

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Social Services Portfolio

Department of Social Services

2024-25 Budget Estimates

Topic: Compliance and Debt Recovery

Question reference number: DSS SQ24-000389

Question asked by: Linda Reynolds

Outcome Number: 1 - Social Security

Type of Question: Spoken

Hansard Page/s: 37

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 25 July 2024

Question:

Senator REYNOLDS: [...] I think this is a joint DSS and Services Australia question. Have you got figures of what debts are currently outstanding and for how long for various payments?

Mr Flavel: To be broken down by payment we'd need to take that on notice because it's both disaggregated by payment but also I think what you're looking for in relation to the period outstanding, we'd definitely need to come back with.

Senator REYNOLDS: Thanks. I'd like all payment types, all debts and the nature of the debt. Do you have any attributions? What are some of the reasons for the debts? Was it that the clients, in terms of their claims, were in error. Can you take all that on notice?

Answer:

- Refer **Attachment A** for outstanding social security debts by payment type and age as at 30 April 2024.
- Refer **Attachment B** for outstanding social security debts by reason as at 30 April 2024.

SQ24-000389 – ATTACHMENT A

Outstanding Social Security Debt by Benefit Group and Age as at 30 April 2024												
Benefit Group		Age of Debt (since raised)										Total
		< 30 Days	30 - 90 Days	3 - 6 months	6 - 12 Months	1 - 2 Years	2 - 3 Years	3 - 4 Years	4 - 5 Years	5 - 6 Years	> 6 Years	
Jobseeker Payment	No. Debts	6,910	8,405	9,000	19,090	28,750	31,260	17,665	115	0	0	121,190
	No. Debtors	6,650	7,895	8,330	17,355	23,375	23,265	12,655	80	0	0	99,610
	Balance (\$m)	7.35	7.36	7.49	14.95	30.11	29.43	15.93	0.03	0.00	0.00	112.65
Newstart Allowance	No. Debts	65	70	80	245	1,380	2,385	3,555	12,935	13,245	69,115	103,070
	No. Debtors	35	40	55	165	1,015	1,785	2,685	10,470	10,385	44,150	75,765
	Balance (\$m)	1.23	0.71	0.48	2.25	5.10	9.86	14.48	29.86	36.29	229.49	329.75
Parenting Payment Single	No. Debts	1,380	1,470	1,905	3,185	4,950	4,540	2,865	4,265	5,060	31,660	61,280
	No. Debtors	1,325	1,330	1,675	2,650	3,875	3,225	1,935	3,180	3,520	16,345	47,585
	Balance (\$m)	3.20	3.20	5.54	9.89	18.93	22.12	24.03	29.66	40.73	298.69	455.98
Parenting Payment Partnered	No. Debts	445	605	540	980	1,725	3,095	1,485	1,550	1,705	11,225	23,355
	No. Debtors	355	455	385	650	1,060	1,690	925	1,110	1,230	6,145	17,800
	Balance (\$m)	0.56	1.14	0.64	2.02	3.94	6.21	5.87	10.56	11.83	64.49	107.26
Youth Allowance Employment	No. Debts	680	860	1,060	1,900	2,355	2,240	1,330	1,180	1,175	3,630	16,410
	No. Debtors	665	835	1,010	1,775	2,090	1,975	1,135	955	975	2,490	15,120
	Balance (\$m)	0.56	0.54	0.56	0.92	1.56	1.74	1.01	1.38	1.50	4.68	14.45
Sickness Allowance	No. Debts	5	5	10	10	40	80	80	335	375	935	1,870
	No. Debtors	5	5	5	5	25	60	60	280	300	570	1,750
	Balance (\$m)	0.04	0.01	0.05	0.06	0.14	0.43	0.41	1.08	1.26	3.56	7.04

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Widows Allowance	No. Debts	0	5	0	5	10	30	25	25	55	525	680
	No. Debtors	0	5	0	5	10	20	15	25	40	380	560
	Balance (\$m)	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.08	0.09	0.28	0.40	0.25	0.82	7.66	9.60
Partner Allowance	No. Debts	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	200	215
	No. Debtors	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	150	185
	Balance (\$m)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.24	0.01	0.05	2.52	2.83
Special Benefit	No. Debts	15	40	30	80	165	205	105	105	110	655	1,505
	No. Debtors	15	40	20	70	135	140	65	85	70	435	1,215
	Balance (\$m)	0.07	0.13	0.08	0.24	0.37	0.75	0.49	0.43	1.12	5.82	9.50
Other Working Age Payments	No. Debts	10	20	55	35	30	10	25	85	60	1,195	1,515
	No. Debtors	10	15	50	30	25	10	20	65	50	510	1,365
	Balance (\$m)	0.03	0.09	0.36	0.09	0.15	0.11	0.13	0.32	0.30	16.53	18.11
Family Tax Benefit (Circumstance)	No. Debts	2,340	3,030	2,985	6,840	7,345	4,260	2,180	5,105	6,180	24,535	64,800
	No. Debtors	1,755	2,305	2,215	4,740	4,710	2,595	1,575	2,980	3,315	12,155	52,775
	Balance (\$m)	0.77	1.08	0.93	2.30	2.45	1.46	0.74	4.89	5.88	40.91	61.41
FTB Reconciliation	No. Debts	11,390	17,060	29,290	101,340	88,815	73,270	35,210	29,595	19,545	36,530	442,045
	No. Debtors	9,760	14,205	24,225	80,505	43,280	28,880	12,245	9,285	6,095	11,915	286,590
	Balance (\$m)	32.16	49.47	81.64	278.77	279.01	229.16	107.68	91.08	61.33	115.30	1,325.60
FTB Non Lodger	No. Debts	165	165	165	20,385	12,090	8,640	6,290	7,025	7,175	54,655	116,760
	No. Debtors	50	50	85	13,880	4,030	3,030	2,485	3,010	3,185	20,620	74,460
	Balance (\$m)	1.40	1.47	1.28	150.78	93.81	59.91	40.90	45.42	48.45	320.80	764.22

