

Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs

Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes No. 2) Bill 2025

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Finance Portfolio
Services Australia

Topic: Supporting evidence for financial coercion or abuse

Question reference number: IQ25-000012

Asked By: Senator Penny Allman-Payne

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 14 October 2025

Question:

1. Both Working with Women Alliance's and Single Mothers Australia's submission highlights the need for a wide range of supporting evidence to be accepted to demonstrate financial coercion or abuse. What evidence will be required?
2. Working with Women Alliance's submission recommends that the Government should mandate training for Service Australia staff to ensure trauma-informed, survivor-centred service delivery. Is this something that the Government will be implementing in relation to these changes?

Answer:

1. There is no set criteria or list of required evidence when determining whether special circumstances exist. The special circumstances waiver requires consideration of a person's circumstances in their entirety. Each case must be considered on its own merits.

Services Australia (the Agency) may consider a person's experiences of financial abuse and coercion and make decisions based on the evidence available and the circumstances of the individual case. This includes the customer's own statements and account of events, and indicators on the customer's record (such as notes of partnered status, homelessness, mental health, or social worker involvement). Staff can refer customers to social workers and consider the social worker's assessment as part of their decision making. Staff can also seek other information that is not currently held by the Agency to support their decision where available and appropriate, such as police or court documents, and third-party verification from support services, counsellors, doctors, or accommodation providers.

2. The Agency uses a Family and Domestic Violence Support Model that provides a consistent framework to help staff identify cues and ask risk identification questions of customers that may be impacted by Family and Domestic Violence. The Agency also has a suite of mandatory training packages to help relevant staff identify and support customers affected by Family and Domestic Violence.

As always, the Agency will engage with our staff to address any new training needs that may arise when taking on new or changing types of work.