

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 24 FEBRUARY 2011 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Fraud Tip-offs

Question reference number: HS 7

Senator: Fifield

Type of question: Hansard CA page 86

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Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator FIFIELD - Of those tip-offs, how many have been investigated?

Mr Withnell - At this point in time 2,323 have been referred for further review or investigation.

a) **Senator FIFIELD** - How many of these have been substantiated as fraudulent or incorrect payments?

Mr Withnell - I do not have the figure that have actually been finalised, but I can provide that to you. I thought it was in this list. A number of these will take some time because evidence gathering will take some time. Some of them have been finalised already. Largely we would seek to recover the amount.

b) **Senator FIFIELD** - In relation to tip-offs, could you provide a breakdown of how many you have had by phone, by website and through other means?

Mr Withnell - I will see if we can do that. They go into one system. I am not sure if we record the source in terms of the type of communication as opposed just recording the information of the tip-off.

Mr Withnell - The figure I would have to substantiate is a total figure, so I would need to take that on notice to break it down for you. There will also be a double-up between tip-offs and where we have identified the concern. Sometimes the two overlap.

c) **Senator FIFIELD** - Could you take on notice how many of the claims being reviewed were discovered because of public tip-offs and how many were discovered because of Centrelink's own investigations?

Mr Withnell - Yes.

Answer

The following data is at 23 February 2011.

- a)
 - i. 641 debts totalling \$844,735.00;
 - ii. 13 matters are being considered for referral to the CDPP; and
 - iii. 9 cases where warning letters have been issued to customers.

- b) The sources of tip-offs are:
 - i. approximately 59 per cent have been received via phone;
 - ii. 18 per cent through the Centrelink website's 'Report a Suspected Fraud' system;
 - iii. 7.5 per cent of tip-offs have been taken over the counter at Centrelink offices; and
 - iv. the remainder have been sent via emails, letters, and other government agencies, including the minister's office.

- c)
 - i. 2,323 claims are being reviewed or investigated as a result of tip-offs; and
 - ii. 1,492 claims are being examined a result of Centrelink's own investigations.