

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES - 21 NOVEMBER 2013 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Fraud and Compliance – Member of a Couple

Question reference number: HS 51

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Written

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Number of pages: 3

Question:

In the financial year of 2012-13 in relation to “Member of a Couple” (MOC) (by same-sex and opposite sex) relationships:

- a) How many reviews by each payment combination?
- b) How many investigations undertaken by Centrelink’s Business Integrity Unit?
- c) How many “tip-offs” were received? What were the outcomes of these “tip-offs”? (For example, in relation to MOC tip-offs”, how many led to criminal prosecutions, how many led to how much debt, no action being taken, etc.)
- d) How many debts were raised, what was the total value of debts raised and provide a breakdown of the range of debts raised? (Provide data by payment type and other payments e.g. Family Tax Benefit, Rent Assistance).
- e) How many payments were cancelled?
- f) How many MOC debts led to prosecutions?

Answer:

- a) The information requested is not available split by same-sex and opposite sex relationships.

Member of a Couple Reviews/Investigations Completed in 2012-13:

Payment Type	No. Completed Reviews
ABSTUDY Payment	62
Age Pension	1,543
Austudy Payment	220
Carer Allowance	212
Carer Payment	1,837
Child Care Benefit	86
Family Tax Benefit	1,907
Newstart Allowance	9,654

Sickness Allowance	67
Widow Allowance	121
Youth Allowance Student	305
Disability Support Pension	6,882
Parenting Payment Partnered	261
Parenting Payment Single	21,109
Youth Allowance Job Seeker	984
Other	157
TOTAL	45,407

b) In the 2012-13 financial year, the department conducted 287 investigations into potential fraud relating to Member of a Couple.

c) In 2012-13:

- 52,878 tip-offs received related to alleged Member of a Couple allegations;
- 41,979 reviews/investigations completed did not result in a debt or reduction in payment;
- 622 reviews/investigations completed resulted in a debt and/or a reduction in payment; and
- 190 debts were raised totalling \$1,218,910.

Note: a single review/investigation can result in more than one debt.

The remaining 10,277 cases were either assessed as not warranting further action (such as duplicate and incomplete tip-offs) or were still undergoing assessment as at 30 June 2013.

The department referred five alleged Member of a Couple cases resulting from tip-offs to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration.

d) The total number of debts raised in 2012-13 in relation to Member of a Couple relationships was 419. The value of these debts raised was \$8,475,865.

Review Service Reason	No. Debts	\$ Debt
Age Pension	<20	\$690,001
Austudy Payment	<20	\$33,137
Carer Allowance	<20	\$21,815
Carer Payment	<20	\$279,967
Disability Support Pension	52	\$859,147
Emergency Recovery Payment	<20	\$15,920
Family Tax Benefit	<20	\$22,520
Newstart Allowance	86	\$444,704
Other	<20	\$6,998
Parenting Payment Partnered	<20	\$11,384
Parenting Payment Single	224	\$6,057,500
Sickness Allowance	<20	\$13,763
Youth Allowance Job Seeker	<20	\$2,818
Youth Allowance Student	<20	\$16,190
Grand Total	419	\$8,475,865

Note: all figures in the above table are rounded to the nearest dollar.

- e) The number of payment cancellations was 166.
- f) The department does not hold prosecution data. This is held by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP). In the 2012-13 financial year, the department referred 42 Member of a Couple cases resulting from all sources, including tip-offs, to the CDPP for prosecution consideration.