

## Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

### SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 22 OCTOBER 2015 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

#### Department of Human Services

**Topic:** Centrepay – information for users

**Question reference number:** HS 30

**Senator:** Cameron

**Type of question:** Hansard page 130

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 11 December 2015

**Number of pages:** 2

#### **Question:**

Senator CAMERON: Has DHS provided information to Centrepay users who are paying companies that are now excluded from Centrepay that they could be excluded, and what is the reason for this? That might be the 17,000, or something, that you were talking about.

Mr Learmonth: Yes, we have. We have written to all of them.

Senator CAMERON: Can you provide me with copies—not the individual correspondence but what you have done? What was the correspondence? What are the initiatives that you have taken?

#### **Answer:**

The Department sent a letter to all customers with Centrepay deductions in place that may have been impacted by the 1 July 2015 changes to Centrepay, which excluded funeral insurance and unregulated consumer leases.

The letters were sent to 129,632 Centrepay customers on 28 July 2015. The letter advised customers that Centrepay had changed and that they had deductions that might be impacted. They were advised to make contact with their relevant service provider (business) to check if they needed to make other payment arrangements. The letter also advised that there was a twelve month transition period (from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016) for businesses and customers to make the necessary changes. The Department took the opportunity to draw attention to alternatives to consumer leases. A sample copy of the letter is attached.

In conjunction with the letter, the following additional initiatives were undertaken:

- communications about the letter and Centrepay changes were disseminated to all front-of-line departmental staff;
- an alert message and carousel news item was placed on the Centrepay customer pages of the Department's external website;
- an Integrated Voice Recognition (IVR) message was placed across payment lines for customers who received the letter and contacted the Department by phone; and

- new Centrepay website content for customers was published, including a *Procedural Guide for Customers* and information on affordable payment alternatives for household goods, including a link to the Department's *Managing your money* page and the Rent vs Buy calculator.