

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES - 20 OCTOBER 2011 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Child Support – Change of Assessment

Question reference number: HSW 42

Senator: Johnston

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 9 December 2011

Number of pages: 1

Question:

In relation to a “standard” or “average” Child Support Change of Assessment Case:

- a) How long does such a case normally take?
- b) How many DHS people are normally involved (e.g. 1 Case Officers, 1 team leader etc.)?
- c) How many other Government Departments are normally involved?
- d) What does it cost the department to initiate a request for financial records to be provided to the Registrar under the Child Support (Assessment) Act?

Answer:

- a) This year to date (to 31 October 2011), 52 per cent of Change of Assessment (COA) applications were finalised in 50 days or less, with an average time taken for each case of 57 days.
- b) The number of people normally involved in finalising a COA application is two, the case allocation officer and the Senior Case Officer.
- c) Usually no other government departments are involved in a COA process. Senior Case Officers may use other government agency data sources that are available to them via data links. The Australian Taxation Office and the Centrelink program are the main sources used.
- d) The majority of cases rely solely on the information the parties supply in their COA application and/or responses. Where information is required from an organisation (e.g. bank, employer or accountant) it is sought via a Section 161 notice, which requires the relevant organisation to provide information. It takes an estimated average of 10 minutes for an officer to initiate and document a request and costs an average of \$11.23. On some occasions there can be additional costs for search requests for vehicle, property or credit history searches.