: It is not just the profiles of individuals on certain payments; it is the profile of the broad base of the customers.

Ms Campbell: And of course those profiles change every day.

Senator SIEWERT: I understand that. But you could do some work on what you could consider would be the typical—

Ms Campbell: We will take that question on notice.

Senator CAMERON: What would be the most accurate analysis? It would not be average recipient; it would be the median recipient? Could you advise what the average welfare recipient gets, what the median recipient gets? Can you do any of that work?

Senator Payne: We can take that on notice, but when you say 'the median welfare recipient', the breadth of even that concept is quite phenomenal.

Senator CAMERON: I am not saying you can do it and demanding that it is done. I am just asking.

Senator Payne: In terms of what you want the officers to do, and the department to do, if we begin with the example that you used, which was the same as the one in the mid-year reports you have referred to, we will operate from that basis, using that as the point of reference; we will take that on notice and come back with the information that we can provide.

Senator CAMERON: Minister, I think most businesses would be able to do all this analytical work about their clients. You can say: this is how much I get from this client—usually a business is charging a client—and here is the ratio of clients that pay this amount. I know the issue ISIS but I do not think this is an issue that would be beyond ISIS—Ms Campbell is having a smile.

I think it would be extremely helpful for the Senate, if we are faced with this type of attack—and certainly me as shadow minister faced with this kind of attack on my portfolio's clients, if you like, to have some idea—to know whether this is an issue that is spread right across the country. Tens of thousands of people getting \$54,000 is an extremely important thing for politicians to understand—if that is occurring—so they can stop the attack on welfare recipients. It would be good if we could actually see—and I accept that it changes all the time, but it would change within bands and ranges. You could give us some ranges of how much is paid out, from the lowest range to the highest range, couldn't you? Surely that is not beyond the width of the department?

Ms Campbell: We will take that on notice and consult with other agencies such as the Department of Social Services on the data they have as well.

Senator CAMERON: Thanks.

Senator KROGER: I support your concern about the demonising of anyone. I suggest that it does not matter if it is tens of thousands of people or one person; it should not happen. The media like to comment on this, and I do not think that reflects well on the media. But I just want to make the observation that I do not think it matters if it is one person or tens of thousands of people; the point remains.

Senator CAMERON: I am just trying to find the facts. That is all.

Senator KROGER: I understand.

Senator MOORE: Ms Campbell, Minister, in terms of the process, it has not only been the recent attacks on single parents—with the discussions about the bloated nature of the system; it has also been the serial attacks in some of the media about disability support pensions. I want to clarify, in the current arrangement, when those kinds of issue are there, where they talk about policy and then they go into the numbers which are specifically for Human Services, what is the role of the public relations area of Human Services in that area? Is there a need to respond? Where is the pressure point about whether you will make a comment or not—is it the department or back to the minister's office? I know it is all too regular, and I know it has been happening for generations. But I share some of the views that some of the recent stuff, particularly about disability support pensioners, has crossed a line, and I want to know how the system responds to that.

Ms Campbell: We work very closely with the Department of Social Services to determine whether an answer like that is about service delivery or about policy, and it is a case-by-case assessment as to who is going to answer and who has that data.

Senator MOORE: And where in the department, and how, is that done?

Ms Campbell: If it is in the media, it is generally coordinated through our media unit; that goes back to the significant matter experts, depending on the nature of the query. If it were the inquiries we have been talking about this morning, it would be Ms Golightly's area.

Senator MOORE: And then the link with your office, Minister? How does that work in that area?

Senator Payne: It depends on the individual circumstances.

Senator MOORE: I understand that. But, for instance, in the recent process for disability support pensions, it crosses both areas. Is there a link between Human Services and DSS on that? Is there a process where you have a chat between the two departments about what is most appropriate?

Ms Campbell: On every occasion, we generally discuss it.

Senator MOORE: The media cycle has a tight turnaround. You have a monitoring system, and you are monitoring all that media?

Ms Campbell: We are.

Senator CAMERON: Given that this made such prominent media—and that is not unusual when the Treasurer actually puts the story in the press and commented on the story—was there a discussion between DHS and DSS about the implications for DHS customers and DSS welfare recipients?

Ms Golightly: Not that I recall directly, because it would have been questions around the amount, and that is a policy matter. DSS would have been handling that one itself. It may have checked some of the facts against our publications. But I can check for you. I do not recall any specific—

Senator CAMERON: Did you have any discussions with the minister about whether you should respond to this to defend it? Because, the implication is that people were getting far too much money. Minister, was there any discussion about that with the secretary on how you should respond?

Senator Payne: No.

Senator CAMERON: None. Just to take that point a little bit further, if there is an issue that bears badly on your customers in the media, what is your policy in terms of responding?

Ms Campbell: We look to determine whether the issue is a policy matter and on this occasion I would have assessed that this was a policy matter and that is a matter for the Social Services. If it is service delivery matter, that is a matter for Human Services. There is this grey area in between and they are the ones we discuss as to who is going to answer those ones.

Senator CAMERON: On this particular issue, you were aware of it at your level, the DSS secretary would have been aware of it, so did you talk on this issue?

Ms Campbell: I do not recall talking to Mr Pratt on this issue.

Senator CAMERON: You would not have seen any need for you to do that?

Ms Campbell: I would have seen this as a policy issue which rested with the Department of Social Services.

Senator CAMERON: And what is a grey area? How do you resolve the grey area?

Ms Campbell: On a case-by-case basis.

Senator CAMERON: You are going to come back to me on all of those issues that we have raised.

Ms Campbell: We will take those questions on notice.

Senator CAMERON: I will indicate the issues that I want to go to so that you have some idea. I think we will spend most of this morning on 1.1.

Senator SIEWERT: I have an overarching question on eligibility to Newstart.

CHAIR: Perhaps it would be better if you ask your question now, Senator Siewert.

Senator SIEWERT: When somebody is breached for not taking a job when offered, if someone rejects a contract that offers nil-hours, does that qualify as a breach?

Ms Golightly: If it is an offer of a job then I think *prima facie* it would meet that criteria.

Senator SIEWERT: In other words, what you are saying—and this is very important because it is what is happening with some of the carers situations at the moment where people are being offered contracts that do not

guarantee any work, they are nil-hour contracts—is that somebody can be breached for not accepting a job that actually offers them no official work.

Ms Campbell: So that is no guaranteed work—

Senator SIEWERT: It is a nil-hour contract. In the contract it is actually a nil-hour contract.

Ms Golightly: What I was saying was that, on the surface, if they are offered a job, then *prima facie* that meets the criteria. If there are unusual circumstances—

Senator SIEWERT: This is a reality now. People are being offered no-hour contracts.

Ms Golightly: I think there is a difference—and possibly the experts would need to look at the contract—between no guaranteed work and a contract that says you will not get any hours.

Senator SIEWERT: What is the difference?

Ms Golightly: I am just saying that would be a different circumstance. I am not—

Senator SIEWERT: Can you tell me what would happen if there were no guarantee of work?

Ms Golightly: What happens is that if a person is unsure of what they should do, they can ring.

Senator SIEWERT: I am asking you what the department does.

Ms Golightly: I am sorry, Senator, I am trying to get to that. If someone is reported for not accepting a job offer and they believe that they had a reasonable reason for doing that, they can ask for that to be looked into.

Senator SIEWERT: What is your position?

Ms Golightly: I would have to check. I have never seen such a contract, so I would have to check. Personally, I would have to check.

Senator SIEWERT: This is a real-life case because people are being offered nil-hour contracts now. What happens? You have made a difference between no guarantee of work and a nil-hour contract. Can you tell me what, in the department's eyes, is the difference between those two things and what is the response?

Ms Golightly: I will have to take on notice the difference in the contracts. We would also confer with the relevant agency about the rules around when somebody is suspended or cancelled and what would meet that criteria, particularly if it is a case we have not come across.

Ms Campbell: If you have that information, we would be happy to take that and talk with the Department of Employment, the policy owner in this space, and talk to our staff about how that is applied.

Senator CAMERON: I think in terms of being offered a contract that says you have no hours, then that would be a questionable contract. If you are offered a contract that does not guarantee you a minimum number of hours, that could be zero hours.

Ms Campbell: We would have to look at the contracts and talk with the policy department, in this case the Department of Employment. It could be that this is casual work. We would need to understand what those contracts were.

Senator CAMERON: You see this does raise a very interesting point. We hear much from the government about flexibility for the employer. Well, this would be maximum flexibility for the employer to offer you a job with no guarantee of hours but you actually have a job. You could get one hour or two hours, the following week no hours, the week after that 40 hours, the week after that—that is a real issue.

Ms Campbell: Those issues are probably best addressed by the Department of Employment. But as you were discussing, if someone were to receive work which varied between different hours, of course they report their earnings to us. They are able to access payments, taking into consideration how many hours they have actually worked.

Senator CAMERON: How long is that normally averaged over?

Ms Golightly: Fortnightly.

Senator CAMERON: How does this then work for the work for the dole? How are you integrating this type of flexible rip-off contract with the work for the dole? How would you assess it?

Ms Golightly: What we look at is whether the person has earned enough money to remain eligible for a payment that fortnight. That is the basic point at which we get involved.

Senator CAMERON: What is the test you will be making for forcing someone onto work for the dole? Just take me through that test again.

Ms Golightly: What we do is refer people to their job service provider who then works out what that person needs to do for the mutual obligation.

Senator CAMERON: No, but you have to send them there.

Ms Golightly: Yes, that is correct.

Senator CAMERON: When do you make a determination that a person on one of these zero-hour flexible contracts has to go on work for the dole?

Ms Golightly: It is not based on what contract they are on; it is based on whether they are receiving income support. If they are receiving Newstart allowance then they have mutual obligations, one of which might be work for the dole.

Senator CAMERON: Is it possible they could be on a contract providing so few hours per week that they would still be entitled to welfare benefits?

Ms Golightly: That is correct, Senator, yes.

Senator CAMERON: They are on welfare benefits, they have got a contract and they are on very low hours. Would that person then be classified as a welfare recipient, not in employment and on Work for the Dole?

Ms Golightly: If they are not earning enough to be off benefit then they are classified as being on Newstart, yes.

Senator CAMERON: How much can you earn before you are on Work for the Dole?

Ms Rule: Do you mean how much you can earn before your payment is affected?

Senator CAMERON: Yes. How much can you earn and still receive a welfare benefit? That is the issue.

Ms Rule: If you are a single person with no children on Newstart allowance you can earn up to \$100 a fortnight before your payment starts to be affected, and it tapers off after that.

Senator CAMERON: So you could be working some hours every week and you could be pushed onto Work for the Dole. You will lose the few hours that you are getting and you will be forced onto Work for the Dole; is that right?

Ms Rule: The department is not responsible for deciding who goes onto Work for the Dole. That is determined between the job seeker and the Job Services Australia provider. They will negotiate a series of activities for that person which meets their circumstances. They may negotiate with their provider a set of activities which includes some time for them to do casual work. But that is not an issue for us.

Senator CAMERON: It goes to the job seeker and who else?

Ms Rule: The Job Services Australia provider.

Senator CAMERON: What liaison do they have with you?

Ms Rule: Our role is to refer the job seeker to a provider, to make that connection. We have a secondary role: if the job seeker is non compliant the provider will give us information that we need to investigate.

Senator CAMERON: Are you saying the job seeker gets sent to JSA?

Ms Rule: Yes.

Senator CAMERON: If you do not send the job seeker to the JSA provider, Work for the Dole cannot kick in, can it?

Ms Rule: But we do send them to the provider. It is one of the conditions of—

Senator CAMERON: This is the point I am making. You could have a worker earning up to the limit that still gets them access to a welfare payment. As I read it, they are then sent automatically to the job service provider and that job service provider could then say, 'You are on Work for the Dole.'

Ms Rule: That is right.

Senator CAMERON: What discussions have you had with Social Services on how you should handle this?

Ms Golightly: This is actually a matter for the Department of Employment. They run the Job Services Australia contracts.

Senator CAMERON: You have three agencies involved, really, in Work for the Dole. You have Social Services; DHS, as someone who just makes a call to send someone somewhere; and the Department of Employment.

Ms Golightly: The Department of Employment is responsible for Work for the Dole.

Senator CAMERON: But, really, you cannot kick in Work for the Dole unless you send them there, can you?

Ms Campbell: We send the people on the Newstart benefit to Job Services Australia providers. That is the same arrangement—

Senator CAMERON: So they can have a minimum income under the threshold and you will still send them to the job seeker provider?

Ms Campbell: Yes.

Senator SIEWERT: I want to finish what I started, please. I want to ask about the issue around people being breached. Have you breached anybody for a nil contract?

Ms Golightly: I will have to take that on notice.

Senator SIEWERT: Could you please take that on notice. As it stands from what you have just said, it is possible that someone can be breached for turning down a nil-hours contract.

Ms Golightly: No, I said that there was a difference between turning down a contract for work and something that I have not heard of before.

Senator SIEWERT: Quite frankly, I am surprised that you have not heard of that because it is becoming a thing in the workplace. Please take on notice then, a nil-hours contract and whether any contract that says nil hours counts as an offer of employment even though there is no guarantee of work.

Ms Golightly: We will check that with the policy agency.

Senator SIEWERT: On top of that, if there is a nil-hours contract and you count that as a contract, how do you work out whether there is a guarantee of work or not?