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Paid Parental Leave	No. Debts	730	605	400	665	1,465	230	170	110	130	280	4,780
	No. Debtors	560	380	105	340	1,045	115	100	65	80	195	3,315
	Balance (\$m)	2.37	1.40	0.71	1.50	3.36	0.59	0.63	0.30	0.39	0.80	12.06
Other Family Payments	No. Debts	175	235	270	1,125	1,180	1,575	735	930	1,250	17,000	24,480
	No. Debtors	70	85	70	150	130	150	60	120	125	960	19,485
	Balance (\$m)	0.10	0.13	0.15	0.58	0.60	0.87	0.37	0.44	0.76	16.91	20.91
Income Management	No. Debts	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	5	20	55	100
	No. Debtors	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	50	95
	Balance (\$m)	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.07	0.10
Age Pension	No. Debts	2,185	2,525	2,235	4,010	6,165	3,070	1,355	1,125	900	4,405	27,970
	No. Debtors	2,025	2,265	1,990	3,555	5,390	2,600	1,180	790	705	3,280	24,470
	Balance (\$m)	5.74	11.10	6.14	11.86	22.53	13.81	11.45	8.52	9.57	47.28	147.99
Disability Support Pension	No. Debts	1,430	1,805	2,070	4,300	5,095	3,490	1,600	2,365	2,580	15,210	39,950
	No. Debtors	1,255	1,445	1,635	3,300	3,505	2,465	1,115	1,490	1,540	7,005	29,430
	Balance (\$m)	4.36	4.09	4.18	9.10	12.39	11.23	12.15	14.25	19.93	135.33	227.02
Carer Payment	No. Debts	1,165	1,575	1,850	3,350	4,370	2,385	1,265	2,470	2,625	8,050	29,105
	No. Debtors	965	1,260	1,415	2,295	2,825	1,370	800	1,410	1,410	3,615	23,450
	Balance (\$m)	2.46	3.59	4.08	9.49	17.05	12.12	11.40	18.53	22.91	70.89	172.53
Carer Allowance	No. Debts	450	505	550	910	1,445	675	175	670	650	1,940	7,970
	No. Debtors	305	320	230	350	500	250	60	125	120	300	7,480
	Balance (\$m)	0.37	0.54	0.47	1.02	2.36	1.19	0.59	1.11	1.44	3.65	12.76

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Other Pension Payments	No. Debts	30	15	30	145	225	130	95	200	125	605	1,595
	No. Debtors	15	5	5	60	75	40	10	70	35	285	1,325
	Balance (\$m)	0.02	0.02	0.21	0.08	0.27	0.34	0.35	2.55	1.23	5.62	10.69
Youth Allowance Students	No. Debts	820	1,250	1,565	3,030	4,330	4,565	2,640	4,975	4,410	12,665	40,250
	No. Debtors	785	1,155	1,435	2,590	3,190	2,875	1,565	4,065	3,435	7,835	33,600
	Balance (\$m)	2.93	4.96	4.81	13.01	17.93	9.74	5.12	14.78	13.45	43.90	130.62
Austudy	No. Debts	295	450	655	1,270	1,810	1,210	665	1,850	1,575	7,225	17,010
	No. Debtors	255	365	535	905	1,135	630	395	1,260	1,000	3,470	13,930
	Balance (\$m)	1.17	2.04	1.92	6.54	10.49	3.12	1.92	8.85	7.60	32.82	76.47
Abstudy	No. Debts	175	290	460	895	1,360	555	145	625	755	2,905	8,170
	No. Debtors	140	210	355	600	890	310	80	345	390	985	6,210
	Balance (\$m)	0.68	1.21	1.48	4.16	4.74	2.17	0.22	2.27	2.64	9.52	29.07
Assistance to Isolated Children	No. Debts	120	170	95	860	185	25	5	25	65	160	1,715
	No. Debtors	85	115	50	495	75	5	5	5	15	15	1,315
	Balance (\$m)	0.23	0.38	0.16	1.55	0.38	0.06	0.01	0.06	0.14	0.23	3.22
Other Student Payments	No. Debts	680	1,175	1,455	3,050	3,015	3,305	15	2,050	1,620	1,915	18,285
	No. Debtors	380	515	605	1,180	1,070	1,485	5	325	220	195	12,135
	Balance (\$m)	0.79	1.33	1.47	2.87	2.72	2.65	0.02	1.90	1.49	1.79	17.05
Youth Allowance (Combined)	No. Debts	5	5	5	0	5	0	0	0	5	995	1,005
	No. Debtors	5	5	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	515	805
	Balance (\$m)	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	2.37	2.43

