

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2015 - 2016

Outcome 1 - Employment

Department of Employment Question No. EMSQ16-000085

Senator Cameron asked on 11 February 2016 on proof Hansard page 67

Question

Work for the Dole - financial supplement

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Senator CAMERON: Minister, have you been made aware of some of the problems with this \$20.80 payment?

Senator Cash: We have had discussions with providers about issues that they have. I would need to go and check whether or not that is one of them. But, if the provider has an issue, I am more than happy to sit down with them and talk through the issue. Obviously, I prefer to talk to groups of providers to ensure that it is an issue across the board. But, again, I would need to check whether or not that one specifically has been raised with us.

Senator CAMERON: Why would it need to be an issue across the board? If someone is on Work for the Dole and you are going to introduce penalties if they do not comply with Work for the Dole, yet they are only given \$10.40 a week for transport, surely this is a big issue?

Senator Cash: Again, I would have to go and check whether or not this has been raised.

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Ms Leon: For example, the figures I have are that, from 1 July to 30 November, 37,000 participation reports were submitted by jobactive providers, but only 50 per cent of those resulted in a financial penalty being incurred after they had been considered by the Department of Human Services.

Senator CAMERON: Only 16,000-odd people had financial penalties!

Ms Leon: After they had been assessed by both the provider and the Department of Human Services as to whether—

Senator CAMERON: Only 16,000 people lost their income!

Ms Leon: they had a reasonable excuse for nonattendance.

Senator CAMERON: Do you know if any of them tried to raise the excuse of having 10 bucks a week to get to the—

Ms Leon: I do not know.

Senator CAMERON: All right. Can you take that on notice—if you have had any feedback on that?

Ms Leon: We will see what we can find.

Senator CAMERON: All right.

Answer

Under social security law, jobactive providers are required to take into account job seekers' circumstances when referring them to activities such as Work for the Dole and to determine whether the activity is the most suitable for the job seeker. Availability and affordability of transport are factors which can be taken into account.

If a job seeker fails to participate in an activity and this is reported by their provider, the Department of Human Services (DHS) is required to consider whether or not the job seeker had a reasonable excuse before applying any penalty. This includes consideration of whether or not transport was available and affordable.

Data available to the Department does not indicate whether the Approved Programme of Work Supplement was raised as a factor in a job seeker's non-attendance at an activity.