Ms Campbell: We will take on notice for the purposes of the breaching as you have asked. We generally focus on earned income when it comes to paying the payments.

Senator SIEWERT: Yes, but you are responsible for looking at the compliance, are you not, and dealing with compliance?

Ms Campbell: Yes, and that is what we will take on notice.

Senator SIEWERT: Compliance clearly sits with you.

Ms Golightly: We would seek advice from the policy agency, though, if there were some doubt about whether something met the definition of a job offer.

Senator SIEWERT: When you take that on notice, could you also see if you have breached anyone. I think you will find that you have. If you have, can you also then take on notice whether you consulted DSS about—

Ms Campbell: It is the Department of Employment.

Senator SIEWERT: The Department of Employment—that counts as policy with them rather than with the DHS.

Ms Campbell: Policy is with Employment.

Senator SIEWERT: Could you please take on notice whether you did consult them before any action was taken.

Ms Campbell: Sure, Senator. If you could provide us with some details about these contracts that would be very useful. Whether or not it is a nil and guarantee or just the nature—is this a casual contract that we are talking about?

Senator SIEWERT: I will find that information. It is a tricky situation because on some of the occasions I understand why—they are trying to protect the workers, as opposed to other contracts where maybe it is not about that. The fact is that we need to know whether people are going to be breached over rejecting contracts that in effect offer nil hours.

Ms Campbell: Or nil guaranteed hours.

Senator SIEWERT: I think this is where the nitty-gritty is. It is very confusing for people whether it is nil guarantee or nil, and how you work it out. Thank you.

CHAIR: Let us go to disability support pension.

Senator CAMERON: Secretary, as part of the measure of DSP review of recipients aged under 35 years, the department's portfolio budget statement on page 27 shows an increase in departmental funding in program 1.1 of \$21 million over three years. How many additional staff will the department receive?

Ms Golightly: I can get that for you fairly quickly. I just do not have that in this folder.

Ms Campbell: We can give you the dollar amounts.

Senator CAMERON: Is this the dollar amount on staff?

Ms Campbell: This is the dollar amount for all activities run by DHS with regard to these measures. We will just get the staff numbers for you, the exact number of staff.

Senator CAMERON: I want to try to break it down. I would like to know how many additional staff. You can do staff and dollar amounts on that. I would like to know how much it is costing, what the dollar amount is and what classifications of staff you will be engaging.

Ms Campbell: Or redirecting from other parts of the business. We would, of course, seek to use other staff who may not be required in other elements of the department in these roles.

Senator CAMERON: I am asking for additional staff in this area plus whether there will be a general increase in staffing as a result of this.

Ms Campbell: As a result of the budget as a whole there is a general increase in staffing of 161 ASL. There are unders and overs right across the department, but we can give you the exact details for this measure of the staff.

Ms Golightly: Which particular DSP one was it?

Senator CAMERON: It was the review for recipients aged under 35 years.

Ms Golightly: There are two that are under 35s, that is why I am just checking. The review of DSP recipients against new impairment tables measure, we have funding for 3.2 staff this year to get ready, then 74.6 staff next year in 2014-15 and in 2015-16 there is 61.9 staff and that is the final year.

Senator CAMERON: Will you also be paying for external staff as part of this process of reviewing the recipients?

Ms Golightly: We have qualified staff internally to the department. I am not expecting that we would be using external staff.

Senator CAMERON: How much will be spent on IT computer system changes to deal with this budget allocation?

Ms Golightly: We have \$4.6 million roughly for ICT over the three years that I mentioned.

Senator CAMERON: Do you have how the \$4.6 million will be allocated over the three years?

Ms Golightly: That was for ICT? Sorry, for each year?

Senator CAMERON: Yes, each year.

Ms Golightly: In 2014-15, it is \$3.7 million—I am rounding here. In 2015-16 it is \$880,000. Sorry, it is only in those two years.

Senator CAMERON: I might get you on notice to provide me details of what type of ICT investments are being made.

Ms Golightly: It would be mainly a software investment if that is the sort of thing you are looking for.

Senator CAMERON: Yes. Is that software for ISIS?

Ms Golightly: Yes.

Senator CAMERON: So we are being locked more into ISIS because of these changes?

Ms Campbell: To make any changes to payments we need to adjust—

Senator CAMERON: You are still locked into the ISIS?

Ms Campbell: It is not that we just adjust ISIS; we have to make changes to ISIS. We have nothing else.

Senator CAMERON: So is there any money being spent on communication activities and, if so, how much?

Ms Golightly: There is a small amount. In one year there is \$127,000 in the 2014-15 year.

Senator CAMERON: That is it?

Ms Golightly: That is it.

Senator CAMERON: And what is that for? What are you going to use that for?

Ms Golightly: I would imagine that is for letters to the people being reviewed to advise them of when to come in and what to bring with them, that sort of thing.

Senator CAMERON: So that is 127,000 letters. You do not expect any other communication?

Ms Golightly: What we usually do is do something on the website and we may have other ancillary activities like that.

Senator CAMERON: How many total Centrelink staff are going to be involved in these reviews? I know you are saying that you have 74.6 staff in 2014-15, but is that the total amount?

Ms Golightly: Yes.

Senator CAMERON: For 500,000 is what I have seen.

Ms Golightly: No.

Senator CAMERON: Can I ask you a broader question. How many reviews are you going to undertake, and give me that on a year-by-year basis?

Ms Golightly: It is in the order of 28,000 customers.

Senator CAMERON: So that is 28,000 reviews. Is that over the forward estimates?

Ms Golightly: No, that is over about a 12- to 18-month period.

Senator CAMERON: Okay, and what about the period after that? That is all you are doing—28,000.

Ms Golightly: Yes. This is a measure where they will be reviewed and once we get through the 28,000, we have done that measure.

Senator CAMERON: Is that every DSP recipient under 35 years of age? That 28,000: is that the numbers?

Ms Golightly: No.

Senator CAMERON: Except those that are manifestly unable to work.

Ms Golightly: It is except those, and it is also except those who have less than eight hours work capacity, and it is confined to that group that have not been reviewed against these tables before. So it is a subset.

Senator CAMERON: Are the tables changing?

Ms Golightly: The tables changed a couple of years ago.

Senator CAMERON: Is there any view that the tables will change again?

Ms Golightly: We are not aware of any. That is a question for DSS.

Senator CAMERON: What type of staff will be undertaking the reviews and what qualifications will they have?

Mr Tidswell: You asked a question about the numbers of staff across our assessment service function. We have got about 560 full-time equivalent staff across the country. When you asked about the disciplines, we have got about 442 of those with professional disciplines: psychologist, social worker, registered nurse, occupational therapist, rehab counsellor, exercise physiologist, physiotherapist. It is a full suite of allied health professionals, with the dominant staff team being psychologists.

Senator CAMERON: The psychologists will be doing the bulk of the work, will they?

Mr Tidswell: About 50 per cent of that total staff number based around the country do that work—a range of assessments—every single day, and they will be the staff doing the work.

Senator CAMERON: So the bulk of these reviews are on people with psychological or mental health issues. Is that right?

Mr Tidswell: I am not sure about that.

Ms Campbell: I think Mr Tidswell was talking about the break-up of those assessment services. How we do those assessments would depend, case-by-case, on the customer that presents.

Senator CAMERON: Do you know how many of these 28,000 customers have mental health issues that result in a DSP payment?

Ms Golightly: No. We may be able to interrogate our data. But I would have to check that.

Senator CAMERON: Could you provide that on notice.

Ms Golightly: It would depend. We would have to look at it.

Ms Campbell: The system does not have a mechanism. There is no field.

Ms Golightly: That is right. A number of disabilities could be recorded, and whether it is the primary one or not, we—

Senator CAMERON: So you are going to do this review over a maximum of 18 months?

Ms Golightly: Yes, 12 to 18 months.

Senator CAMERON: That is a maximum of 18 months. So you would be able to identify these individuals. You have to send letters to them. You would then know why they are receiving a benefit, would you not?

Ms Campbell: But since the time they were originally assessed, we would need to determine what position they are in now, whether they still have the same issue or whether there were other issues—

Senator CAMERON: But what I am asking is: what was their original assessment? That is what I am asking.

Ms Golightly: And we can look into whether we can track the primary reason they were given DSP.

Senator CAMERON: I would hope you could, Ms Golightly, because if they are there now, they are there for a reason, and you must have a documented reason.

Ms Campbell: Indeed, senator, but it is, potentially, for each individual case much more complex than that. Without wanting to try and break down examples across the country, you can imagine that you have individuals who have a multiplicity of issues, one of which may be the one to which you have just pointed: a mental health issue. But it could be associated with a physical disability. It could be associated with an accident that has caused a disability. So it is not a simple interrogation of saying how many are in that column and how many are in this column. It does not work that way.

Senator CAMERON: No, that is fine. But you could do the interrogation. You are going to write to them. The department is going to write to these individuals. You are going to look at their records. You must know why they are receiving disability support pension and whether that is for a multiplicity of reasons or whether it is for one individual reason.

Senator Payne: We will have a look at the material that is there and see what it is possible to extract for you on notice.

Senator CAMERON: Thank you. Where will the staff who are going to be doing this be located? Are they going to be all over the country?

Mr Tidswell: The staff are all over Australia and we do a combination of mostly face to face and phone assessments, and we also do some video-link assessments, which helps us to get connected to remote communities.

Senator CAMERON: I was at Collie a few months ago in Western Australia. The complaint that I got about the DHS there was that people were being taken to Bunbury, I think it was, for face-to-face interrogation—

Mr Tidswell: They have always had to do their assessment work at Bunbury—always.

Senator CAMERON: Just let me finish, will you. They were being taken to Bunbury. The local DHS had now been set up in the Indigenous community area. People had come from DHS to the Indigenous co-op with the skills of DHS personnel. They actually had done face to face in their previous employment, but people had to go to Bunbury and there was very poor public transport. What happens in a situation like this?

Ms Campbell: When you say 'DHS assessment', I think in that case they were not these types of assessments. They were discussions about benefits and the like, but not this more detailed review function. These, as we discussed, require different skills in our staffing and they are not something that every staff member has. We talked about the psychologists and that. So often it is necessary to ensure that we match the right skill base to the customer that we are assessing. Sometimes we will seek to do video in order to be most convenient and sometimes some people need to travel a little to get to those services.

Senator CAMERON: Because the local state member has raised this strongly with me—that that is one of the big complaints he gets. Would these psychologists travel, say, to Collie or other regions and go to the clients instead of the client being brought to them?

Ms Campbell: Sometimes we need to again assess this on a case by case basis in terms of what is the best way to get the best amount of productivity from these assessors. Sometimes customers travel to larger cities to do their shopping and the like, and we work out what is the most convenient way of doing it. But we do not have an office in every location in Australia.

Senator CAMERON: The Centrelink customers that I met were not heading off to Bunbury to spend money; they were on \$35 a day and their complaint to me was they could not afford to go there, never mind get shopping. So that is the issue I am raising. I do not want to be creating more hardship for these individual clients.

Mr Tidswell: In that situation, we never did that intensive level of work in Collie. It was always a light-touch service offer and we have moved it from 20 hours of staff paid time employed by the department to an agent service providing 30 hours of contact and work. The customers would always go to Bunbury for their new claim

finalisations and for their more detailed assessment work and activity. For some, though, we will do a phone assessment. Over time, I think in situations like Collie we will take advantage of new technology and video technology to do more of that work in that virtual way. That is the approach and direction.

Senator SIEWERT: What is the maximum distance that you expect people to travel for these sorts of more regular contacts and also for the assessment?

Mr Tidswell: I do not think we have an exact number. As we work through all of our agents, access points and service centres, we try to make sure that there is a reasonable level of ability for people to make contact with us. In some parts of the country, as you well know, there are very isolated townships and communities and so it is difficult for us. Sometimes we do arrange visiting services where we go to those townships and communities. Our mobile service officers travel the country regularly to go to those small communities and isolated townships where the population is quite low and quite scarce. We are conscious of that. Our aim, though, is to do more and more of the work in the digital space.

Senator SIEWERT: Could you take on notice how many of the customers who receive DSP that you are going to reassess are in the city versus the regions?

Ms Campbell: We will take on notice.

Senator CAMERON: I do not suppose there would be a great deal in either the Treasurer or the Prime Minister's street, but there might be plenty in Mt Druitt and Penrith area because that is where people are getting hammered by these changes. In Penrith, where you have got many thousands of people that might come under these reviews, will there be specific—

Mr Tidswell: We use the staff in the assessment service function as a virtual team and we look at the work—

Senator CAMERON: A virtual team?

Mr Tidswell: A virtual team of staff available to do work. One of our approaches is to maximise their appointment schedules on any given day, and sometimes that will be a mixture of face-to-face work and can be phone work. That gives us the ability to get on top of the peaks and troughs and the demand across the country.

Senator CAMERON: How many of these professionals—

CHAIR: Ms Campbell was going to add to that answer.

Senator CAMERON: Sorry.

Ms Campbell: The assessment team does not just sit in their office. They will move to different offices to deal with these peaks and troughs, particularly in areas such as western Sydney. They can move depending on where the appointments are and they can move across offices.

Senator CAMERON: How many reviews will take place in Penrith?

Ms Campbell: I do not think we would have that information with us; we can take that on notice.

