

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 24 FEBRUARY 2011 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Access by Prisoners

Question reference number: HS 37

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Hansard CA page 124

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Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator SIEWERT - How many services have you been able to provide? I am looking at need versus what needs have been met?

Ms Clapin - The numbers have been small. I do not have the actual number here. We have not actively developed any programs with any of the authorities to seek out those people and actively go out to prisons or anything like that.

Senator SIEWERT - I have a couple of questions around that issue. Could you take on notice how many and in which state? Further, could you be proactive in talking to state authorities around addressing hearing impairments in prisons? Finally, if you could, do you have the funding or do you need the funding?

Answer:

Australian Hearing has seen the following number of eligible clients in prisons:

Financial Year	Number	State
2010-11	2	Western Australia
2010-11	1	New South Wales

The Department of Health and Ageing, through the Office of Hearing Services, updated its advice in March 2010 on providing services to prison inmates. This indicates that people who meet the eligibility requirements under the Australian Government Hearing Services Program (Voucher and Community Service Obligations) retain their entitlement to services while in prison, in custody on remand, or in juvenile justice centres, provided that the person's Voucher is current while in custody, for those over 21 years of age.

Where the service is requested by the custodial authority, the service is not covered by the Program.

Australian Hearing has been in contact with Mr Paul Higginbotham, Chief Executive Officer of Telethon Speech and Hearing Centre in Western Australia, regarding services to eligible inmates. To date, Australian Hearing has not had any referrals. Australian Hearing will undertake to contact all state Corrective Services departments to advise them of the changes to eligibility. Any referrals of eligible clients from these authorities will be seen within current funding.