

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

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

Department of Human Services

Topic: Income Support Payments – Job Seeker Compliance

Question reference number: HS 25

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Hansard page 8, 6 June 2014

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

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) Senator SIEWERT: As it stands from what you have just said, it is possible that someone can be breached for turning down a nil-hours contract.

Ms Golightly: No, I said that there was a difference between turning down a contract for work and something that I have not heard of before.

Senator SIEWERT: Quite frankly, I am surprised that you have not heard of that because it is becoming a thing in the workplace. Please take on notice then, a nil-hours contract and whether any contract that says nil hours counts as an offer of employment even though there is no guarantee of work.

Ms Golightly: We will check that with the policy agency.

- b) Senator SIEWERT: On top of that, if there is a nil-hours contract and you count that as a contract, how do you work out whether there is a guarantee of work or not?

Ms Campbell: We will take on notice for the purposes of the breaching as you have asked. We generally focus on earned income when it comes to paying the payments.

Senator SIEWERT: Yes, but you are responsible for looking at the compliance, are you not, and dealing with compliance?

Ms Campbell: Yes, and that is what we will take on notice.

Senator SIEWERT: Compliance clearly sits with you.

Ms Golightly: We would seek advice from the policy agency, though, if there were some doubt about whether something met the definition of a job offer.

- c) Senator SIEWERT: When you take that on notice, could you also see if you have breached anyone. I think you will find that you have.

- d) If you have, can you also then take on notice whether you consulted DSS about—

Ms Campbell: It is the Department of Employment.

Senator SIEWERT: The Department of Employment—that counts as policy with them rather than with the DHS.

Ms Campbell: Policy is with Employment.

Senator SIEWERT: Could you please take on notice whether you did consult them before any action was taken.

Answer:

- a) See answer to HS 22.
- b) Not applicable. See answer to question (a).
- c) See answer to HS 24.
- d) See answers to HS 22 and HS 24.