Senator CAMERON: Let me know how many reviews are taking place in Penrith. Can you do it by seat? Can you do it for Lindsay?

Ms Campbell: We can take the question on notice and see what we can get out of ISIS.

Senator CAMERON: See if you can do it for Lindsay.

Senator Payne: If we can do it by service centre, I think, is probably a logical approach for the department.

Senator CAMERON: So the service centre within Lindsay?

Senator Payne: It is in Penrith.

Senator CAMERON: Within the seat of Lindsay.

Senator Payne: Yes.

Senator CAMERON: If you could do the numbers in the service centre, where that service centre would be and also the numbers in the Prime Minister's seat and in the Treasurer's seat.

Ms Campbell: This process is we have to go through the entire cohort and work out who is going to meet these eligibility requirements and then we have got to look through. We have estimated it is about 28,000, but I do not think we have got the complete list of 28,000 names at the moment. We will go through that process but we will take his questions on notice to see what we can get.

Senator CAMERON: Did Centrelink or DHS provide any advice to DSS, or a central agency, in the preparation of this measure regarding the extent or limits of its powers to undertake medical reviews on DSP recipients?

Ms Campbell: As part of the budget process, we provide advice to a variety of agencies on implementation of options that lead to become measures.

Senator CAMERON: What is the extent or limit of your powers to undertake medical reviews on DSP recipients?

Ms Campbell: When you say 'the extent of our powers' do you mean our capability?

Senator CAMERON: What do you have? Do you have capabilities or do you have powers? You have got powers; you can direct people to do it.

Ms Campbell: Are you talking about our staff capability?

Senator CAMERON: I am talking about: what legislative basis do you have to pull them in to do this?

Ms Golightly: As you point out, we do have power to ask people to come in for their review under the Social Security Act. We do that now.

Senator CAMERON: Maybe if you can just give me details of those powers, on notice if you would like. I want to come back to work for the dole.

CHAIR: I think there are other questions on DSP.

Senator SIEWERT: When people are reassessed, they may stay on DSP, but they will then be subject to the new compliance regime, won't they?

Ms Golightly: Yes.

Senator SIEWERT: What is the process from there? Once they have been reassessed, do they then go back to their JSA or DES—because they can actually be in either system—and the new process is explained to them? Some of these people will already have gone through the process of getting their EPP—

Ms Golightly: Yes, or program of support.

Senator SIEWERT: Do they have to redo that, or do the new compliance measures just kick in on what they have already done?

Ms Golightly: I think the details are being worked out, but basically it is envisaged that the activities would be looked at to see that they are still suitable. That would be a normal activity anyway. We do not run the DES or JSA providers so that may be a question for DSS.

Senator SIEWERT: But you do then have to do the compliance—

Ms Golightly: If the provider, whether it is a DES provider or a JSA provider—as is the case now—feels there is a problem and someone is not complying, then they let us know and we take it from there.

Senator SIEWERT: With the compliance measures that will apply to them, if they do not meet their activities, will that be an eight weeks noncompliance period?

Ms Golightly: For people on DSP, their payment can be suspended until they recommence that activity.

Senator SIEWERT: It is not the eight weeks that applies to Newstart?

Ms Golightly: It is different to the job seeker compliance model.

Senator SIEWERT: Even with the new approach of the noncompliance requirements? It is just until they do not re-engage? There is no consideration of the eight weeks kicking in?

Ms Beath: This is probably a matter for DSS because they are still working out the exact policy in relation to this. At the moment, it is just suspension.

Senator CAMERON: There is a lot of working out going on.

Senator SIEWERT: But there is the potential that it could change over to eight weeks? Is that what I would take from that comment?

Ms Beath: No, I think it is still being worked on. I do not think that means that it will be swapped. That is not what I was saying. It is still being developed.

Senator SIEWERT: For the time being, it is until they re-engage?

Ms Beath: Yes.

Senator SIEWERT: Is the process your responsibility? Once they are suspended, you are the body that is then responsible for how they re-engage? What do you do? Do you get something from their DES or their JSA saying this person has not complied?

Ms Golightly: At the moment, they would then ring us to make their appointment with their provider and it goes from there.

Senator SIEWERT: But you are responsible for saying, 'This is how you can re-engage'?

Ms Golightly: Yes. A provider would explain that too, if they are talking to their provider.

Senator SIEWERT: Yes, but once they are not engaged, it becomes a compliance measure and then it is back to you.

Ms Golightly: Yes, we would explain to them what they need to do to have their payment restarted.

Senator CAMERON: Secretary, in the 2012-12 annual report on page 3 you outline the issues in managing the department and you say:

Through this time of change, we are ensuring that our governance remains sound and that we fulfil our outcome, as expressed in the *Portfolio Budget Statements 2012–13*, to:

Support individuals, families and communities to achieve greater self-sufficiency; through the delivery of policy advice and high quality accessible social, health and child support services and other payments; and support providers and businesses through convenient and efficient service delivery.

Has anything changed in that portfolio statement?

Ms Campbell: I am just going to compare the one that we put in the portfolio budget statement. And I am looking for the person who is responsible for it, but they are not here. I think the words are exactly the same.

Senator CAMERON: So that means that you are there to support individuals, families and communities—and you are really the face of the government for many, many millions of Australians. How many of your costumers do you think you will be referring to the JSA providers on work for the dole?

Ms Rule: The system is demand driven, so the number of job seekers can move around. We refer people to JSA providers in accordance with the number of people that are on payment at any point in time.

Senator CAMERON: But you must have some assessment. You have to run your organisation. Have you heard the figure 500,000?

Ms Rule: So for example, at the moment there are around 695,000 people on Newstart allowance.

Senator CAMERON: There are 695,000 on Newstart? And there would be more people on Newstart in Penrith than there would be in the northern suburbs of Sydney?

Ms Campbell: We do not have the profile with us at the moment and—

Senator CAMERON: You do not have to have a profile. You would know these things, would you not?

Ms Campbell: We have officers in locations where we are likely to have costumers.

Senator CAMERON: There is likely to be more people forced onto work for the dole in Penrith, Mount Druitt and the western suburbs than there would be in the northern suburbs of Sydney, would there not?

Ms Campbell: We do not have with us the actual locations. We can talk to you about global numbers of people likely to be accessing Newstart allowance.

Senator CAMERON: So why can you not just tell me the obvious in these things? No, you cannot do that?

Ms Campbell: You are asking for actual numbers of unemployed people.

Senator CAMERON: No, I am asking you in broad terms. I am simply saying that you would have to focus your work on this referral process more in the western suburbs of Sydney than you would in the Prime Minister's seat or the Treasurer's seat, would you not?

Ms Campbell: We look through the entire country of where we are likely to have need for customer services. That is where we put our officers and that is where we allocate staff to. Unfortunately, I do not have with me the profile of where we expect unemployed people, the actual numbers, in different locations around Australia.

Senator CAMERON: Why have you not got it with you?

Ms Campbell: Well I do not have it and I will take it on notice.

Senator CAMERON: I am just surprised you do not have it with you because that is one of the most controversial issues in the public domain, and you do not have it with you.

Ms Campbell: I am facing these questions from a service delivery perspective. My understanding of your question is about location of unemployment, and I think that is something best in the employment portfolio.

Senator CAMERON: No, it is service delivery. You have to refer people who are going to be subject to work for the dole to the JSA provider; that is what you do. So I am simply saying to you there will be more referrals in the western suburbs than there will be in the Prime Minister's seat or the Treasurer's seat, will there not?

CHAIR: I think we might take that as a comment, Senator Cameron. Do you have a question?

Senator CAMERON: It is not a comment; I am asking a question. I am just trying to get a response; where are the greatest numbers in Sydney?

Ms Campbell: Can I explain to you how we do these referrals? That might assist you in how we actually deliver the service.

Senator CAMERON: Well let us see how you do them, yes.

Ms Campbell: We actually use a phone service as the first way of dealing with unemployed people accessing Newstart.

Ms Golightly: As the secretary has just said, people who need to be referred to a provider can be referred on the phone. So therefore the person can be anywhere in Australia, and our staff member answering can be anywhere in Australia.

Senator CAMERON: But you would expect, surely, the bulk of the referrals—it does not matter where your person is sitting—will be in the western suburbs of Sydney when we talk about Sydney. Is that correct, Ms Golightly?

Ms Campbell: I do not have those numbers with me, Senator. I can take on notice where we have seen trends for Newstart claims, but I do not have that with me.

Senator CAMERON: But it is not just Newstart claims; it is existing Newstart recipients. You know where the Newstart recipients are in Sydney, don't you?

Ms Campbell: I do not have those numbers with me but I can take that on notice.

Senator CAMERON: Are there any staff here with those numbers? Is there no-one here who can tell me numbers? Here we have the whole of DHS at our beck and call and we cannot get a simple response on how many Newstart recipients are in Sydney. You have got to be joking!

Ms Campbell: We can see whether we can find a number for how many there are on Newstart in New South Wales.

Senator CAMERON: But you can break it down further than that, can't you?

Ms Campbell: We can break it down by service centre but, as I have said, I do not have that information with me. I am happy to take it on notice.

Senator CAMERON: So there is no-one here who thought you might get a question on Newstart and you might get a question on Work for the Dole and you might get a question on how many Newstart recipients are in certain areas? You actually came here thinking that would not happen, did you, Secretary?

Ms Campbell: Senator, I am happy to take the question on notice.

Senator CAMERON: What an absolute joke! Let's come back to Penrith. You cannot tell me how many Newstart recipients are in the Penrith region?

Ms Campbell: We do not have that information with us. I still do not have that information with me, Senator. I can take the question on notice.

Senator CAMERON: Can I propose that in future, Secretary, when you come to Senate estimates you come prepared for questions—

CHAIR: Senator Cameron, that is not necessary. Please ask a question.

Senator CAMERON: I am asking a question. Can you make sure that you come prepared for issues like this? This will be an ongoing issue for Senate estimates, and I would like you to come here with appropriate information so that we can inquire effectively.

Senator Payne: Senator, thank you very much for that suggestion. As you can imagine, you are not the only senator able to ask questions on this matter.

Senator CAMERON: That is why I thought the information would be here.

Senator Payne: It is not just a matter of being able to tell you what exists in one part of Sydney or another but of whether, for example, Senator Siewert is minded to ask the officers in relation to Western Australia or Senator Peris in relation to the Northern Territory. That level of detail is not with us today. We will bring that level of

detail and we will provide it on notice in relation to these questions. Or you could check the internet—one or the other.

Senator CAMERON: Computers and spreadsheets are really helpful things. Ms Golightly, is \$500,000 the figure that you would be working towards? That is the public figure I have seen.

Ms Golightly: For what, Senator?

Senator CAMERON: For people being referred to JSA providers?

Ms Golightly: No, Senator.

Senator CAMERON: What is the figure you think would be referred to JSA providers to access Work for the Dole?

Ms Golightly: If you are referring to the measure for job seekers under 30, the figures we have got are: for 2014-15, roughly, \$104,000; for 2015-16 in the order of \$215,000; for 2016-17 in the order of nearly \$216,000; and for 2017-18 in the order of \$204,600.

Senator CAMERON: So this year it is \$104,000.

Ms Golightly: For 2014-15 it is \$104,000—this coming year, yes.

Senator CAMERON: You will simply refer that. That is the total. What do you tell the individual being referred when they come? They front up at the Penrith Centrelink office. What does your officer tell them?

Ms Golightly: If they were claiming for the first time, we would explain that new claim process, but also go through with them what their obligations are and what the support mechanisms are, which would be the referral to JSA.

Senator CAMERON: So this is not just new job seekers: this is existing as well.

Ms Golightly: Yes.

Senator CAMERON: That is existing as well. So they front up to Penrith. That would be one of your busy areas. They will go, 'Okay, I want to claim Newstart allowance.' You say, 'I am referring you to a JSA provider.' Is that what you do? That is it?

Ms Golightly: We would explain to them the process and documents and eligibility criteria they need for their claim and help them through that process. If they are assessed and considered to be eligible for Newstart, we would explain to them what the process is from there on and what they have to do, and that would include going to the JSA.

Senator CAMERON: What if they say to you, 'Look, I'm sleeping on the street. I just need money. I've got no food'? What do you do?

Ms Golightly: Our staff are trained to handle people who might need the immediate assistance of other services as well as what we can do for them. So they would take them—

Senator CAMERON: What are the other services?

Ms Golightly: For example, there might be homelessness services, there might be mental health services, we have got social workers on call—it could be a range of things.

Senator CAMERON: Is a social worker going to dip into their own pocket and give them money for food? What is the issue there? They go to charity, really, don't they? Do you refer them to charities?

Ms Golightly: That could be one of the options.

Senator CAMERON: Is that a big option?

Ms Golightly: It is one of the mix of options, depending on what is needed by that customer.

Senator CAMERON: What discussions have you had in Penrith and with what charities? Have you had any?

Ms Golightly: No, senator, I have not.

Senator CAMERON: I do not mean you personally. I am asking about the department.

Ms Golightly: We have not had any.

Senator CAMERON: So you have not had any discussions with any charities.

Ms Golightly: That is not what I said, senator.

CHAIR: Senator Cameron, can you just let Ms Golightly finish her answer. I do not think she had finished explaining what she meant.

Ms Golightly: What I meant was we have not had any discussion with charities in Penrith that I know of. There may have been. We talk to local people and community services every day.

