

## **Senate Community Affairs References Committee**

### **DESIGN, SCOPE, COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS, CONTRACTS AWARDED AND IMPLEMENTATION ASSOCIATED WITH THE BETTER MANAGEMENT OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM INITIATIVE**

**PUBLIC HEARING 10 APRIL 2017**

**ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Department of Human Services**

**Topic:** Retaining pay-slips

**Question reference number:** QoN 97

**Member:** SIEWERT

**Type of question:** Hansard page 12-13

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 5 May 2017

**Number of pages:** 1

#### **Question:**

**Senator SIEWERT:** Do you know what you are telling people now?

Mr McNamara: I can take that on notice as well.

#### **Answer:**

On the Department's website under 'Income Reporting' and within the 'Information you need to know about reporting employment and using the Earnings Worksheet', it advises customers to keep evidence of their earnings (payslips) as they may be asked to provide proof of their income in the future.

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**PUBLIC HEARING 10 APRIL 2017**

**ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Department of Human Services**

**Topic:** Call logs

**Question reference number:** QoN 99

**Member:**

**Type of question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 5 May 2017

**Number of pages:** 1

#### **Question:**

Evidence was received from Mr Phil Saunders of the South Australian Council of Social Service during the committee's hearing in Adelaide on 10 April 2017, that a person received a call purportedly from a Centrelink officer. The person later called Centrelink to query the source of call and was told the call would have been from Centrelink, although there was no record in the system that this call had been made.

Please clarify whether all outgoing calls are logged, and in the instance cited above, please advise if this call could be from a Centrelink officer if there was no record of the call in the database.

#### **Answer:**

There is an expectation that contact with a recipient is documented on their record by the relevant Centrelink officer. However, because this is a manual process, not every single call is logged.

With the limited information that has been presented, it is hard to determine with any certainty that the original call was from Centrelink.

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**PUBLIC HEARING 10 APRIL 2017**

**ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Department of Human Services**

**Topic:** Blocked calls data

**Question reference number:** QoN 100

**Member:**

**Type of question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 5 May 2017

**Number of pages:** 1

#### **Question:**

Please provide blocked calls data for a nominated date (10 April 2017). Please provide this data broken down by time periods per day and for each helpline.

#### **Answer:**

Call blocking is not applied to Compliance lines.

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**PUBLIC HEARING 10 APRIL 2017**

**ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Department of Human Services**

**Topic:** Debt Collection Guidelines

**Question reference number:** QoN 107

**Member:**

**Type of question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 5 May 2017

**Number of pages:** 1

**Question:**

Does DHS comply with relevant debt collection guidelines with regards the internal debt collection activities of the department. If so, how are those guidelines incorporated into operating procedures and manuals

**Answer:**

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) consumer protection legislation provisions may apply to Commonwealth agencies that carry on a business or engage in 'trade or commerce'.

While the Department's activities in relation to debt collection would not normally meet the threshold of being of a trading or commercial character and the Department is not technically required to comply, the Department have chosen to adopt the following procedures. These procedures align with the relevant ACCC Debt Collection Guideline for Collectors and Creditors:

- collection and disposing of information in line with the Australian Privacy Principles;
- adherence to reasonable hours and frequency of contact;
- consideration of an individual's financial circumstances when negotiating payment arrangements;
- provision of information and documents, including under Freedom of information;
- suspension of debt recovery when a review is requested;
- record keeping;
- appropriate conduct of staff;
- offering debtors the right of review and appeal;
- adherence to the Bankruptcy Act 1966; and
- notification to the debtor regarding possible further recovery action.

These procedures are incorporated into the Department's internal operating procedures.