

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES - 27 FEBRUARY 2014 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Income Management – review of rent deductions

Question reference number: HS 22

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 24 April 2014

Number of pages: 1

Question:

- a) Is the Department undertaking a review of the way it approached rent deductions via income management, given its awareness that it has made significant number of payments to Territory Housing on behalf of customers where there was no liability for the customer to pay rent?
- b) Is the Department undertaking a review of its processes regarding income management and rent payments in the Northern Territory as a result of the above?

Answer:

- a) The department is not aware of it having made a significant number of payments to Northern Territory Housing (NT Housing) for income managed customers where there was no liability to pay.

An issue was identified for a relatively small number of customers from the Binjari community in the Northern Territory who paid rent from their income managed funds to Kalano Community Association Incorporated (Kalano) for 'improvised' dwellings between 2008 and 2012.

The NT Department of Housing (NT Housing) found that these customers had no obligation to pay rent from 1 July 2009 and the department recovered the funds from Kalano and reimbursed customers.

- b) NT Housing has advised that there are several Community Housing Organisations in the NT that are authorised to collect rental payments from remote customers. The department has requested confirmation of these organisations from NT Housing and once confirmed will undertake a check to identify if any income managed rental payments are being made to any other organisation outside of these approved housing organisations. If any cases are identified, the department will investigate and will commence recovery action on behalf of customers where appropriate.