

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 22 OCTOBER 2015 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Member of a Couple and Tip-offs

Question reference number: HS 185

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 11 December 2015

Number of pages: 2

Question:

In the financial year of 2014-15 in relation to Member of a Couple” (MOC) relationships:

- a) How many reviews by each payment combination?
- b) How many investigations undertaken by Centrelink’s Business Integrity Unit?
- c) How many “tip-offs” were received? What were the outcomes of these “tip-offs”? (For example, in relation to MOC tip-offs”, how many led to criminal prosecutions, how many led to how much debt, no action being taken, etc.)
- d) How many debts were raised, what was the total value of debts raised and provide a breakdown of the range of debts raised? (Provide data by payment type and other payments e.g. Family Tax Benefit, Rent Assistance).
- e) How many payments were cancelled?
- f) How many MOC debts led to prosecutions?

Answer:

- a) Member of a Couple reviews / investigations completed in 2014-15:

(Primary) Payment Type	Completed Interventions
ABSTUDY Payment	54
Age Pension	1,876
Austudy Payment	206
Carer Allowance	183
Carer Payment	1,940
Child Care Benefit	90
Disability Support Pension	5,945
Family Tax Benefit	3,463
Newstart Allowance	10,899
Parenting Payment Partnered	127
Parenting Payment Single	18,716

Sickness Allowance	82
Widow Allowance	122
Youth Allowance Job Seeker	1,007
Youth Allowance Student	328
Other Payment Types	88
Total	45,126

b) In the 2014-15 financial year, the Department conducted 20 investigations into potential fraud relating to Member of a Couple.

c) In 2014-15:

- 52,643 tip-offs received related to alleged Member of a Couple allegations;
- 33,735 ¹reviews/investigations completed did not result in a debt or reduction in payment;
- 1,209² reviews/investigations completed resulted in a debt and/or a reduction in payment; and
- 329 debts were raised totalling \$1,930,874.

Note: a single review/investigation can result in more than one debt.

The remaining 17,699 cases were either assessed as not warranting further action (such as duplicate and incomplete tip-offs) or were still undergoing assessment as at 30 June 2015.

The Department referred three alleged Member of a Couple cases resulting from tip-offs to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration.

d) The total number of debts raised in 2014-15 in relation to Member of a Couple relationships was 551. The value of these debts raised was \$3,889,225:

(Primary) Payment Type	Debts Raised (No.)	Debts Raised (\$)
ABSTUDY Payment	<20	\$13
Age Pension	<20	\$125,392
Austudy Payment	<20	\$33,405
Carer Payment	29	\$368,486
Disability Support Pension	74	\$558,283
Family Tax Benefit	20	\$37,898
Newstart Allowance	172	\$387,303
Parenting Payment Single	218	\$2,362,504
Sickness Allowance	<20	\$389
Widow Allowance	<20	\$190
Youth Allowance Job Seeker	<20	\$8,912
Youth Allowance Student	<20	\$6,450
Total	551	\$3,889,225

e) The number of payment cancellations was 282.

f) The Department does not hold prosecution data. This is held by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP). In the 2014-15 financial year, the Department referred seven Member of a Couple cases resulting from all sources, including tip-offs, to the CDPP for prosecution consideration.

¹ Tip-off completed number includes office referrals.

² Tip-off completed number includes office referrals.