

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 11 APRIL 2017

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Auditing incorrect debt repayments

Question reference number: QoN 114

Member: Senator Pratt

Type of question: Hansard page 5

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

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator PRATT: In terms of how many people have thought, 'Well, if the department sent me a letter, they've got more information than I do,' has the department done an assessment of how many people have just assumed that the letters are correct and that they have a liability when, in fact, they may not? Has the department started to have a look at people who are now repaying debts, but who would not, in fact, owe a debt or would owe a debt that would be much lower, if you were to go back to look at the peaks and troughs in their income as they have reported it to you already? Has the department started to do any of those calculations, in terms of auditing people who are repaying so 115 called debts to work out whether a debt exists in all cases?

Mr Mowbray-d'Arbela: Not that I am aware of directly, but I can take that on notice and come back to you

Answer:

The Department will contact people who have a debt and did not engage with the Department during the review process by the end of August 2017. The purpose of the contact is to ensure that these people are aware of the circumstances of the debt and their rights to reassessment or review. If people request a reassessment or review of their debt, the Department will pause debt recovery for the duration of the review, unless the person requests to enter into a payment arrangement.