

## Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

### ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES – 14 FEBRUARY 2013 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

#### Human Services Portfolio

**Topic:** Disaster Relief Payments

**Question reference number:** HS 5

**Senator:** Furner

**Type of question:** Hansard pages 105-106

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 5 April 2013

**Number of pages:** 2

#### **Question:**

- a) Senator FURNER: In respect of the recent flooding in Queensland, online citizens may have been registered during the 2010-11 flooding. No doubt the recent flooding is in similar if not the same areas with 46 local government areas affected. Were their claims more easily accessed as a result of their already being online? Was it an easier outcome to get them recognised and have payments made to them as a result of the four million residents now being online?

Ms Campbell: Mr Tidswell can probably talk a little more about the technicalities of how we make those payments.

Mr Tidswell: We are in the midst of doing all of that work as we speak for the bushfires in Tasmania, the Warrumbungles, Coonabarabran and obviously the flooding event across northern, central and southern Queensland and northern New South Wales. I do not have figures at this time that give me the breakdown by channel, but increasingly in the last few years more people are doing their work to access payments online. We also have the ability to make the payments very speedily because we can self-identify people on the telephone.

We can take that on notice. We have obviously had a big volume of claim work and activity. We stood up our online claims very quickly after the Prime Minister's announcement and usually have that up within a matter of hours so people can start claiming. We may have some data here tonight. Hopefully I can get that for you, but if not I can take that on notice.

- b) Senator FURNER: I have some other questions regarding the disaster recovery payments, but I was specifically looking at whether there was any greater ease of access if citizen Bob Smith from Gayndah in Queensland was a recipient back in 2010-11, and as a result of his being registered online now due to the recent flooding his payment was more easily accessed and recognised and then paid as a result of the increase in online usage.

Mr Tidswell: It gives us the capacity to identify individuals outside of the common citizen database that we have. If they only deal with us because of these emergency events, it gives us a better dataset. It has sped the process up, absolutely. We will try to get a breakdown of how many people, as a result, are using the online capability.

**Answer:**

- a) Yes, a person who had previously registered to claim online would be able to claim in 2013 without re-registering.
- b) As noted above, it is easier for citizens who have registered to claim online to do so again in the future. However, there was no increase in citizens lodging claims online on this occasion – there were some connectivity issues related to the flooding which affected online usage.