

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2012-13 Supplementary Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: Cross

Question No: 246

Topic: Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT)

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

Given the low number of Indigenous income support recipients who lodge appeals, are you, or have you previously, undertaking any work to investigate why this is so? Please provide details of any evaluations, including the name of the reports and when they were completed or are expected to be completed. If there has been no work undertaken in this area, is this something that the SSAT could look in to?

Answer:

(1) The SSAT has queried the relativity of the number of applicants for review of a decision made under the social security law who identify as Indigenous to the number of non-Indigenous applicants. A meaningful answer to the query depends on the incidence of adverse decisions made under the social security law about Indigenous persons relative to the incidence of adverse decisions about other non-Indigenous persons. In 2010, the SSAT was unable to ascertain (from Centrelink) the number or percentage of Centrelink's "customers" who identified as Indigenous and who received adverse decisions.

(2) The Acts which confer jurisdiction on the SSAT require the officer who made the decision on internal review to notify the person in writing of his or her right of review by the SSAT. Evaluation of the effectiveness of such notification for Indigenous persons (or of broader issues regarding their access to review by the SSAT) is a matter for the department rather than the SSAT.

At various times, the SSAT has visited or contacted bodies which provide legal advice to Indigenous persons and has provided information and offered education sessions. The SSAT sends a copy of its annual report to those bodies as a reminder of the availability of review by the SSAT. The SSAT also undertakes outreach to other groups which provide services to sectors of the community which include Indigenous persons (such as the homeless).

The SSAT will engage in outreach services in 2012-2013.