

Senate Select Committee on the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme

PUBLIC HEARING 13 November 2024

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Social Services Portfolio
Services Australia

Topic: TFES Consultation Visit

Question reference number: IQ24-000044

Member: Anne Urquhart

Type of question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 48

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 22 November 2024

Question:

Senator URQUHART: If you can take that on notice, that would be good. Were they scheduled to go? Did they turn up? How did they actually get that information out to people for consultation? Whom was invited? What is the process of how people get to know about it?

Ms Callinan: Our agency do conduct remote servicing, and it may be that we had a team scheduled to go to Flinders Island at that time.

Senator URQUHART: And King Island?

Ms Callinan: Potentially, yes.

Senator URQUHART: In September, too.

Ms Callinan: I would need to take that on notice. We routinely do remote servicing to the islands. Whether that was directly related to this scheme or other general business conducted across Services Australia, we would have to check.

Senator URQUHART: The information I have is it was directly related to TFES.

Ms Callinan: I'll check that.

Senator URQUHART: I would be really interested. If you can take that on notice and then provide what they do and what information they get, but also how do they disseminate the fact that they're coming out, that they're going to visit a place? And if they don't turn up, why don't they turn up?

Mr Piazza: Generally, in terms of some of the servicing, on the mainland you may be aware we have our mobile services set up. I can certainly talk in terms of them. There is quite a communication campaign that is done through local media advising when Services Australia will be in town.

Senator URQUHART: I know what you're getting at.

Mr Piazza: I'm saying if they did go to King Island and Flinders and it was ourselves, I imagine we would follow a similar process in terms of informing people.

Senator URQUHART: If you can take that on notice, it would be appreciated.

Answer:

Service Australia's (the Agency) Remote Servicing Team routinely visit both Flinders Island and King Island as part of their regular outreach programs. The Agency arranged for a Tasmania Freight Equalisation Scheme (TFES) expert to visit Flinders Island on 6 September 2024 as part of the Remote Servicing Team's routine visit that week. This visit was arranged after the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, and the Agency,

met with Flinders Island Council. The Agency's visit was promoted via social media, posters and emails to various third-party organisations on Flinders Island. The promotional material invited businesses and claimants to meet with staff if they need information about TFES.

Unfortunately, the TFES staff member became unwell and was unable to travel with the Remote Servicing Team and no alternative arrangements could be made at the time. Instead, arrangements were made for the Remote Servicing Team to connect the one claimant who had scheduled an appointment on Flinders Island, and any other claimants who attended on the day, with a TFES assessor based in Hobart via telephone. Feedback received was that those with questions about TFES were satisfied with the assistance provided.

The Agency's Remote Servicing Team is scheduled to visit Flinders Island in March 2025 and arrangements will be made to have a TFES staff member attend to provide information about TFES. Arrangements will also be made for a TFES staff member to visit King Island in the first half of 2025 in accordance with the Agency's remote servicing schedule. Flinders Island and King Island residents are able to contact the TFES team by calling 131 158 or emailing tfes.support@servicesaustralia.gov.au.