Senator CAMERON: So you talk to them every day on the basis of the existing legislation, and that means some people go to charity. That is accepted. This is a whole new ball game. People could be with no money and no support for six months—is that right?—under this change.

Ms Golightly: It may be up to 6 months.

Senator CAMERON: But it could be up to 11 months as well, couldn't it?

Ms Campbell: That would require them to have had liquid assets, which means that for a period of that duration they would have had significant liquid assets.

Senator CAMERON: So your officers sitting in Penrith have got a person that comes in. It could be a wife who has been subject to abuse and who says, 'Look, I've had to leave home. I've got absolutely no money.' Do they get sent to a JSA provider?

Ms Golightly: It would depend what payment they were receiving at the time.

Senator CAMERON: What if they were receiving a payment and they were applying for Newstart?

Ms Golightly: We also have other benefits available for people in that situation.

Senator CAMERON: If they were applying for other benefits, would they then be sent to work for the dole? Is there any welfare payment?

Ms Campbell: It would depend on the case. It would depend on their circumstances and if there were dependent children. Each customer is assessed individually on their circumstances.

Senator CAMERON: Let me ask you about a specific customer who comes in. The customer has got no dependent children. She has been in a married relationship for 20 years. She is in her early 50s. The relationship goes bad. There is violence against the individual. She goes, 'I'm out of here. I need some support. I want Newstart. I am going to apply for Newstart.' Does that individual then get sent to a JSA provider?

Ms Campbell: In this case, they would be assessed to determine—

Ms Golightly: That is right, which benefit is best.

Ms Campbell: which is the best benefit. And if it was Newstart they would be referred to a jobs services provider.

Senator CAMERON: So if she said to the job services provider that you cannot give her any immediate support, can you?

Ms Campbell: Yes.

Senator CAMERON: What can you give her?

Ms Campbell: Well, if she was eligible for Newstart she would receive Newstart. She is not under 30.

Senator CAMERON: So what if that individual is under 30?

Ms Campbell: Well, then she would be referred to the job service provider.

Senator CAMERON: Okay, so you have a young woman in Penrith, under 30, in a violent relationship, tries to get out of the relationship, says, 'I want to try to get a job. I want to set up to get clear of this terrible situation I am in.' She fronts to Penrith Centrelink, says, 'I want to get Newstart.' What do you say to her?

Ms Golightly: We would do a number of things, Senator. If the person was in distress, we would apply our normal response to that and provide whatever support we could to that person.

Ms Campbell: Which includes social workers.

Ms Golightly: Which includes social workers. For people who are particularly in domestic violence situations, we have something called a crisis payment that they may be eligible for.

Senator CAMERON: How long does that last for?

Ms Golightly: That is a one off payment.

Senator CAMERON: So how much is it?

Ms Rule: It is equal to one week of the relevant benefit that they would otherwise be eligible for.

Senator CAMERON: So Newstart, how much is that for the week?

Ms Golightly: It is roughly, if she is single, in the order of \$400 or \$500.

Ms Rule: \$542.90 is the full amount.

Senator CAMERON: So she can get \$500. She has left everything, she has walked out of a violent relationship, she comes to you and says, 'I want to try and get a job, I'm applying for Newstart.' You say, 'Here's \$500. That's what we can do for you now.' That gives her a couple of nights, probably, in a motel somewhere and lets her buy some food. Then you send her to JSA and they could then say, 'You've got to do work for the dole.' Is that correct?

Ms Golightly: No, because there would be also other assessments about whether Newstart was actually the right benefit for that customer, on the circumstances. Even if it is Newstart, if she falls into one of the exception categories, she may not be caught up in this six-month waiting period.

Senator CAMERON: And what is the exception category?

Ms Golightly: There are a number. If she were considered to be highly disadvantaged in Job Services Australia terms, it is categorised as a stream 3 or 4 participant. They are excluded from this measure.

Senator CAMERON: And how do you get into stream 3 and 4?

Ms Golightly: So we do an assessment against the job seeker classification index, JSCI—you may have heard the Department of Employment speak of that. That is one set of exclusions. Another set is if you are a principal carer, for example, or if you only have partial capacity to work—there are quite a number there.

Senator CAMERON: Okay, so it is pretty complex really. You would have to work all this through, but there is the possibility that this young women in Penrith who has been subject to family violence could end up on work for the dole? That is a possibility, is it not?

Ms Campbell: In this example, if she was assessed under the JSCI as stream 1 or 2, she would be referred to the jobs service provider.

Senator CAMERON: Yes, okay. So she goes on work for the dole, then she has no payments.

Ms Golightly: If she does not meet the exclusion categories I just mentioned—

Senator CAMERON: She has got no payments.

Ms Golightly: then the other thing we need to assess is if she has had recent work experience, because the waiting period can be discounted by that and so she may—

Senator CAMERON: She has not had work experience, she has been a family relationship, she is dependent on her husband as many, many women are in Penrith—

Ms Golightly: So she is probably the principal carer.

Senator CAMERON: So she has no work experience, she just wants to get a job.

Ms Golightly: Has she got children?

Senator CAMERON: No children. She is married but she is getting out of a violent relationship. If she is in stream 1 and 2 she is on work for the dole. She then gets no money. I think we have established that she could be on work for the dole.

Ms Golightly: No. She is referred to the Job Services Australia provider.

Senator CAMERON: Then Job Services Australia could place her on work for the dole?

Ms Golightly: Not in that waiting period. During the waiting period they can ask her to do activities that would assist her in getting a job, so job search activities and maybe some other things.

Senator CAMERON: Is this the earn or learn, is it?

Ms Campbell: She could take up a learning requirement. She could enrol in a course.

Senator CAMERON: But she is on the street. She has got nothing. She has a plastic bag full of what she could grab. What does she do then? You are the face for these people. You are the first stop. She has a plastic bag full of her gear, all that she could take.

Ms Campbell: We would work with other entities—in this example, in the Penrith area.

Senator CAMERON: Charities?

Ms Campbell: We would work with state government about housing and other referrals which may be applicable to her, as we do now. This is not different from what we do now.

Senator CAMERON: She has no money other than maybe a payment of one week's Newstart. She has a plastic bag. She is in stream 1 and 2. You refer her to a jobs provider.

Ms Campbell: And they work with her to get a job.

Senator CAMERON: And they will help to get a job, will they?

Ms Campbell: They will work with her to get a job.

Senator CAMERON: They will help her to get a job. She comes back to you and says, 'I cannot get a job. I need more support.' You just say, 'Sorry, I cannot help you.'

Mr Tidswell: One of the things we do in this situation, and unfortunately this situation does occur every day across our service centres—

Senator CAMERON: Every day this situation comes up.

Mr Tidswell: Our social workers will work very hard. They know the local arrangements and connections, they work with the state government and they work with shelters. The primary purpose here would provide a safety net for that individual and make sure that other elements were in place—

Senator CAMERON: What if they cannot do that? There are people living in motels in Penrith. You know that. In Penrith people are doing it tough. This woman has a plastic bag full of her clothes, she is fleeing a violent relationship, she is in stream 1 or stream 2, she has to earn or learn or she gets no money and you will help her get charity. You can help get charity, can you not?

Ms Campbell: We could offer crisis payment referrals. Ms Golightly can talk about, if it was a circumstance like that, what might be the likely outcome of the JSCI.

Ms Golightly: It is highly unlikely that she would be stream 1 or 2 because the person that you are describing to me and other people here is someone who does not sound work-ready to me. If someone is not work-ready then they are very unlikely to be in stream 1 or 2.

Ms Campbell: In your example has this person under 30 never worked?

Senator CAMERON: No, she has worked. But she has been dependent on her husband and has not worked recently.

Ms Campbell: If she has worked, we would take into consideration how many years she has worked for because of the sliding scale and the discount of the waiting period.

Senator CAMERON: What if she has not worked for 10 years?

Senator KROGER: If she has not worked for 10 years and she is under 30 and she has been married: I think that what you are putting is—

Senator CAMERON: I am not asking you.

Senator KROGER: But you are not listening to—

Senator CAMERON: I am not asking you.

Senator KROGER: the responses you have been given.

Senator CAMERON: If I were looking for empathy, Senator Kroger, you would be the last person I would come to.

Senator KROGER: It goes to show how little you know.

CHAIR: Senator Cameron, you have had almost 30 minutes on this topic. We are moving on to Senator Siewert in two minutes.

Senator CAMERON: I want to ask one last question and I am sure Senator Siewert will let me finish this. What happens to a young person who has been referred to the JSA provider, is definitely in stream 1 or 2, is on work for the dole, gets sent to a job—and I described this to DSS, and I am sure someone was listening—to paint the local community hall, as was the example used by the junior minister, is concerned that their health and safety are at risk, because there is a JSA provider and there could be 3,600 placements in the Penrith area alone. They say, 'I can't do that because it is unsafe. I'm just not doing it.' They come back to you: what happens?

Ms Golightly: They would go to their JSA provider first and discuss the situation with them.

Senator CAMERON: But what if the JSA provider says to them, 'We think it's safe. You do it'?

Ms Golightly: This is really a matter for the Department of Employment, because they are running Work for the Dole and the compliance regime.

Senator CAMERON: But they have come to you, because you are the face of government.

Ms Golightly: Yes.

Senator CAMERON: They have come to you and they say, 'Look, I can't do it. I want to go back on Newstart because they have put me on an unsafe job. I can't do it.'

Ms Golightly: Sorry, if they are doing Work for the Dole they are on payment. They will already be receiving Newstart.

Senator CAMERON: But if the JSA provider says, 'Cut them off because they have walked off the job,' and they genuinely believe that it is unsafe—what happens there?

Ms Golightly: Any customer, including the ones you are talking about, can always ask for a review of that decision, and we would look into the circumstances around the decision.

Senator CAMERON: Would you send someone out to that job that they are on to assess whether the job is safe or not?

Ms Golightly: We would not. We would probably talk to the Department of Employment, which is running the Work for the Dole program.

Senator CAMERON: So you would need to engage with the Department of Employment?

Ms Golightly: Yes.

Senator CAMERON: And the Department of Employment is the same department that looks after the JSA, isn't it?

Ms Golightly: That is correct.

Senator CAMERON: So you are asking that department to look at an allegation against the provider—it is a self-assessment, basically? Is that correct?

Ms Golightly: All I said is that that would be the first port of call. As the people running the contract they would need to look into the contract.

Senator CAMERON: If the JSA provider says to you, 'This person has worked off—cut the dole.' Would you cut Newstart right away?

Ms Golightly: We would suspend their payment.

Senator CAMERON: You would suspend them immediately?

Ms Golightly: Yes.

Senator CAMERON: Then that person would be with absolutely no money and not be able to pay for any accommodation. They would have no money—is that the situation?

Ms Golightly: I am not sure, Senator. Again, we would have to look at the circumstances of the particular customer. For example, they may be eligible for rent assistance and continue to get that.

Ms Campbell: They may have dependent children, they may have family tax benefit—

Senator CAMERON: They may—but if they have not? This is focused on the 'dole bludger'. This is what has been described in the Murdoch press as the 'dole bludger'. Young people, under 30 and single. That is what I am looking at here. And I do not describe them as 'dole bludgers'—the Murdoch press do. But you are going to face this day in and day out. You are going to face this as a practical problem.

Ms Campbell: We do this now.

Senator CAMERON: Yes, but you do not do it to the extent of 500,000—

Ms Campbell: It is not 500,000—

Senator CAMERON: Well, it is close to it if you take the two years—

Senator KROGER: They just told you: it is just over 100,000!

Senator CAMERON: If I was looking for any information or common sense, I would not ask you!

Senator KROGER: But, Senator Cameron, you are not listening to the answers They have just said that it is just over 100,000—

Senator CAMERON: Chair—

Senator KROGER: Senator Cameron, of all places—

CHAIR: Last question, Senator Cameron.

Senator KROGER: at this point in time to try to re-prosecute the same thing.

Senator CAMERON: What discussions have you had, either at the peak level or the local level with charities, to deal with this practical position that people will find themselves in? Mr Tidswell has said that you deal with this day in, day out. But there is going to be a bigger influx. People will be coming off Newstart—

CHAIR: Senator, I think you have asked the question.

Senator CAMERON: No, I am asking the question!

CHAIR: No, you have asked it—allow the officers to answer it.

Senator CAMERON: Chair! Just give me a few seconds, please!

CHAIR: Calm down.

Senator SIEWERT: You have had more than a few.

Senator CAMERON: Well, Senator Siewert, you are not chairing. So the—

Senator SIEWERT: No, but I want to ask a question.

Senator CAMERON: Well, good on you. So what do you do in that situation? What is the engagement you have with charities?

Ms Campbell: At the peak the Department of Social Services area has responsibility for these matters and that rests with the Department of Social Services.

Senator CAMERON: So you do nothing with charities?

Ms Campbell: As Mr Tidswell said, we have a daily relationship with community organisations, state governments and other providers of services. We have that throughout our entire network, and it is generally done at the local level because that is where the activity occurs. It is much easier for the people in Penrith to know what services are available in Penrith on any given day than I can.

Senator CAMERON: Could you, on notice—

CHAIR: Senator Cameron, can we move to Senator Siewert now?

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you. I want to go back—

Senator CAMERON: No wonder you are covering this up.

