

Senate Community Affairs References Committee

INQUIRY INTO CENTRELINK'S COMPLIANCE PROGRAM

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Social Services Portfolio
Services Australia

Topic: OCI Scheme - Debt Evidence

Question reference number: IQ22-000005

Member: Janet Rice

Type of question: Written. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 07 February 2022

Question:

1. What is the number of Taskforce Integrity investigations involving debt raised through or partially through the Online Compliance Intervention (OCI) scheme (Robodebt) for each of the following financial years 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020?
2. During investigations into income discrepancies through the OCI scheme, did Taskforce Integrity investigators and police officers ever raise concerns about the poor evidentiary basis for debts raised?
 - a. What actions were taken by Services Australia if concerns were raised?

Answer:

The existence of a debt is not relevant to the commencement of criminal investigations.

Taskforce Integrity focuses on criminal investigations into serious offences such as fraud and identity theft, which may result in a referral to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP) to consider prosecution action. The administrative process of raising and recovering debt, including those debts related to the Income Compliance Program, is not a reason for a criminal investigation and subsequent referral to the CDPP. The Agency, including Taskforce Integrity, does not conduct a criminal investigation into a person because they have a debt. Rather, the investigation occurs because the Agency suspects that the relevant person has committed a criminal offence. For example, obtaining a financial advantage by deception.

Senate Community Affairs References Committee

INQUIRY INTO CENTRELINK'S COMPLIANCE PROGRAM

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Social Services Portfolio
Services Australia

Topic: OCI Debt Outcomes

Question reference number: IQ22-000010

Member: Janet Rice

Type of question: Written. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 07 February 2022

Question:

Since the Federal Court of Australia approved the settlement in the Robodebt Class Action in June 2021, what is the number of debts that have been:

- a. Zeroed?
- b. Reassessed?
- c. Refunded?

Answer:

96.5 per cent of debts were refunded or zeroed before 11 June 2021.

From 11 June 2021 to 31 December 2021:

- a. 9,997
- b. As outlined in SQ19-000173, customers can provide additional information, and seek a reassessment, at any time following the raising of a debt. In relation to the Income Compliance Program there is no data available to identify all instances where a reassessment was requested by a customer.
- c. 8,188