

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2019–20 – 5 APRIL 2019 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Online Compliance Intervention – South Australia

Question reference number: HS 7 (SQ19-000113)

Senator: Patrick

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 30 May 2019

Number of pages: 3

Question:

For each financial year since Centrelink's robo-debt inception:

- a) How many robo-debts were issued and how many of those were for South Australians?
- b) What was the value associated with those debt notices and what was the total amount for South Australians?
- c) How many of those debts were challenged?
- d) How many were successfully challenged (the debt was reduced or wiped)
- e) How many of those debts were ultimately recovered in full?
- f) How many were recovered in part?
- g) How many were partially waived?
- h) How many were fully waived?
- i) How much was actually collected and how much of this was collected from South Australians?
- j) How many debts were referred to a debt collector and how many South Australians were referred to a debt collector?

Answer:

Based on data for online earned income verification reviews completed between 1 July 2016 and 31 March 2019.

a) Number of Debts Raised¹

Region	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19 FYTD
National	142,634	163,711	193,936
South Australia ²	11,293	14,698	14,655

b) Debts Raised by Amount³

Region	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19 FYTD
National	\$ 326.9m	\$ 376.8m	\$ 552.2m
South Australia ²	\$ 25.2m	\$ 32.3m	\$ 39.0m

c) and d)

The review process can involve an iterative engagement with individuals as additional information is provided. This is not a challenge to the debt, but the customer working with the Department of Human Services to determine the debt. Where customers engage with the Department in the review, this process occurs prior to a debt being created and as a result of this iterative process, the Department is not able to provide this information.

Debts Reduced^{4,5}

Region	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19 FYTD
National	39,420	9,129	8,837
South Australia ²	3,244	875	661

e) Debts Recovered in full

Region	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19 FYTD
National	69,759	85,646	42,854
South Australia ²	5,657	7,533	3,126

f) Debts Recovered in part

Region	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19 FYTD
National	21,898	44,181	62,747
South Australia ²	1,723	3,982	4,796

g) Debts Partially Waived

Region	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19 FYTD
National	3,187	10,411	11,190
South Australia ²	241	908	787

h) Debts Fully Waived

Region	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19 FYTD
National	13,084	9,366	8,710
South Australia ²	970	914	683

i) Debts - Amount Recovered in Total⁶

Region	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19 FYTD
National	\$ 116,857,402	\$ 135,505,821	\$ 74,253,700
South Australia ²	\$ 9,136,053	\$ 10,997,803	\$ 4,991,130

j) Debts Referred to an External Collection Agent

Region	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19 FYTD
National	70,140	50,483	52,687
South Australia ²	5,129	4,339	3,673

¹ One Assessment can lead to multiple debts if the recipient has been the beneficiary of different types of income support payments or broken periods of income support.

² State of South Australia was recorded as either the customer's home or postal address at the time of the initiation of the review.

³ Debt amount at time of raising. This does not include additional charges/fees or subsequent changes to the debt amount.

⁴ Changes to debts can occur in a financial year later than the review completion year.

⁵ Includes debts reduced to zero and debts reduced to non-zero amounts.

⁶ Total Repayment amount to March 31, 2019. Does not include debts later deemed as no longer a debt.