Senator SIEWERT: to where people are on no payment. They are on earn and learn, they have been assessed as being on no payment. They are supposed to make monthly contact, I understand.

Ms Golightly: That will be determined by their provider. They need to report their earnings to us, if they have any. But the ongoing contact is with their provider.

Senator SIEWERT: I understand that. What we were told by the Department of Employment was that under their compliance measures they would be required to be in contact with the JSA provider once a month.

Ms Golightly: That is for the Department of Employment.

Senator SIEWERT: You don't know what rules have been set yet? My understanding is when you were in stream 1 and 2, you largely had little contact with your JSA provider in that first period. We will check the time period in a minute. It is very minimal contact, is it not?

Ms Golightly: These are matters for the Department of Employment. How they organise their providers and the number of contacts is something they decide. I am not sure I can help you.

Senator SIEWERT: I thought there were rules around this, that you were responsible for—

Ms Golightly: At the moment, for the first 13 weeks we are currently responsible for that contact.

Senator SIEWERT: Thirteen weeks is three months.

Ms Golightly: Yes. Now under this measure, if you are under 30, that contact for the first six months will be with the job services provider. We will have some contact in that, of course, when the person first comes to claim Newstart we will have that contact there and we will explain what is going to happen. If they have earnings they will still be required to report any, but the main contact is with their job services provider.

Senator SIEWERT: Does the 13-weeks rule apply to anybody else above 30 from now on?

Ms Golightly: As it does now, yes. That is not changing for people over 30.

Senator SIEWERT: Is that set by an internal decision or is that done by regulation?

Ms Golightly: There is regulation that talks about mutual obligation and what the penalties are for. I can check this, but I think lower level detail like that is policy between departments.

Senator SIEWERT: Please take that on notice. What I am trying to find out is what the regulations are and how the government is changing the requirements. At the moment you are not sure whether it is by regulation or whether you can set the rules.

Ms Golightly: I am pretty sure that this level of how often they contact et cetera is not by regulation. I think that is policy.

Senator SIEWERT: So above 30, they go to the JSA then there is basically 13 weeks of no contact.

Ms Golightly: For above 30, it is exactly the same model as is now.

Senator SIEWERT: Which is that model—that is correct, isn't it?

Ms Golightly: Yes.

Senator SIEWERT: You are changing the model now for those—

Ms Golightly: Under 30.

Senator SIEWERT: under 30. They are on income with nil payment and you are saying they have to have monthly contact with their JSAs.

Ms Golightly: I am not saying that; I do not know what the Department of Employment has arranged with their providers.

Senator SIEWERT: Has that not been communicated with you yet?

Ms Golightly: We are still working on that. I understand that level of detail is still being sorted.

Senator SIEWERT: During estimates, we were told by the Department of Employment they would be required to do it monthly. I wanted to check what the arrangements were for over 30 and under 30. You will have no contact at all with them for the first six months.

Ms Golightly: That is right, except for when they first come in.

Senator SIEWERT: We were referred to you in terms of asking about compliance. My question was if these people are on nil payment, they obviously have no resources. They have no liquid assets or very few liquid assets. They will have little capacity to be able to pay for transport and things like that. So when I asked what happens when they are not compliant and cannot make appointments, they said if they are non-compliant they would then get an extra month extended on their nil payment period. When I asked what are the rules around that, they told me to talk to you. So I want to ask you about what will be the rules around the flexibility that providers will have to actually understand what these young people are going through in not being able to meet their obligations.

Ms Campbell: What the providers do, I am afraid, is the Department of Employment. We do the compliance.

Senator SIEWERT: You can understand why I am a little bit frustrated. I do not like playing ping pong between committees.

Ms Campbell: I will try to clarify. What the providers do is in the space of the employment department. So how they will cope with those issues that you raised is one. For us, it is the compliance. We will enact the compliance in accordance with the rules and guidelines that we work out with the Department of Employment. But, as the Department of Employment said, if the customer has not met the requirements of that six-month period, which is to engage and look for employment, the period can be extended to six months of looking for employment; that is correct.

Senator SIEWERT: My question remains unanswered. Will there be flexibility for people that have not got money for transport—bearing in mind they have no money? If a JSA comes to you and says they have not met this compliance, they have not contacted us for this month and they have not been in to see us—we did have a discussion about online and, depending on your circumstances, it is not always going to be easy to get online—what will be your response then? If you get something from a JSA saying this person with no payment has not turned up for an appointment, what will be your response?

Ms Campbell: These are some of the details that are still being worked out with the Department of Employment. The period could be extended. We would have to talk with the Department of Employment about things that would be considered a reasonable excuse or that sort of thing. But these are bits of detail that are still being discussed and sorted. They are not settled yet.

Senator SIEWERT: Maybe you could take that on notice because, obviously, we would like to know this prior to the next estimates. Could you take on notice what those arrangements will be. Do you have numbers in your database on the number of people under 30 who live at home?

Ms Rule: Not here. We could take that on notice and see whether we can extract that from our system.

Senator SIEWERT: Do you have the number of people under 30 who have children?

Ms Rule: We would have that on our system, yes.

Senator SIEWERT: I presume you do not have it here?

Ms Rule: We do not have it here. Do you mean the number of people on Newstart and youth allowance?

Senator SIEWERT: Yes, those on Newstart and youth allowance and, if possible, the numbers of children. Do you have that level of detail?

Ms Rule: We should have that level of detail and we can take that on notice.

Senator SIEWERT: You have just been talking to Senator Cameron. We were talking about counselling and social work earlier. Obviously young people under 30 are young people. Will you have counsellors with specific skills in youth counselling for this measure?

Ms Rule: Mr Tidswell might be able to answer that because we do deal with a lot of young people now.

Senator SIEWERT: I know you do but you are going to have young people in even more extreme circumstances.

Mr Tidswell: One of the highest groups that we deal with in the case loads for social work is young people. Quite often they are unable to live at home or want to seek independence for the family for a whole variety of reasons.

Senator SIEWERT: This is why I am asking all about this one.

Mr Tidswell: That is right. So we are well versed in assisting. There are things you have to consider in dealing with young people. We have a pretty good cross-section of staff. Our social work staff have a pretty good staff profile so we do have some younger social workers. I have found they are often in some of the more difficult parts of the country. We would obviously do all the training we would need to do as these measures start to have effect and to work through the capability, skills, questioning techniques and interviewing techniques that are required from our social work staff. We are very proud of our social work staff. They have done this for many years and they are a very important part of the puzzle—just like we have talked to you for many years about income management and the role of social workers in our professional staff.

Senator SIEWERT: We know there has been emergency relief money allocated. Again, following up on Senator Cameron's questions, have you had discussions with DSS yet about how that specific emergency relief process will work?

Ms Golightly: As part of developing the implementation, how all the details of how this measure will be implemented, we are including what role they might want us to play in referrals et cetera. But it is very early days.

Senator SIEWERT: So you have not worked that out? Following the example of Senator Cameron, if someone needs to access to emergency relief, do you refer them to specific organisations?

Ms Golightly: We currently do and would continue to do that.

Senator SIEWERT: Which are, as Senator Cameron said, charities and the emergency relief providers—most of whom or, I think, all are charities. So that is what you will do?

Ms Golightly: Yes. That is what we do now and I believe we will continue to do it. All of that detail is still to be settled but we will continue to refer.

Mr Tidswell: We do not just refer on. We would look at all the circumstances. We put a lot of emphasis on our social work staff and our community engagement officers that work in the community settings, work with homeless shelters, work with all the variety of providers, youth services and advocacy groups to try and build together a rich tapestry of all the things available across the state and territory government and the non-government sectors to assist people and individuals to work through the issues that they are dealing with.

Senator SIEWERT: If I were on nil payment, would I still have access to all concession cards?

Ms Rule: That is a policy question for the Department of Social Services.

Senator CAMERON: But you deliver.

Ms Rule: That is right, but we deliver in accordance with the policy that is set by the department.

Senator CAMERON: What is the policy?

Senator SIEWERT: Yes, that is what I was going to ask. Have you not been told yet whether people keep the various concession cards that they would normally have if they were on Newstart?

Ms Rule: My current understanding is that the proposal is that they would keep their healthcare card and not have access to other concessions.

Ms Golightly: But the details are still being—

Senator SIEWERT: You are joking! They are on no payment and that is the only concession card they get to keep?

Ms Golightly: This is a question for the Department of Social Services.

Senator CAMERON: It is earn or learn or starve. That is what it is.

Senator SIEWERT: I am not happy with the answer but I understand what you have just told me. If you are on Newstart, what other concession cards would you have?

Ms Rule: It depends on your circumstances. There are a range—

Senator SIEWERT: If I am under 30 as it is now.

Ms Campbell: If you are under 30 now and you are on Newstart—

Ms Rule: You would get the healthcare card. That is probably the main one. Are you a single person?

Senator SIEWERT: Give me both, because this takes in couples as well.

Ms Rule: You might also get a pensioner concession card, depending on your circumstances. Those are the main concession cards—a pensioner concession card or a healthcare card.

Senator SIEWERT: So we do not know whether I am going to get that pensioner concession card?

Ms Rule: You do not get that automatically if you are on Newstart. It depends on your circumstances.

Senator SIEWERT: Potentially I can, but the decision has not been made.

Ms Rule: That is right.

Senator SIEWERT: Yesterday or the day before we traversed with DSS the issue around principal carer and partner. In that circumstance we established that the partner would be subject to earn or learn. If they were not on this nil payment, is there any other concession a family would get that there is a question mark over?

Ms Rule: They may get the pensioner concession card, but that would be tied to other payments like family tax benefit and so on. It is a complex question to answer.

Senator SIEWERT: I understand that. Maybe you could take that on notice. You are right. This is a complex web that people stitch together so that they can survive.

Ms Golightly: Certainly the eligibility for it attached to other payments is not changing. If they are getting it because of another payment, all of that stays.

Senator SIEWERT: So anything that is attached to other payments stays, other than subject to those measures?

Ms Rule: Concessions are linked to a primary income support payment. That could be Newstart or it could be other payments. What would happen in particular people's circumstances depends on where that link is.

Senator SIEWERT: I have been concentrating on the gap between five to 30. What about youth allowance?

Ms Golightly: The same scenario would apply.

Senator SIEWERT: Are you able to tell me how many people have taken up the pensioner education supplements?

Ms Golightly: If you give us a second, we probably have that.

Senator SIEWERT: I would like to know how many people have it now and also how many went back onto it when it was returned to single parents.

Ms Golightly: We will have to take that on notice.

Ms Campbell: The first one.

Ms Rule: Approximately 42,000 people are in receipt of the pensioner education supplement.

Senator SIEWERT: Could you take on notice how many single parents have come back on since it started again in March? Are you able to tell us how many dropped off when the latter came in?

Ms Rule: When the parenting payment changes came in?

Senator SIEWERT: When the parenting payments occurred and people were not able to access the card. Actually, you cannot really tell, can you?

Ms Rule: No.

Ms Golightly: There are all sorts of reasons.

Senator SIEWERT: Yes. Just tell me how many people have now taken it up. That would be appreciated.

Ms Rule: Yes.

Senator SIEWERT: This relates to homelessness and young people. Yesterday in DSS we traversed the issues around the fact that if people become homeless through the earn or learn provisions they may get reassessed back into stream 3 and 4. Does JSA provide a review which comes back to you?

Ms Golightly: We can do the review ourselves or a request can come from the provider.

Senator SIEWERT: But you would not necessarily know, because they have not had any contact with you in that first six months.

Ms Golightly: No. But, for example, if they are homeless, quite often people come to us anyway, as a point of contact.

Senator SIEWERT: If they have fallen into homelessness because of that measure, they may in fact come to you rather than JSA; is that what you are saying?

Ms Golightly: They may, just as happens now; anybody, whether they are on a payment or not—quite often through word of mouth et cetera—might come to us to see if there is something we can do to help them. But the other way is that the JSA provider can request us to do the review, and contact would be made with the job seeker.

Senator SIEWERT: But that is going to be their main point of contact for the job seeker, isn't it? Basically, under this this measure, there is six months of this. Essentially they are told: 'You've got nil payment. Go and do your compliance stuff with your job service provider'. I think they could quite justifiably take it that they do not have any contact with you, because they are not getting paid, they are not getting any form of support, so it is unlikely that they are going to think to go you.

Ms Rule: That is right, but with any payment, we tell customers that if their circumstances change, to the extent that they need to be reassessed, they should recontact us. That applies in these circumstances as well. But if a person, for example, became homeless—their circumstances have changed and they need to be reassessed—they should make contact with us. We would do that reassessment.

Ms Golightly: And they may be customers of ours for reasons other than just Newstart; they may have contact with us for different reasons. I think there is absolutely a chance that they may come to us.

Senator SIEWERT: Okay. Thank you. We will see how that one pans out, won't we. If someone becomes sick when they are on nil payments, what happens?

Ms Rule: It will be up to them to work through that issue with their provider. Again, it will depend; are they sick to the point that we have to reassess their circumstances or do they have something that is less serious. That is an issue they will have to work through with their provider. The rules around that will have to be set by the Department of Employment.

Senator SIEWERT: What happens in terms of the healthcare card; going to the doctor they will still have to pay the \$7, won't they?

Ms Golightly: I think there are rules for people who have concession cards—around the \$7.

Senator SIEWERT: They have to pay for the first 10, don't they? That is \$70. You have no money.

