

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

**Program: Administrative Appeals Tribunal**

**Question No. AE17/019**

**Senator Siewert asked the following question at the hearing on 28 February 2017:**

Senator SIEWERT: Please tell me if someone has already asked these questions. If so, I will just go to the Hansard. I apologise; I have been caught up elsewhere. My questions relate to the disability support pension. How many applicants have you had over the last 12 months?

Ms Leatham: If you bear with me, I will find those figures for you. I am afraid that we have global figures in relation to Centrelink matters, but we do not have them broken down further—into disability support pensions, for example—simply because in the amalgamated AAT we have so many categories of work that it would be very difficult to get down to that level of detail. But we can certainly take that on notice and get you that information.

Senator SIEWERT: Perhaps I can go to that higher level of Centrelink. What I am interested in looking at are issues relating to the last couple of years, so maybe you can give me numbers for the last four years specifically relating to Centrelink?

Ms Leatham: If you are just interested in the numbers of lodgements—

Senator SIEWERT: For the time being, yes.

Ms Leatham: relating to Centrelink matters, I can tell you that for the 2014-15 calendar year we had 12,989 applications. That compares with 13,201 for 2015-16, so that was a two per cent change.

...

Senator SIEWERT: So the figure you have just given me, the 22 per cent increase—why is that a bit different? I just ask so that I can understand the numbers.

Ms Leatham: Because there are many different types of payment that make up the Centrelink jurisdiction, there are variations in how much the case load has increased in those areas. I have some information here that says that in the year to date, for the 2016-17 financial year, we have had 6,525 applications specifically about disability support pensions.

Senator SIEWERT: And that is the six per cent increase?

Ms Leatham: That was the six per cent increase I referred to before.

Senator SIEWERT: That in fact makes up almost half of the Centrelink overall cases for last year already, just for DSP.

Ms Leatham: Because I have not got them listed in the way that you have expressed them, we would probably want to take that on notice. We could give you a year-to-year comparison about the disability support pension.

Senator SIEWERT: If you could, but I was not just comparing then. If you could, take that on notice over those three years specifically about disability support pension, but could you break it down for each of the payments? Is that possible?

Ms Leatham: Yes, we can certainly—

Senator SIEWERT: Yes, if you could, I would—

Ms Leatham: The aspects of Centrelink we can break down.

Senator SIEWERT: That would be appreciated. I am particularly interested in the disability support pension, obviously because there has been a change in policy. If I understand what you have just told me in terms of the figures for DSP, they are nearly half of the figures that you gave me for Centrelink for last year.

Ms Leatham: That sounds right.

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you.

**REPEATED QUESTION:**

Senator SIEWERT: So Centrelink for this year to 31 December—Centrelink per se—is 7,877?

Ms Leatham: Correct.

Senator SIEWERT: How much of that is DSP?

Mr Matthies: That is what we will need to take on notice.

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

Prior to 1 July 2015, applications for review of decisions made under the family assistance, social security and student assistance laws by Centrelink (Centrelink decisions) were first made to the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT). An affected individual or the Secretary of a department administering those laws could then apply to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) for a review of the SSAT's decision. On 1 July 2015, the AAT merged with the Migration Review Tribunal, the Refugee Review Tribunal and the SSAT. Since 1 July 2015, applications for first review of Centrelink decisions are dealt with in the AAT's Social Services & Child Support Division (SSCSD) and applications for second review are dealt with in the AAT's General Division (GD).

The following table sets out the number of applications lodged with the SSAT and the AAT for the review of Centrelink decisions in each of the noted years.

Payment/decision type	First review (SSAT/SSCSD)				Second review (AAT/GD)			
	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17 to 28 Feb 2017	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17 to 28 Feb 2017
Age pension	672	881	831	903	90	122	122	110
Austudy	261	289	269	217	13	12	7	25
Carer allowance and carer payment	426	672	524	444	54	74	6	62
Child care benefit	57	92	134	91	2	3	6	13
Disability support pension	4,437	6,139	6,525	4,711	1,026	1,253	1,419	1,037
Family tax benefit	1,033	1,349	1,563	1,275	73	94	152	127
Payment/decision type	First review (SSAT/SSCSD)				Second review (AAT/GD)			
	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17 to 28 Feb 2017	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17 to 28 Feb 2017
Mobility allowance	38	51	49	32	11	2	7	3
Newstart allowance	1,621	1,534	1,286	1,185	109	104	83	119
Parenting payment	460	504	492	491	29	18	26	61

Partner allowance	2	3	4	2	0	3	3	1
Pension bonus	96	164	63	18	24	54	19	7
Pensioner education supplement	38	31	33	16	5	5	2	1
Rent assistance	101	103	91	92	17	12	13	6
Sickness allowance	47	34	58	66	2	1	3	5
Special benefit	64	90	85	51	15	11	9	4
Youth allowance	728	681	780	523	25	18	9	22
Compensation preclusion period <sup>a</sup>					69	64	52	
Overpayments and debt recovery <sup>a</sup>					387	440	455	
All other decision/payment types	373	372	414	273	53	30	70	42
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,454</b>	<b>12,989</b>	<b>13,201</b>	<b>10,390</b>	<b>2,004</b>	<b>2,320</b>	<b>2,463</b>	<b>1,645</b>

<sup>a</sup> Prior to 1 July 2016, the AAT recorded applications for second review of decisions relating to compensation preclusion periods and overpayments and debt recovery separately from their respective payment types.