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Total	No. Debts	31,650	42,335	56,750	177,705	178,305	151,240	79,705	79,715	71,400	308,270	1,177,080
	No. Debtors	28,500	37,525	50,365	157,225	146,650	118,925	65,630	65,720	58,185	168,205	694,950
	Balance (\$m)	68.62	96.03	124.82	524.11	530.52	419.37	256.54	288.53	291.11	1,481.63	4,081.30

Notes:

1. Data extracted from Statistical Analysis Software (Services Australia).
2. To protect individuals' privacy, all cells including any totals and subtotals have been rounded to the nearest 5, values from 1 to 7 are rounded to 5. Zero cells are actual zeros. This may result in non-additivity for some totals. Caution should be taken in re-calculating totals from rounded data, as this may compound the effects of rounding.
3. All dollar values including any totals and subtotals have been rounded to the nearest \$0.01m, non-zero values lower than \$0.01m are rounded to \$0.01m. Zero cells are actual zeros. This may result in non-additivity for some totals. Caution should be taken in re-calculating totals from rounded data, as this may compound the effects of rounding.
4. Inconsistencies between the totals of rows and columns occur as debtors can have multiple debts across different payments and age groups.
5. Other (Payment Program) incorporates debts for minor payments and allowances and/or defunct payments.
6. Youth Allowance (Combined) incorporates Youth Allowance debts where the activity class was not specified.

Outstanding Social Security Debt by Reason as at 30 April 2024				
Reason Group	Reasons include*	No. Debts	No. Debtors	Outstanding Balance (\$m)
Advance/Loan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance payments** • Ineligibility for received Crisis Payment 	145,520	134,210	43.78
Assurance of Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debts related to the Assurance of Support scheme. 	415	265	7.44
Automatic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Assistance reconciliation • Family Assistance non-lodger • Debts arising from internal transfers between payments 	571,250	356,500	2,121.65
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debts arising from the payment of compensation, recovered from the customer and/or compensation provider. 	8,565	7,350	60.80
Dependants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child left care • Shared care arrangements not taken into account • Child no longer a full-time student • Child no-longer a Family Tax Benefit Child 	29,060	21,600	102.51
Income (earnings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undeclared/coded earnings • Wrongly declared/coded earnings 	186,520	133,925	697.87
Other Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment income • Comparable foreign payment • Overseas pension 	19,385	17,250	169.40
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not eligible for payment • Duplicate payment • Fraud • Rent incorrectly declared/coded • Incorrect bank account • Debts related to Schoolkids Bonus 	69,275	55,010	86.32

Obligation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form not-lodged • Participation serious failure • False statement / misrepresentation 	7,110	6,910	9.06
Qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not entitled to payment • In prison or other institution • Assets over limit • False or multiple identity • Incorrect relationship status • Not in Australia • Not providing care • Payment after death 	102,615	79,500	602.66
Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discontinued studies • Unsatisfactory attendance workload • Not enrolled at institution 	37,115	33,505	177.81
Obsolete, Other or Not Recorded		255	225	2.01
Total		1,177,080	***694,950	4,081.30

Notes

1. *There are hundreds of debt reasons codes. Some reasons are specific to certain payments; some are across multiple payments. We have provided a high-level summary of the main reasons in each category.
2. ** Advance Payments can be requested by customers. They are coded as debts in Centrelink's system, and repaid over time.
3. ***Total number of debtors is lower than sum of the debtor numbers in each category as debtors can have more than one debt across different reason codes.
4. Data derived from Statistical Analysis Software (Services Australia).
5. To protect individuals' privacy, all cells including any totals and subtotals have been rounded to the nearest 5, values from 1 to 7 are rounded to 5. Zero cells are actual zeros. This may result in non-additivity for some totals. Caution should be taken in re-calculating totals from rounded data, as this may compound the effects of rounding.
6. All dollar values including any totals and subtotals have been rounded to the nearest \$0.01m, non-zero values lower than \$0.01m are rounded to \$0.01m. Zero cells are actual zeros. This may result in non-additivity for some totals. Caution should be taken in re-calculating totals from rounded data, as this may compound the effects of rounding.