Ms Rule: So the healthcare card that they would keep, as we currently understand it, would allow them to have those 10 free visits.

Senator SIEWERT: They will get 10 free—

Ms Golightly: No, it is after—

Senator SIEWERT: Exactly. I thought it was 10 paid visits. Then it kicks in.

Ms Golightly: Yes. Then it kicks in.

Senator SIEWERT: So my question is: how are they going to pay when they have no money? That is my first question. Secondly, is it your understanding from the JSA that they have the EPF—would they be able to help the job seeker by paying that money so they could go to the doctor?

Ms Golightly: That is a question for the Department of Employment.

Senator SIEWERT: Have you given any thought to how people are going to—when you are dealing with them—with compliance measures? Does that go back to not having worked it out yet?

Ms Campbell: We are still working through that detail with the Department of Employment.

Senator SIEWERT: It is a live question, isn't it; how are they going to pay for going to the doctor when they are sick?

Ms Campbell: And it will depend on their circumstances. If they are living at home—

Senator SIEWERT: And we do not know how many are living at home. Can they come to you for a crisis payment? If they are on nil payment, can they come to you for a crisis payment to deal with something like that?

Ms Golightly: There are a couple of different things. There is a crisis payment for people with domestic violence issues. We would have to look at their circumstances and see what assistance they would be eligible for, and we would try and work that out for them.

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you.

CHAIR: You have finished now, Senator Siewert?

Senator SIEWERT: I have others but I will put them on notice.

CHAIR: We will go to Senator Moore, then Senator Kroger.

Senator MOORE: I have some follow-up questions, which you may have to take on notice. I would like you to clarify for me again how the liquid assets process works. We asked the question last night in Social Services and it has been asked again this morning: what would be the maximum time that someone may be without access to payment? We know there is a flat six months in the proposed budget change—

Ms Golightly: It is not a flat six months.

Senator MOORE: In the budget change, there is a six-month possible time without payment. We asked the question last night and we were told it could be to a maximum of 11 months with everything that packed in, and one of those things was—and I understand the system—that someone in that situation would have to have significant liquid assets. Can you, for the record, remind us about how that works?

Ms Golightly: First of all, as you have just outlined, the assets and resources that the person has is first assessed—

Senator MOORE: At time of claim.

Ms Golightly: At time of claim. And there is a similar test for people who may have been compensated for earnings. So that compensation would also be taken into account as a waiting period. Once they have served, if they meet those criteria—

Senator MOORE: With a determination payment of some kind.

Ms Golightly: That is right. Then they are assessed for what waiting period they would have to serve under this measure. That waiting period is up to six months. It can be discounted for time worked.

Senator MOORE: And those details are still being worked out. And there is a follow-up question about how your department and employment and DSS operates and works together as a team.

Ms Golightly: That is correct.

Senator MOORE: Who is in it and all that kind of stuff. Is that the kind of detail you provide me with on notice about what is the ongoing liaison process?

Ms Golightly: Yes.

Senator MOORE: Does it have a special title, when you are looking at budget issues?

Ms Golightly: Not really. This is something we do every year and it is our—

Senator MOORE: I understand that the departments must work together because of how the system works. But when you have particular changes, like we have now, particularly with particular cohorts, I would like to know exactly what the process is for determination of how a budget issues operates. But I am still following through on those assets. That was a subset.

Ms Golightly: Yes.

Senator MOORE: For the maximum preclusion, what kind of liquid assets are we talking about?

Ms Rule: I do not have the amount, I would have to take that on notice.

Senator MOORE: Can we get something from you about how that works? Because it is an interesting point. And one of the questions that people are raising in the community is: what is the full scenario of what could occur in terms of planning? So I would like to get from you on notice exactly how that process operates and what would preclude people—and I know that every circumstance is different; I just want the general rules around it.

Ms Campbell: Often, if a customer had a lot of liquid assets, they may have had income, they may have had work and, therefore, the six-month period may be reduced as well. The with the 11-month hypothetical, you have to work out where they got those liquid assets from—if they had not had any work in the previous period.

Senator MOORE: And then we go into the area of gifting and all those kinds of things and other forms of assistance.

Ms Campbell: And then maybe they have family support.

Senator MOORE: Yes. So that was that bit, and I can get it on notice. We have heard many times that these details are still being worked out, but I would like to know how that working out is being done and who plays in the working out.

Ms Golightly: The working out of the liquid assets test, do you mean?

Senator MOORE: No, the general purpose. I thought we had the liquid assets and the process put as a question on notice. That was my understanding. Now I want to get on record who is actually working out the details, with the necessity that it has to include Human Services because of the responsibility of implementing the process.

Ms Campbell: I think we touched on this last night. This is a large budget, and we were asked to go back and look at how many measures there were in previous budgets and whether we have a tried and tested process for doing this. Yes, it is a large budget but there have been other budgets where there have been more measures.

Senator MOORE: That is going back a long way, Ms Campbell.

Ms Campbell: Last year there were 39 measures; the year before, there were 40 measures. In 2011-12 there were 70; in 2010-11 there were 55; in 2009-10 there were 81 measures; and in 2008-09 there were 71 measures. So Ms Golightly is going to walk us through the process.

Senator MOORE: I think 1982 was a really big year as well.

Ms Campbell: They were unable to get that overnight, sorry.

Senator MOORE: But this is not uncommon.

Ms Campbell: No. This is the process that we go through when we have world practice project management arrangements in place to do these things.

Senator CAMERON: This is a big budget. There were 60 measures this time. Some of those measures are absolutely unheard of in social welfare. So it is not just the number of measures; it is the scope of the measures that is important. Is that correct?

CHAIR: Senator Cameron, we have a question in the process of being answered. You can wait.

Senator CAMERON: I will wait.

Ms Golightly: The normal process would be starting at the deputy secretary level. So myself and my counterparts in DSS and Employment, or any another department that might be—

Senator MOORE: Drought assistance would have agriculture.

Ms Golightly: That is right. We would have regular meetings about what the policy intent was and we would be providing advice back on options of: how this might work or that might work; what our IT systems could do; what we could do on the ground; what resources we could bring to bear; what we know from what suits customers; and that sort of thing. That would be high level and setting high-level milestones around what needed to be done by when. As you can imagine, we have lead times on the policy side, sometimes for legislation or policy guidelines being written. They then lead into our lead times for things like amending or adjusting the IT system, as well as getting new processes around how we process things; training staff, et cetera.

So we would map that out at the high level, at my level. Then, within each of our departments as well as together, we would then work through people like our program managers—Ms Rule has been one of them—about expanding that out into all of the little components that need to be done to make sure that we have the policy being applied in the way that was intended. That would go to things like: how do we treat this cohort or that cohort or for the certain circumstances? For example, like some of the examples that have been given today. All that nitty-gritty detail is worked out.

At that level we would have very regular meetings and working groups to work through those issues and to identify things that need to be fed up the line for a decision or options—which way do we want to go?—and then that would feed back into that process of managing the project and the overall implementation so that we get to the date of delivery that we need to get to.

Senator MOORE: And the IT process would be critical for that.

Ms Golightly: Usually, yes.

Senator MOORE: Also, the elements we talked about earlier, in terms of social work, the particular identification of community impact. The social work team is involved?

Ms Golightly: That is right. They are a key player. But what we call the 'network' as a whole—Mr Tidswell's area—we have to of course have all of our staff who may be having either initial contact or ongoing contact as well as the specialised contact. We need to make sure they have what they need; that they are trained and they have the systems ready.

Senator MOORE: And that would pick up things like Indigenous impact and multicultural liaison services that would all come through at that stage.

Ms Golightly: That is right.

Senator MOORE: When does this team start meeting? Is it before the budget or after the budget?

Ms Golightly: Certain experts may be called upon to give advice as budget measures are evolving, but certainly we were meeting with the relevant agencies straight after the budget to get going on some of this.

CHAIR: Thank you, Senator Moore. We will move now to Senator Kroger.

Senator KROGER: Thank you. I am hoping someone can answer this today. I am interested to ask some questions about the Australian victims of terrorism overseas payments. Does anyone know anything about that?

Ms Campbell: We do know something. Mr Tidswell knows more than I do.

Mr Tidswell: We call it AVTOP.

Senator KROGER: There is always an acronym.

Mr Tidswell: Senator, I can tell you that we have paid 400 claims.

Senator KROGER: I understand that this was one of the government's priority things in the first 100 days, but when was it actually activated?

Mr Tidswell: On 9 October the Prime Minister announced the activation of the payment, and shortly thereafter we began the process to establish the arrangements to make the payments on behalf of the people who had suffered these terrible events. As of 30 May 2014, we have granted 400 claims and paid more than \$24 million to eligible recipients. These range over—

Senator KROGER: How much?

Mr Tidswell: Just about \$24.5 million.

Senator KROGER: How does one go about making a claim?

Mr Tidswell: Effectively what we set up very shortly after the Prime Minister's announcement was a hotline so people could make contact with us. We would talk to them, and then they would be required to provide us with some information. Then we would help people work through the claim. We were conscious this was a very difficult issue for many individuals, so we helped them work through what evidence was required; medical evidence and other supporting documentation to make the assessment.

Senator KROGER: Were all these people in Australia when they were calling the hotline? Were some of these people overseas? What were the parameters? Was it permanent residency status?

Mr Tidswell: That would be my understanding. I believe we do have some people overseas; just people who are Australian citizens across the world. I do not have that information directly in front of me about numbers that may have applied when they were overseas, and have come back and forth and what have you, but we can take that on notice.

Ms Golightly: They have to be an Australian resident.

Senator KROGER: You mentioned paying out 400 claims. Is that correct?

Mr Tidswell: That is right.

Senator KROGER: So how many total claims?

Mr Tidswell: We received about 587 total claims. Some have been withdrawn; some have been rejected; and there are still about 50 we are getting further information on—complicated medical information.

Senator KROGER: I appreciate that. So, within that differential of 187, either they have withdrawn—you have 50-odd you are still processing.

Mr Tidswell: That is right. And we have rejected about 123.

Senator KROGER: I was in Bali before the last Bali bombing, literally days before. What sort of criteria was used to substantiate that someone should be able to access these payments?

Mr Tidswell: The principles contained within the legislation prescribe what is required: the nature of the injury, the impact on the primary victim's life, the relationship of the claimant to the deceased person, and other impacts in that sense. So it is quite clear criteria. Obviously some of these events are somewhat old now, so it has been difficult collecting that primary medical evidence. That is why it takes a little time to finalise the payments.

Senator KROGER: Although I have to say, if the button was pressed on this in October 2013 and you have already paid out 400 claims successfully, that is a pretty short time frame to undertake that.

Mr Tidswell: That is correct. We worked very hard to get on top of this work as quickly as possible, because we wanted to make sure that once the Prime Minister had made the announcement we could provide this assistance to individuals.

Senator KROGER: A question was put to me locally, so I am asking this I guess for them. You mentioned whether the claim was for a relative who was, I presume, deceased. How many of the claims have been for primary victims? How do you refer to families or relatives—as secondary victims?

Ms Golightly: Yes.

Senator KROGER: What is the breakdown of those 400 claims?

Mr Tidswell: We will have to take that on notice. I do not seem to have it here with me.

Ms Golightly: We have total claims rather than a breakdown.

Mr Tidswell: We used to have that broken down. We can get that quite quickly.

Senator KROGER: Yes, if it is not hard. I understand the significance of all the things you are doing at the moment. My other request is in relation to the outstanding claims. I think the person that has spoken to me about this might be one of those. Are they all secondary victims? Are they all claims from associated family members or relatives?

Mr Tidswell: I am not quite sure. Again, I would have to take that on notice. I look at this closely and we want to try and resolve this as quickly as possible—that is our intention. It is my understanding that it is often getting that medical evidence to give us the clarity we need to make the determination. Sometimes we go back to individuals and say, 'Can you get further evidence and further information?' It is difficult for us to require people to do that. It is up to their time lines and what have you. I do not know, exactly, the break-up of the 50 in terms of primary and secondary.

Senator KROGER: Given the sensitivity of this issue, like so many others, what communication channels did you set up to expedite this process? Did you do it with an online response system?

Mr Tidswell: We thought the best way to do this was through the hotline, with the ability for people to make contact quickly. Obviously we had some information available to us. In that sense there was word of mouth, as well, across this community of people that had been affected. We found that was pretty successful in getting the message out. What we wanted to do was build that relationship with claimants, to step them through the process. We wanted to make this as easy as possible so it was not one of these terribly difficult things that people would reel from and not want to do the work and give us the information. It was very much, in my language, a case managed approach for each particular claim, so people knew what was going to go on, what the steps in the process were, how it would get finalised and what was required, so that this could be done in the quickest way but also so that the claimant knew exactly what the circumstances were.

Senator KROGER: What is your expectation in relation to the resolution of the outstanding claims?

Mr Tidswell: I do not have a time line, but I am very keen for this to be finished and finalised. I do ask this regularly, and I do ask why we cannot get those 50 outstanding claims sorted, fixed and finalised. I am told they are all in good hands and that the work is continuing. I do not have an end date. I have just noticed that we estimate that upwards of 300 people will qualify as primary victims as a result of these events. So that is the end result.

Senator KROGER: That is a considerable number.

Mr Tidswell: That is right.

Senator KROGER: I am thinking of 9/11 or 12 October, the Bali bombing. What is the definition of a terrorist event?

