

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018

Outcome 1 - Employment

Department of Employment Question No. EMSQ17-004271

Senator Marshall provided in writing.

Question

New job seeker compliance measures - waivers

What waivers, if any, will be available for people with children, caring responsibilities, and/or extraordinary circumstances and who have five or more penalties in order for them to avoid having their payment cut?

Answer

Job seekers enter the intensive compliance 'three strikes' phase after demonstrating persistent non-compliance and having been assessed by both their employment service provider and the Department of Human Services as being fully able to meet their requirements. People who have caring responsibilities or other circumstances that affect their capacity to meet their obligations will have these factors addressed before demands can lead to entry into the intensive compliance phase.

If a job seeker does enter the intensive compliance phase, no penalty will be applied for any further failure if they have a reasonable excuse for the failure. Among other circumstances, unforeseen family or caring responsibilities or extraordinary circumstances affecting job seekers' ability to meet their requirements would be considered as a reasonable excuse and accordingly no penalty would be recorded.

Where a penalty is applied or the job seeker's payment is cancelled, no waivers will be available. This is because the widespread availability of waivers significantly undermines the deterrent effect of penalties. However, the maximum possible penalty will be four weeks without payment, compared to the current eight weeks. Also, job seekers with children will continue to receive family payments during any penalty period.