

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 33

Senator: Siewert

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Question:

Ms Golightly: At the moment, for the first 13 weeks we are currently responsible for that contact.

Senator SIEWERT: Thirteen weeks is three months.

Ms Golightly: Yes. Now under this measure, if you are under 30, that contact for the first six months will be with the job services provider. We will have some contact in that, of course, when the person first comes to claim Newstart we will have that contact there and we will explain what is going to happen. If they have earnings they will still be required to report any, but the main contact is with their job services provider.

Senator SIEWERT: Does the 13-weeks rule apply to anybody else above 30 from now on?

Ms Golightly: As it does now, yes. That is not changing for people over 30.

Senator SIEWERT: Is that set by an internal decision or is that done by regulation?

Ms Golightly: There is regulation that talks about mutual obligation and what the penalties are for. I can check this, but I think lower level detail like that is policy between departments.

Senator SIEWERT: Please take that on notice. What I am trying to find out is what the regulations are and how the government is changing the requirements. At the moment you are not sure whether it is by regulation or whether you can set the rules.

Answer:

Job seekers receiving income support payments have an obligation to meet activity test or participation requirements from the commencement of their payment. Meeting these requirements is a condition of receiving payment and is prescribed in the *Social Security Act 1991*.

The management of job seekers' participation and activity test requirements in their first 13 weeks of unemployment is prescribed in policy advice between the Department of Employment and the department.