

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES - 14 FEBRUARY 2013 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Centrepay engagement

Question reference number: HS 8

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Hansard page 111

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

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) Mr Sandison: We also gave out warnings or information to the major providers - say, housing authorities and so on - that they might expect some engagement from people about their Centrepay deductions. We both went to the third-party organisations as well as informing individuals about Centrepay. It was a specific reference made to support people.

Senator SIEWERT: So, the housing authority equivalents in each state?

Mr Sandison: Yes, that is right, and others, obviously, also, but housing authorities.

Senator SIEWERT: What about utility organisations?

- b) Senator SIEWERT: Could you take on notice, if you cannot tell me now, whether you engaged with Synergy in Western Australia?

Mr Sandison: I will take that on notice.

Answer:

- a) The local Department of Human Services Account Managers made contact with organisations that had more than 1,000 customers that were impacted by these changes. The following utility organisations were included:

- Essential Energy;
- AGL Sales Pty Ltd;
- Tru Energy Pty Ltd;
- Origin Energy Services Ltd; and
- Ergon Energy Queensland.

- b) The local Department of Human Services Account Manager made contact with Synergy in Western Australia on 23 November 2012 to advise them of the changes and the potential impact on mutual customers.

The following information about the changes was provided in writing to Synergy:

- an overview of the budget measure;
- who would be affected;
- what may happen to Centrepay and Income Management payments that were being made to Synergy by impacted customers;
- what may happen if the customer's rate of payment changed;
- how Synergy would be notified of the changes to customer payments; and
- what the Department was doing to notify customers who would be impacted by the changes.

Synergy in Western Australia acknowledged the information and advised that it was distributed internally.