

Committee

Public Hearing – 22 January 2021
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Sign off for the Redress Scheme

Question reference number: IQ21-000001

Senator: Sharon Claydon

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 3-4

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 05 February 2021

Question:

Ms CLAYDON: Finally, it was asked of the committee why there is a practice to send out those emails that are just signed off in a generic way, as 'from the National Redress Scheme', and there's not a person identified—the email is not coming from a particular contact person within NRS. Do you have a response to that? I've seen the email—all committee members have. It is signed off by the National Redress Scheme but there is no name, contact number or anything attached to it. Is that a standard practice or is that something unusual?

Ms Hefren-Webb: We can check, but my understanding is that it has been standard practice for the Redress Scheme. We will confirm that for you on notice, if that's alright. I just don't have—

Ms CLAYDON: Okay; and, if it is standard practice, I guess an explanation as to why. It's an issue that gets raised with us from time to time about having a more personal kind of engagement. So, if it is standard practice, if you could provide the rationale as to why you wouldn't have an officer identifying themselves and being a point of contact for service providers, that would be very helpful.

Ms Hefren-Webb: Yes, we will provide that on notice. I'm sorry, deputy chair.

Answer:

It is the Department of Social Services' practice that all emails engaging with organisations outside of the Scheme should include a particular contact person. Not providing a name at the end of the email, in relation to the correspondence referred to, was an oversight.

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Public Hearing – 22 January 2021 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Number of applications that cover multiple institutions

Question reference number: IQ21-000002

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 4-5

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 05 February 2021

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: Can I go to the rest of the 362. My understanding is that at least one organisation is yet to join. We've had multiple discussions about the fact that there was a much higher number than expected of people covered by more than one institution or where their application included multiple institutions. Are you able to tell us: of those 362, have you got a breakdown of the number of institutions that they cover that are yet to join?

Mr Riley: I don't think I can answer that specific question, but I can give you some detail around that group of applications on hold.

Senator SIEWERT: That would be great.

Mr Riley: Specifically, in relation to declaration 1, which will encompass the remainder of the 158 priority institutions, we will onboard 31 institutions, and that will free up 110 applications to go forward. I've got a little bit of further information. Of the applications on hold, as at 15 January, 15 NGIs—non-government institutions—account for 55 per cent of those. Within that, six are onboarding to the scheme as part of the 158 group—that's related to the 110 that I gave you earlier—and a further six are likely to be defunct. So they will be subject to further consideration as to whether they are in scope for funder-of-last-resort arrangements.

Senator SIEWERT: Sorry—how many were defunct?

Mr Riley: Of the 15, six.

Senator SIEWERT: Would you take on notice—I note you've done it before—the number of applications that cover multiple institutions where they're not onboarded yet or haven't joined.

Mr Riley: Yes, certainly.

Answer:

As of 15 January 2021, there are 362 applications on hold relating to 180 non-government institutions (NGIs) that have not yet joined the Scheme. Of this:

- 66 NGIs are on-boarding (exchanging paperwork with the department);
- 43 NGIs are in outreach (early engagement with the department);
- 68 NGIs are defunct, of which 19 NGIs are being considered for Funder-of-Last Resort;
- Three NGIs have declined and have been publicly named as declining to join the Scheme.

Of the 362 applications on hold, 286 applications name two or more institutions.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: AGD and Home Affairs lead

Question reference number: IQ21-000003

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 6-7

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 05 February 2021

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: Have you investigated where that came from?

Ms Hefren-Webb: We don't have the particular media in front of us, but, if it was commenting on the Home Affairs litigation, Home Affairs would have been responsible for providing any response to a journalist on that matter. We worked with Home Affairs, apparently, to provide input to a response, but it would have come through them.

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you. You did work with them, and then they were basically the spokespeople?

Ms Hefren-Webb: I think they drafted a response and we provided some minor wording adjustments, as I understand it, and we sent it back to them. I haven't followed up on whether they passed that on to the journalist or how that was handled by them.

CHAIR: On the question to officials—this is again to Senator Siewert—can we be a little bit more specific about what media references we're talking about? Is there a date? Is there a time? Is there a particular story to which you can point us or other colleagues or others who might be listening?

Senator SIEWERT: I'll have to find it, Chair.

CHAIR: Okay. I don't recall seeing it myself. I'm just interested in the Fairbridge matter, as you know.

Senator SIEWERT: Yes. I'm on leave, and I heard it while I was away.

CHAIR: I see.

Senator SIEWERT: I will get my office to chase it up, but I also ask the department: if anything was formally put out, are you able to provide us with a copy, or do we need to chase Home Affairs for that?

Ms Hefren-Webb: Can I take that on notice?

Senator SIEWERT: Yes. Thank you. I'm aware I've taken up a chunk of time, so I'll make this my last question. For the process that you've articulated—and thank you for that—with the other agency, do you have a

time line that you have drawn together for when you expect to have meetings to try and move this matter along and resolve it in terms of coming to a combined process?

Ms Hefren-Webb: We've had a series of meetings, as I said. Following the last hearing, our secretary instructed to us ensure we were working in a joined-up way, and we have been

doing that. We've had a series of meetings. Obviously, AGD and Home Affairs have the lead on the actual negotiation or discussions with the Prince's Trust on the matter. So I would need to get their agreement if they're to provide any detail on dates or anything like that.

Senator SIEWERT: If you could take that on notice, that would be appreciated. Thank you.
Ms Hefren-Webb: Absolutely.

Answer:

Neither the Department of Social Services nor the Department of Home Affairs have made any recent formal statements in relation to the settlement with the Prince's Trust.

The Department of Home Affairs has advised that the negotiations between the Australian Government and the Prince's Trust are ongoing, and as the negotiations are ongoing, no further comment or detail can be provided.

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Public Hearing – 22 January 2021
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Relation to the period of time

Question reference number: IQ21-000004

Senator: Celia Hammond

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 05 February 2021

Question:

Ms HAMMOND: Thank you for answering that. Unfortunately, I was disconnected just after you started answering that, but I am going to rely on Hansard, so I won't make you go through that again. I can't ask any follow-up question since I didn't hear the answer, but I've got one more question. I know the chair has questions as well. My final question is in relation to the period of time. For those which have been finalised, what's the average period of time between somebody putting an application in and it being finalised?

Ms Hefren-Webb: I am just asking whether we have the most recent data in front of us. At one stage around 13 months was the average time.

Ms McGuirk: I think it's probably best for us to take that question on notice, because we haven't more recently run that data. I think that, to give you the best possible answer, it will be best to take that on notice at this stage to give you the updated time.

Answer:

As at 22 January 2021, the average period of time to finalise an application is around 13 months. Delays arise through requiring more detail from applicants, locating and contacting institutions, and finalising all steps to on board an institution.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Revoking of the charitable status

Question reference number: IQ21-000005

Senator: Dean Smith

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 11

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 05 February 2021

Question:

CHAIR: On that revoking of the charitable status, is that intended to be retrospective or just prospective? For example, if a charity has behaved poorly but been in receipt of benefits because of its charitable status during the time of its poor behaviour, is it intended to make it retrospective or just from the point of revocation?

Ms Stuart: My understanding is that it's not retrospective. I would like to confirm that for you on notice, though.

Answer:

The Treasury has confirmed that the new Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission governance standard will apply prospectively.