

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

Group: 3

Program: 1.6

Question No. AE15/011

Senator Bilyk asked the following question at the hearing on 24 February:

Senator BILYK: So nobody has actually been cancelled yet?

Ms K Jones: Not under these provisions. There have been cancellations under existing provisions that have been a part of the process for many years relating to the normal sorts of conditions upon which people would have welfare cancelled—that is, if they have left the country for a period of time and therefore cannot fulfil the requirements under the social security legislation in order to qualify for benefits.

Senator BILYK: The Prime Minister made a comment in parliament and said, 'To the best of my knowledge and understanding, all of the foreign fighters who are currently overseas have had any welfare payments well and truly cancelled.' Are we able to clarify that that is the case?

Ms K Jones: I would have to take that on notice.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The number of Australians who have left Australia to engage in conflicts overseas is under constant review. Where Australians are identified as participating in activities of security concern in these conflict zones, the Government can assess if these individuals are in receipt of, or are eligible for welfare benefits, and take action where appropriate. To date, welfare benefits of any identified individuals fighting overseas have been cancelled without using the new provisions because the individuals no longer met existing payment eligibility criteria.