Mr Tidswell: The events that were prescribed were the 2001 US September 11 attacks, the 2002 Bali bombings, the 2004 Jakarta bombings, the 2005 London bombings, the 2005 Bali bombings, the 2006 Egypt bombings, the 2008 Mumbai attacks, the 2009 Jakarta bombings and the 2013 Nairobi assault. It is a bit of a horror story of all the events that Australian's have been involved in.

Senator KROGER: It certainly is.

CHAIR: The intention was to spend the last 40 minutes or so on earn and learn.

Senator SESELJA: Earlier you gave some numbers on redundancies. I think it was 200-and-something since September.

Ms Campbell: Yes. Since 7 September, across the entire department, 247 voluntary redundancies and one involuntary redundancy.

Senator SESELJA: What is the headcount from 7 September to now? Do we have the changed headcount?

Ms Campbell: We do not have that with us.

Senator SESELJA: No other measure, no average staffing level, no FTE?

Ms Campbell: I do not think we have it from the September 7 period to now. Maybe we have something from the financial year.

Senator SESELJA: That would be interesting, and then maybe on notice you could disaggregate that if possible. Do you have the financial year headcount now, or not?

Mr Hutson: The information that I have is year-on-year data between 31 March 2013 and 30 April 2014.

Senator SESELJA: Okay, then why don't you give us that.

Ms Campbell: I think it is headcount as well, which can sometimes be a little bit misleading because we have a number of part-time staff. We budget on an average full-time person; and we are about to give you headcount, which will be the total number of people which won't—

Senator SESELJA: Do you have an average staffing level or an FTE that is more—

Ms Campbell: Not with us today. We could get it to you.

Senator SESELJA: We will go on headcount now and maybe on notice we can get those.

Mr Hutson: At 30 April 2013, the staff the department had was 35,206 headcount. At 30 April 2014, we had 34,160 headcount.

Senator SESELJA: It would be great—

Mr Hutson: Sorry, Senator, I actually do have an average staffing level.

Senator SESELJA: That might be more useful. That would be great.

Mr Hutson: The 30 April 2013 figure is based on 1 July 2012 to 30 April 2013. The 2014 number I will give you is based on 2013 to 2014. Of course, average staffing level is determined over a period. At 30 April 2013, the number is 31,935.52. And at 30 April 2014, the number is 30,083.05.

Senator SESELJA: Is it possible with both of those to get on notice a month-by-month breakdown during those periods that we have just discussed. I also recollect that in a previous financial year there had been a reduction in numbers as well. Are you able to give us what it was? That 31,935 that you have, is there one year before that?

Mr Hutson: I do not have that data with me today. Obviously, we can take that on notice. In terms of ASL month by month, we will give you the ASL numbers for each month, rather than a—

Senator SESELJA: Secretary, do you have something?

Ms Campbell: I have found something. I recalled a product that we had that would be able to assist. These are the average staffing levels across a year. Across 2012-13, it was 31,795; across 2011-12, it was 32,592; across 2010-11, it was 34,973; and in 2009-10, it was 36,019.

Senator SESELJA: These are all previous financial years prior to the change of government. Based on those numbers, from 2009-10 to 2012-13, DHS went from 36,019 to 31,795.

Ms Campbell: That is correct.

Senator SESELJA: That is a drop of 4,224. That is a pretty significant drop during that period. Given that, it will be interesting to see the final, more detailed headcount. We obviously have the redundancies but that will not tell the whole story. I assume that reduction in DHS has slowed from what we saw from 2009-10 to 2012-13.

Ms Campbell: Mr Hutson has just mentioned that we expect at the end of 2013-14 for it to be around 30,000.

Senator SESELJA: That is from a high in 2009-10 of 36,000. But we have seen much of that over those four years.

Ms Campbell: And then there is an increase in 2014-15.

Senator SESELJA: What is that expected increase?

Ms Campbell: We expect to go to 30,150.

Senator SESELJA: Thank you very much for that.

Senator CAMERON: Secretary, earlier when it was raised about people having no income for 12 months, you indicated that the asset test could be quite significant—or 'significant assets' I think were the words you used. Is the liquid asset test not \$5,500 for an individual and \$11,000 if you have a partner and children?

Ms Campbell: The periods of waiting time depend on how much asset. I think what you are talking about are the thresholds at which the liquid asset test applies.

Ms Golightly: Yes.

Ms Campbell: Of course, some people may come with more than that.

Senator CAMERON: I am talking about people in the threshold.

Ms Campbell: Do you want to know how long the liquid asset period is that they need to serve if they only meet the threshold?

Senator CAMERON: Yes.

Ms Golightly: We may have to go and get that specific threshold for you. We will do that quickly.

Senator CAMERON: It is a subject we can come back to. I will move on to some issues. I want to go to another area completely. I think we have only done about two or three of the budget issues, and there are 60 of them.

Senator SESELJA: That is because of all your hypotheticals.

Senator CAMERON: Ms Campbell, how will Centrelink engage with people at the end of the six-month wait period if you have had no contact with them for six months?

Ms Campbell: Ms Golightly was talking through that we are working out implementation detail at this stage. We will engage with them at the start of the period. Six months is the maximum period. When their wait time is up, we will have a method of contacting them to re-engage. They will give us their contact details when we first talk with them and we first work out with them how long that exclusion period will be.

Senator CAMERON: How will you contact someone who has been forced out of their house because they have had no income for those six months? They are living on the street; how do you contact them?

Ms Golightly: When we first talk to them about how the process works, they will be advised that they should come back to us if they feel that their circumstances have changed. And I think we talked before about that, in fact, becoming homeless would be one of those circumstances.

Senator CAMERON: So can you guarantee help with housing for every homeless person who has been on this six-month work for the dole program and are not earning or learning?

Ms Golightly: We currently refer people to state authorities and other assistance for housing and we will continue to do that.

Senator CAMERON: Do you know if there has been an engagement with the state authorities on the implications of their budgets on this issue?

Ms Golightly: Well that is a matter for the Department of Social Services.

Senator CAMERON: Yes, I thought I would ask you anyway. Is the department concerned that young people with no interaction with Centrelink for six months might simply disengage from Centrelink?

Ms Campbell: At the moment it is possible for people to disengage with Centrelink, with our services. And that is why we have community engagement officers who go to shelters, soup kitchens and the like. So we do get out into the community, engage with people who may be disconnected from us.

Senator CAMERON: So do you think that you will need to engage more with shelters and soup kitchens to keep that engagement under this six months basic no income position?

Ms Campbell: We have those engagement practices in place now.

Senator CAMERON: Yes, but I am asking because this is a different engagement practice. This is something that has never happened before, to my knowledge, in modern Australia where people will have absolutely no income for six months. So I am putting to you, will you have to increase your engagement with soup kitchens, charities and welfare organisations?

Ms Golightly: Mr Tidswell might be able to add to this, but our engagement is pretty regular as it is now. So, you know, that would—

Senator CAMERON: But I am not asking about now; I am asking about this massive change, unheard of in modern Australia, where Australian citizens will have no money, no means of support, by deliberate government decision, for six months.

Ms Golightly: As we also mentioned before, it may be that they are customers of ours for other reasons anyway. But, we have very regular engagement with local community groups and that will continue.

Senator CAMERON: I have not got a lot of time. Can you take on notice how you will maintain engagement, what additional resources you will need to maintain engagement because of the government changes and the circumstances of people living in abject poverty—I mean, abject poverty, no income whatsoever for six months. So if you can take that on notice and come back to me on that.

Ms Campbell: Senator, can I just clarify that these people will have contact with the jobs service provider that they would have been referred to as well.

Senator CAMERON: But what if they just disengage? What if they go, 'Nobody cares about me; I have got no faith; I am thrown onto the streets.' Some people will disengage.

Ms Campbell: And that is the case now.

Senator CAMERON: But it is not the case now that people do not get any income for six months, is it?

Ms Campbell: Some people do not engage and do not claim income.

Senator CAMERON: They do not claim, but not by deliberate government policy.

Ms Campbell: And the policy provides for the engagement with the jobs service providers.

Senator CAMERON: Yes, but it is deliberate government policy to remove all income from an individual under those circumstances. This is new, is it not?

Ms Campbell: Ms Golightly has talked about each case. There may not be all income removed, there may be other allowances, but the policy does include regular engagement with a jobs service provider.

Senator CAMERON: Yes, but that is the theory. You know better than most that theory does not always work. And in the area you are involved in, it is not just about theory; it is about dealing with people with massive social problems, mental problems, physical problems, alcohol problems, drug problems. The government is saying to them, within a six-month period, you will get no income. That has implications for DHS.

Ms Campbell: We have talked about some of the exclusions from this measure for people who face barriers to employment, but this is focused on job-ready customers, who will then be referred to the job service provider.

Senator CAMERON: So you refer and then that is the end of it for you?

Ms Campbell: You talked about barriers and we have talked about the fact that there are exclusions for this policy for those people who present with those barriers who are not job-ready.

Senator CAMERON: Secretary, in your public life—not just as secretary now—have you ever known such a measure where young people who, unless they have family support, by deliberate government policy, will be living in poverty?

Ms Campbell: I do not think that is a question I can answer. There are a number of exclusions to this policy. I have walked through some of those. This is about job-ready customers.

Senator CAMERON: But for a young person who has left home because of family violence or abuse, there are some support mechanisms but these are not financial support mechanisms. So a young person, under a range of circumstances, could be left with absolutely no income for six months and be left living in poverty, on the streets. Is that not correct?

Ms Campbell: The job seeker would be assessed against the criteria to determine whether they are stream 1, 2, 3 or 4. Stream 1 and 2 are job-ready and able to work with a job service provider to seek employment. Some of the barriers that you mention may mean that they are not stream 1 and 2.

Senator CAMERON: So they get no money.

Ms Golightly: If they are stream 3 or 4 they are excluded from this policy and they will be on Newstart.

Senator CAMERON: But a young person in stream 1 or 2 could end up not theoretically but in practical terms on the street with absolutely no income for six months. If they have no family support, if they disengage, you say, 'Go and see the job service provider.' That is all you do. That is the end of it. So it is then up to the job service provider, is it not?

Ms Golightly: Senator, I think I have already given evidence to say that if they end up being homeless, or in other extreme circumstances, they are able to come back to us to seek a review of their circumstances.

Senator CAMERON: Okay. So if they cannot pay their rent, you indicated earlier there may be a process where they can get some rent assistance.

Ms Golightly: They may be eligible anyway.

Senator CAMERON: Is it rent assistance or is all of their rent paid?

Ms Campbell: We do not pay all the rent. It is rental assistance.

Senator CAMERON: So you can give them rent assistance but they will get no other income. So they cannot still pay their rent. Is that right? Is that not the practical implication? That they can get rent assistance but if they are not engaging in the government's earn and learn, they cannot pay their rent and they are on the street.

Ms Golightly: I think we have already mentioned that, if they are on the street and homeless, they can come back to us and be reassessed.

Senator CAMERON: And be reassessed for what?

Ms Golightly: Whether they have barriers, are not job-ready and are in stream 3 or 4.

Senator CAMERON: And if you determine that they are job-ready, they get no money. That is the bottom line.

Ms Campbell: If we determine they are job-ready, they engage with the job service provider to find a job.

Senator CAMERON: Okay. I know you have been there for only a short term, Ms Campbell, but you have some experienced officers here. Are you aware of any occasion in this country where a person has been left without income support if they lose their job? Has there ever been a time in recent history—

Senator Payne: If they have lost their job, Senator, then they have been working and they fall into a different category again. That counts towards their position.

Senator CAMERON: But there is a certain cohort, which is stream 1 and 2—

Ms Campbell: Job-ready.

Senator CAMERON: Yes. If they do not earn or they do not learn, you remove all support from them except a health card. Has there ever been a time in modern Australia where that has been, to your knowledge and your department, such draconian legislation in the past?

Ms Golightly: I do not think it is necessarily the case that they lose all support.

Senator CAMERON: What you have told me today is that they get rental assistance but they have no money, so the rental assistance will not pay the rent, and you will send them to a charity. Is that correct?

Ms Golightly: We will refer to them entities, such as state government authorities, around housing issues and other services as applicable on a case by case basis.

Senator Payne: Which we already do.

Senator CAMERON: Including charities?

Ms Campbell: It depends on the available resources in that location, but it could include charities.

Senator CAMERON: So it could be a charity?

Ms Campbell: We do that now.

Senator CAMERON: But in these circumstances, are you aware that charities are going to be provided with some extra funding?

Ms Campbell: I think that was in the DSS evidence and in the budget.

Senator CAMERON: So the charities are going to be funded so that people are reliant on the charities. So we have now gone back probably 150 years, where if people do not have a job, if they do not earn, or if they do not learn, they are charity reliant. That is the situation, isn't it?

Senator KROGER: Garbage.

Ms Golightly: They may actually be—

Senator CAMERON: It is not garbage. That is the plan.

Senator KROGER: That is garbage.

Senator CAMERON: Is there anyone in the department who has expressed any concern about how you can practically deal with your customers in these circumstances or do you just—

Senator PAYNE: The department will do their job.

Senator CAMERON: The department will do what they are told?

Senator PAYNE: No, I did not say that.

Senator CAMERON: The department will do what they are told.

