

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 26 APRIL 2017

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Calculation of Income Support

Question reference number: QoN 166

Member: Senator Bilyk

Type of question: Hansard page 45

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 9 May 2017

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator BILYK: Are redundancies and those sorts of things included in the process used to calculate people's debts?

Mr Hutson: That would very much depend on the circumstances. You are getting into a matter of detail regarding the calculation of income support that I am afraid is probably not easily answered, but I will certainly take that question on notice and provide more detail for you.

Answer:

Termination and leave payments may be included in debt calculations.

The effect of the termination or leave or payments on a person's Income Support Payment (ISP) varies depending upon the type of payment the person received and:

- the period ISP was paid for,
- the means test relevant to the ISP,
- the type of leave or redundancy payment paid,
- the amount of leave or redundancy payment paid,
- whether the employment has ceased or is continuing,
- the period the leave or redundancy payment was paid for, and
- whether the leave or redundancy payment was declared within the relevant notification period.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Tax file number

Question reference number: QoN 168

Member: Senator Siewert

Type of question: Hansard page 47

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 9 May 2017

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: Why is that? Is it because it is associated with the tax file number and you do not use the tax file number?

Mr Hutson: I simply do not know.

Senator SIEWERT: Could you take that on notice.

Mr Hutson: I will also find out whether or not we could get the information on addresses from the tax office.

Answer:

The *Privacy (Tax File Number) Rule 2015* governs the use of the Tax File Number which is restricted to specific uses and does not cover the Employment Income Matching Program.

The Department undertakes data matching with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) for this Program, in line with the *Guidelines on Data-matching in Australian Government Administration*.

The Employment Income Matching Program uses Pay As You Go information provided to the ATO from employers. This information includes address information, as recorded by the employer, for the relevant period of employment. In some instances, this data may be more than five years old depending on the match period.

Recipients who are included in this Program are those who were on payment during the employment period. Therefore, the address held by the Department is likely to be, either more up to date or, the same address information provided by employers to the ATO.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Statistics on sick leave

Question reference number: QoN 176

Member: Senator Bilyk

Type of question: Hansard page 56

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 9 May 2017

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator BILYK: To me, this is probably one of the most important questions, actually: do you keep statistics on sick leave? If so—and I hope you do—can I have a breakdown of the sick leave taken within the department prior to the implementation of OCI and from then to date?

Mr Hutson: Yes.

Answer:

The amount of sick leave taken by departmental staff fluctuates from year to year. As at 31 August 2016 departmental staff took some 12.41 days in sick leave per annum compared to 12.75 days per annum as at 30 April 2017. Sick leave for staff implementing the Online Compliance Initiative declined, however, by some 0.81 days to 12.49 days per annum over the same period.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Reassessment

Question reference number: QoN 179

Member: Senator

Type of question: Hansard page 57

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 9 May 2017

Number of pages: 1

Question:

CHAIR: Are they being reassessed? If you are reassessing the 56,000, why would you not reassess the other two categories?

Mr Hutson: I will take that question on notice as well.

Answer:

The Department will write to all recipients who had an Online Compliance Intervention debt, to remind them of their review rights, including the application of the recovery fee.