

## Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

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

#### Department of Human Services

**Topic:** Farm Household Allowance

**Question reference number:** HS 32

**Senator:** Bullock

**Type of question:** Written

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

**Number of pages:** 2

#### **Question:**

- a) What is the average processing time specified in the service agreement with the department of Human Services for processing Farm Household Allowance applications?
- b) Has the Department of Human Services met that average processing time at all stages since the Farm Household Allowance commenced on 1 July 2014?
- c) How many Farm Household Allowance claims are currently on hand?
- d) For these claims please provide a breakdown by the number of days (in 14 day periods) since the claim was submitted
- e) How many Farm Household Allowance claims have been processed?
- f) How many of these were successful?
- g) For these claims please provide a breakdown by the number of days (in 14 day periods) from when the claim was submitted to when the first payment was made.

#### **Answer:**

- a) The service agreement between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Human Services states that 80 per cent of claims that do not require the involvement of a complex assessment officer will be finalised within 28 calendar days, and 80 per cent of claims that require a complex assessment officer assessment will be finalised within 42 calendar days.

However, for the initial five months of the programme, i.e. July to November 2014, the requirement was that 80 per cent of the claims that were not complex applications were to be assessed within 42 days of lodgement and 80 per cent of the complex applications to be assessed within 91 days.

- b) The department makes every effort to meet the service standards for all payments including Farm Household Allowance. Despite this there have been periods where the department has not been able to meet the standards. Some of the factors that have impacted on this include:

- delays due to further information being required from the customer to enable their eligibility to be determined, including the impact of mail services in remote locations; and
- higher than expected number of claims than initially forecast.

Any cases identified that require urgent assistance are escalated for priority processing.

c) There were 234 Farm Household Allowance claims were on hand as at 23 June 2015.

d)

<b>Days since claim submitted</b>	<b>Number of FHA claims on hand</b>
0-14	51
15-28	65
29-42	26
43+	92

e) A total of 6,171 Farm Household Allowance claims have been processed between 1 July 2014 and 23 June 2015.

f) A total of 5,172 Farm Household Allowance claims have been granted between 1 July 2014 and 23 June 2015.

g) The timeframes between when customers submit their claims and when they receive their first payment will vary, due to a number of issues. These include whether all required information has been provided to allow processing of the claim. If not, this will delay the processing once the claim has been submitted and received. Some customers may also have to serve a waiting period which may delay the commencement of payment.

The department does not normally collect the information requested for a breakdown in the number of days (14 day periods) from when a claim is submitted to when the first payment is made. The collation of data required to answer this question would require an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.