

## **Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee**

### **BUDGET ESTIMATES – 3 JUNE 2015 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

#### **Department of Human Services**

**Topic:** Bereavement Statements

**Question reference number:** HS 30

**Senator:** Siewert

**Type of question:** Hansard pages 79-80

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 24 July 2015

**Number of pages:** 2

#### **Question:**

Senator SIEWERT: I have one last question. In terms of bereavement statements, I have had a constituent who has expressed concern that after his wife passed away, he went through the process of notifying Centrelink and that he was then asked to check a summary of income and assets within 14 days of his notifying of his wife's passing away. Is that the normal process?

Ms Campbell: I am not sure if we have anyone who knows that exactly, but we can come back to you on that.

Senator SIEWERT: If you could come back to me, I also will put on record that, when I had to deal with the service to notify of a death, I must say that I had excellent service from Centrelink, but then I did not deal with the statement, so I do not know what the process is.

Ms Campbell: It may pertain to his own circumstances separate from the bereavement. We would need to look at those particular circumstances.

Senator SIEWERT: Could you provide information on what actually does happen and what gets sent out, because we can understand that it is a very sensitive time.

Ms Campbell: It is.

Senator SIEWERT: It is probably fairly confronting.

Ms Campbell: Indeed.

#### **Answer:**

Surviving partners in receipt of a pension are usually issued with a Bereavement Statement 12 weeks after their partner's date of death. If the notification of death is received 12 weeks or more after the date of death, a Bereavement Statement is issued immediately. If there are any changes in circumstances then the partner needs to notify Centrelink within 14 days of receiving the Bereavement Statement.

Bereavement Statements are not issued earlier than 12 weeks after the death as the department acknowledges that it is a difficult time for a surviving partner. Upon receipt of the Bereavement Statement, the surviving partner is requested to advise the department within 14 days if any of their details need to be updated. This is to ensure they receive the correct rate of payment.

The Bereavement Statement provides a summary of the income and assets held in the surviving partner's name. It also provides a summary of the income and assets previously held in both names at the time of the death.

The Bereavement Statement is designed to make it easier for the surviving partner to see what details the department now has recorded and, if necessary, update their actual circumstances. For example, notify of any changes to assets that may have occurred following the settlement of the deceased person's estate.