Senator PAYNE: I will not have you put words in my mouth. I said the department will, as they always do, do their job and do it well.

Senator CAMERON: Better Futures, Local Solutions has been set up to engage at the community level with Indigenous unemployed, young unemployed and long-term unemployed. It has been a program that has been very successful—is that correct, Ms Campbell?

Ms CAMPBELL: It depends. In some cases local feedback has been that some of these measures have been successful.

Senator CAMERON: Let us have a look at the Shellharbour project. I understand that you have received reports on these projects. Is that correct?

Ms CAMPBELL: Yes, we have.

Senator CAMERON: Can you, on notice, table those reports from the projects?

Ms CAMPBELL: We will take that question on notice.

Senator CAMERON: Can you also provide all correspondence since the budget deliberations commenced. I do not know what the date would be, but you would know, when the minister started looking at budget responses for the department. So that would be within that budget lead-up period. Could you provide all correspondence from the department to the minister on this issue, from the minister back to the department on this issue, and all correspondence from the Better Futures, Local Solutions organisations to the department.

Ms CAMPBELL: We will take that on notice.

Senator CAMERON: Are you aware of the Shellharbour project?

Ms Golightly: Yes.

Senator CAMERON: I am told that this is pretty typical of what is happening across all projects across the country. It is a very small amount of money, I think about \$11 million over a couple of years.

Ms CAMPBELL: For the whole program.

Senator CAMERON: What is the operating budget of the department?

Ms CAMPBELL: Approximately \$4.2 billion.

Senator CAMERON: So this is \$7 million in about a \$4.2 billion operation.

Ms CAMPBELL: No, this is administered funding. This is grants, which is separate from departmental funding which is used to run the department. This is funding that is provided to third-party organisations to conduct other work.

Senator CAMERON: I am just trying to get in context how much money is involved in DHS; it is billions and this is \$7 million. So what has happened in Shellharbour? They have dealt with intergenerational unemployment, is that correct?

Ms RULE: Senator, there are seven projects in Shellharbour that deal with a range of locations.

Senator CAMERON: That is right. Those projects are dealing with intergenerational unemployment. Is that correct?

Ms RULE: As I said, there are seven projects that deal with a range of issues.

Ms CAMPBELL: And they are the goals of those programs.

Ms RULE: That is right.

Senator CAMERON: You have had reports, haven't you? Have you got the reports here?

Ms RULE: I do not. There are 44 projects currently funded under this program, so I do not have all of them.

Senator CAMERON: The Shellharbour projects have dealt with 263 participants. Have you been advised of that?

Ms RULE: I do not have that information with me.

Senator CAMERON: I think Ms Golightly is showing you where it is.

Ms Golightly: No, I was not.

Ms Rule: Part of the process for this program is that we let the projects manage themselves from a local level.

Senator CAMERON: You do not do that at all, and I will come back to that. That is not correct. You do not let them manage themselves. There are 263 participants in the Shellharbour project. There are 63 Indigenous participants. Forty seven returned to school after the program. A further 196 completed nationally accredited qualifications and 105 are already employed. I would think, on any analysis, that is a very, very significant outcome. Does anyone disagree with that?

Ms Golightly: I think the figure—certainly the 263 figure—was one that was in the newspaper. We have taken on notice that we will see what we can get for you about this project.

Senator CAMERON: This is not the newspaper. I am putting to you that this is the advice I have. Is my advice wrong?

Senator Payne: We do not have that information here.

Senator CAMERON: Are you saying my advice is wrong?

Senator Payne: No, senator. I think what the officers said very clearly to you is that they would take the details of those numbers on notice because the information is not at the table now.

Senator CAMERON: There are a number of community organisations working with the projects. Is that correct?

Ms Rule: That is right.

Senator CAMERON: There is a local board, including Barnardo's, a range of charities and businesses on board. People have come together to try and help disadvantaged people. Is that correct?

Ms Rule: That is right.

Senator CAMERON: And there is evidence of significant progress. Is that right?

Ms Rule: I do not have that evidence here with me—either way.

Senator CAMERON: Does anyone have that evidence?

Senator Payne: You can make a statement about your view, senator—

Senator CAMERON: No, it is not my view. I am just telling you what I have been advised. Has anyone brought any evidence on this?

Ms Golightly: We do not have the reports.

Senator CAMERON: You do not have anything on this again.

Ms Golightly: We do not have them.

Senator Payne: Senator, there were over 40 projects in up to, I think, eight or 10 locations in Australia. Not all of that information is here.

Senator CAMERON: Senator, you are killing them. You are taking the funding away from them. Let me go to this issue. The issue that has been raised with me is that the funding has gone. Minister, did you consult personally with any of these local projects? Did you go and have a look at any of the local projects?

Senator Payne: I do not think I have specifically visited these projects, no.

Senator CAMERON: So, you made a decision to kill these projects without actually visiting them.

Senator Payne: It was a decision made in the context of the budget, yes.

Senator CAMERON: So, regardless of whether they are putting young Aboriginal people into work, regardless of whether they are helping intergenerational unemployment, you have made a decision based on budgetary parameters to kill a project worth about \$11 million in a department that is operating on billions of dollars. Is that correct?

Senator Payne: As the budget paper says, the savings from this measure will be redirected by the government to repair the budget and to fund policy priorities.

Senator CAMERON: So it will repair the so-called budget emergency.

Senator Payne: Well, it needed a lot of repair after your turns in government.

Senator CAMERON: These are operating right across the country. I am getting information back from them that—

Senator Payne: There are a few locations.

Senator CAMERON: They are operating in areas of pretty high unemployment and disadvantage, are they not?

Ms Campbell: There are 10 locations.

Senator CAMERON: They are areas of high unemployment and disadvantage. Is that correct?

Ms Campbell: That was the reason for targeting those locations.

Senator CAMERON: Secretary, did you provide advice—and I am not asking you what the advice was—to the minister on the future of these projects?

Ms Campbell: I did provide advice to the minister, yes.

Senator CAMERON: Did you forward to the minister details of the reports coming back on the success of these projects?

Ms Campbell: I provided advice to the minister.

Senator CAMERON: Are you aware of the success of these projects?

Ms Campbell: I am aware of some of the results coming from some of the projects, yes

Senator CAMERON: And the positive results for young people who are unemployed?

Ms Campbell: We know that there are some positive results. We look at the cost benefits of positive results and the way money can be prioritised.

Senator CAMERON: So you have done a cost-benefit analysis, have you? It is one of the few places that the coalition has done a cost-benefit analysis then! What is the cost-benefit analysis that you have done?

Ms Campbell: I did not say that. I said we look at how funding is allocated. That is how some of those projects were supported in the first place: 'What are the most likely positive outcomes?'

Senator CAMERON: Have any of these 10 projects failed to meet their commitments under the funding that was allocated?

Ms Campbell: The funding remains in place for those projects. This was a four-year program.

Senator CAMERON: Yes, but whether the funding is there is not the key issue. You provide some funding. But you have removed the local coordinator and the national coordinator, haven't you?

Ms Campbell: Those positions have been removed, yes.

Senator CAMERON: I am advised that the national coordinator and the local coordinator are absolutely fundamental to the operation and management of the 10 schemes.

Ms Campbell: There was one year left of this program. That is the year that has been abolished.

Senator CAMERON: That is why it seems so petty to stop a program that is helping young Indigenous Australians, young Australians suffering intergenerational unemployment. Minister, why would you kill this scheme when it is doing so well?

Senator Payne: I made it clear that the decision was made in the context of the budget to redirect the savings from this particular measure to actions by the government to repair the budget—which, frankly, your government left in a situation which has necessitated a whole range of decisions, including this one—and to fund this government's policy priorities.

Senator CAMERON: So you repair the budget by destroying 10 schemes that have been providing support to young unemployed Indigenous Australians to get them into work. You destroy a scheme that is supported by charities and businesses across the 10 programs. Did you talk to any of the charities about the issue?

Senator Payne: You can use those words but, as the secretary made quite clear, there are over 40 projects funded under this scheme which are continuing in 2014-15. Those projects are not affected by this decision.

Senator CAMERON: They are affected.

Senator Payne: I said in 2014-15.

Senator CAMERON: How do they continue without the national coordinator and the local coordinator? How does that work?

Senator Payne: A number of them are underway.

Ms Golightly: The contracts that are in place at the moment are being honoured and are not ceasing. We are working with the host organisations to put arrangements in place for the transition of the coordinator. The other coordinator, in the local area, is a staff member of the Department of Human Services.

Senator CAMERON: That is the national coordinator?

Ms Golightly: I am not sure of the distinction you are making between national and local.

Senator CAMERON: I thought one was described as the national coordinator and one was described as the local coordinator.

Ms Golightly: Not the ones I am familiar with.

Senator CAMERON: Let's not argue that detail. There are two coordinators for each of the 10 projects, right?

Ms Golightly: There is a government action leader in the area—that is one coordinator—and they may be looking after multiple projects.

Senator Payne: That person is a member of the Department of Human Services.

Senator CAMERON: What is the cost to the department for those national coordinators on this program?

Ms Golightly: I would have to take that on notice.

Ms Campbell: Are you talking about our staff?

Senator CAMERON: Yes. I think the locals describe them as the national coordinator.

Senator Payne: They were called government action leaders.

Senator CAMERON: So government action leaders are basically employees of DHS?

Senator Payne: They are, absolutely.

Senator CAMERON: How many staff have you got nationally?

Ms Campbell: The full-time equivalent is about 30,000.

Senator CAMERON: How many staff have you allocated to this program?

Ms Campbell: There were 10 allocated to this program.

Senator CAMERON: Out of 30,000 staff, you have allocated 10 staff to a program to help communities get disadvantaged people into jobs. You have removed those 10 now, have you? They have gone?

Ms Golightly: No. Those 10 were allocated to helping these projects. There are many other staff in the department who help with disadvantaged Australians. These 10 staff remain with the department, and indeed remain with the local area, and will provide services to the local area.

Senator CAMERON: I am pretty aware of how to follow these answers; I have been here long enough now. These 10 staff are removed from direct and specific allocation to these programs, is that correct?

Ms Campbell: The program is not continuing. The contracts that are in place are continuing.

Senator CAMERON: So you are killing the program.

Senator Payne: No, Senator. That does not mean that there will not be ongoing liaison and service support. That is part of our job and it is what we do.

Ms Campbell: It is part of our day-to-day job. These people are going to stay, and probably at the same desk.

Senator CAMERON: They are at the same desk. But they are not doing the same thing, are they?

Ms Campbell: They will still have an engagement with the community in those 10 locations.

Senator CAMERON: But they were allocated specifically and exclusively to these programs, weren't they?

Ms Campbell: As the action leaders, yes.

Senator CAMERON: And that is no longer the situation, by the ministerial decision?

Ms Golightly: Because there will not be any projects.

Senator CAMERON: Because the projects are killed, right?

Ms Golightly: The projects that are currently under contract will continue until the end of their contract.

Senator CAMERON: But my advice is that, without the government action leader and without the local input which is funded through the program, they cannot run them. I have spoken to charities and business groups. They say, without these two people, the program is dead. It does not matter if the money is there, they say they cannot run the program. Have you received that advice as well?

Ms Golightly: As I mentioned before, there are two coordinators—

Senator CAMERON: I am asking you: have you received that advice?

Ms Golightly: I am trying to get to the answer.

Senator CAMERON: There is two minutes.

CHAIR: Senator Cameron, would you allow the officer to answer the question.

Senator SESELJA: You are bullying the witness.

Senator CAMERON: Don't you talk about being a bully! I would like to hear the answer.

Ms Golightly: We have talked about the government action leaders and they will still be in the zone, as will other staff, to help any community organisation that might need help. With regard to the other coordinator, who resides with the host organisation, we are working with the host organisation on an orderly transition, particularly for those projects which still have a way to run.

Senator CAMERON: An orderly transition—

CHAIR: This is your last question, Senator Cameron.

Senator CAMERON: An orderly transition means that the local coordinators, who are absolutely fundamental to the ongoing projects, are gone. So the whole project, which is about helping young unemployed Indigenous people, disadvantaged people, is gone. With the billions of dollars that go to this department, you cannot find \$7 million to keep young people in employment?

Senator Payne: This is a budget decision, as I have said.

Senator CAMERON: What an absolute joke!

Senator Payne: Even in the 2012-13 budget, over \$3 million was removed from this program; it is a program that has been under review for some time. You might recall who was responsible for the 2012-13 budget, Senator. As a budget decision, we have to deal with the repair to the budget and we have to fund our policy priorities as well.

Senator CAMERON: And just destroy people's lives on the way through!

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Unfortunately—

Senator CAMERON: Can I just—

CHAIR: No, Senator Cameron.

Senator CAMERON: I want to make a statement. I do not want to ask a question. It is a procedural issue.

CHAIR: No, the time has finished.

Senator CAMERON: Chair, I am entitled to have a point of order.

CHAIR: Senator Cameron, you were given your last question and the minister responded. We are now adjourned.

Senator CAMERON: You have not adjourned and I have got a point of order.

CHAIR: I just told you there is no point of order.

Senator CAMERON: More cover ups from this government—what an absolute joke you lot are!

CHAIR: Minister and officers, thank you very much for your professionalism and assistance. I also thank Hansard and officers of the secretariat for their assistance right throughout the estimates process. Thank you everyone. This committee stands adjourned.

Committee adjourned 11:30