

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES - 29 MAY 2012 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Cocos Islands

Question reference number: HS 14

Senator: Fifield

Type of question: Hansard pages 98-99

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Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) Senator FIFIELD: Do you have data on overpayments over the last financial year for the Cocos Islands?

Mr Jongen: No.

Senator FIFIELD: Is that something that can be taken on notice?

Ms Campbell: We can take it on notice, and what we can provide will depend on the granularity.

Senator FIFIELD: Also with a smaller population and the more granular information, the higher the likelihood of privacy issues coming into play. I appreciate that. To the extent that you can do that for 2010-11 and 2011-12, I thank you.

- b) Can we also have for Cocos the total value of any debts for those two financial years to the Commonwealth, and also how much of that debt there is for those financial years, if any, has been recovered.
- c) Also, can we have the number of prosecutions and the number of investigations in 2010-11 and 2011-12, if any.
- d) Ms Ramsey: We fund an agent on Cocos Islands. I am unsure exactly what hours—it is minimal hours; from memory something like 10 hours a week, and we pay a third party to employ that agent. That agent is not a DHS staff member. It is a contract. We pay another agency to employ the staff member
- Senator FIFIELD: What is the agency that is paid to employ this person?
- Ms Ramsey: I am sorry, I would need to take that on notice.
- Ms Campbell: Sometimes they are local governments, Aboriginal corporations. But we will take that on notice.

Answer:

- a) In 2010-11, 45 debts were raised to the value of \$159,166 for customers on the Cocos Islands. From 1 July 2011 to 31 May 2012, 31 debts (relating to 25 customers) have been raised to the value of \$87,776 for customers on the Cocos Islands.

- b) Of the debts raised in 2010-11, \$67,831 has been recovered. Of the debts raised in 2011-12, \$49,774 has been recovered.
- c) As at 30 April 2012, two people have been investigated by the Department of Human Services and prosecuted in the Cocos (Keeling) Court of Petty Sessions for Centrelink payment matters during 2011-12. There were no investigations or prosecutions of Cocos (Keeling) residents for Centrelink payment matters during 2010-11.
- d) The Department of Human Services contracts the Cocos Islands Cooperative for 17.5 hours per week to deliver Agent services on its behalf.