

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

INQUIRY INTO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment

Question reference number: IQ20-000118

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 21 August 2020

Number of pages: 2

Question:

In relation to the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment:

- a) How many applications have been received?
- b) How many applications have been approved?
- c) How many applications are on hand/being assessed?
- d) How many applications have been rejected?
- e) What is the average processing time for an application?
- f) What is the longest processing time for an application?
- g) How many people have applied for the payment more than once?
- h) How many people have been granted the payment more than once?
- i) How is Services Australia cross-checking with the Victorian authorities to ensure people are eligible for the Payment?
- j) If a person is not eligible for the Payment e.g. non-citizen, are people provided with advice about alternative payments e.g. those provided by the Victorian Government
- k) Will there be future compliance action, and debt raising, if people are found not to be eligible for the payment?

Answer:

As at midnight 16 August 2020, Services Australia (the Agency) has:

- a) Received 5,712 claims for Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment.
- b) Granted 4,425 claims for Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment.
- c) 1,223 claims pending for Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment.
- d) 64 claims for Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment have been rejected.
- e) The majority of claims are finalised and paid over the phone when a person first makes contact.

- f) The majority of claims are finalised and paid over the phone when a person first makes contact.
- g) This data cannot be de-identified at this point in time.
- h) This data cannot be de-identified at this point in time.
- i) Services Australia is working with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to exchange information in order for Services Australia to administer and pay the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment to eligible recipients.
- j) Staff are trained to assist callers to apply for alternative income support if they are not eligible for the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment.
- k) Services Australia will undertake robust integrity checking to identify erroneous or fraudulent claims. During the payment process, Services Australia will capture the additional information required for compliance checks. On 3 April 2020, Services Australia paused debt raising and recovery for a period of 6 months to ease pressure on people's budgets during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment overpayments are recoverable. Overpayments will be identified during this national debt pausing period but the Agency will suspend the debt actions where they are not part of serious non-compliance or fraud.