

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES – 5-6 JUNE 2014 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Income support payments

Question reference number: HS 19

Senator: Cameron

Type of question: Hansard page 3, 6 June 2014

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 25 July 2014

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator CAMERON: Would it be safe to say that there would not be a huge amount of customers receiving \$54,417 a year?

Ms Campbell: I do not think we have the information available on what the profile of the customer base is, so we would not be able to make a comment on that statement.

Senator CAMERON: Do you have such a profile?

Ms Campbell: I do not think we do have that profile.

Senator CAMERON: So, if a minister asks you how many single mums are getting \$55,000, you could not tell them?

Ms Campbell: We would have to undertake work with our ICT systems to draw information of that nature out.

Senator CAMERON: Given that this has become a significant issue, a public issue, given that it has been bringing your customers into disrepute in the media, could you provide details based on *The Australian* story and *The Daily Telegraph* story, and advise whether the calculation is correct in terms of the issues that are delineated in those stories—if you were assessing an individual in those circumstances. Can you then tell us how many individuals are in that circumstance within DHS?

Senator Payne: We will take that on notice.

Answer:

As the department did not provide the figures that are quoted by *The Australian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, the department is unable to confirm if the calculations are accurate. This is because the assumptions underpinning the figures and the individual circumstances, on which they are based, are not available and these facts may vary the outcomes.

The department cannot advise of how many individuals are within the circumstances described by the media as the information requested is not readily available and cannot be provided on the grounds that to attempt to provide this information would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.