

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Department of Human Services and agencies

Budget Estimates 2006-2007, 25 May 2006

Question: HS38

Outcome 1, Output 1.1

Topic: Centrelink – Services for Holders of Temporary Protection Visa

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

SENATOR CARR asked on 25/5/2006:

1. What services can Centrelink provide to TPV holders? What programs are they eligible for other than Special Benefit or Family Assistance Office Payments (where they meet the other eligibility criteria)?
2. Does Special Benefit have an activity test attached to it?
3. TPV holders are not able to access settlement services that would help them with their English language capacity, for example. Are they eligible for Job Network services, which might provide an alternative route into language and literacy programs?
4. Does Centrelink provide advice on housing options for its clients?
5. How does Centrelink work with Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services to determine the best advice it can provide to clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness?
6. Is there standard advice that Centrelink staff have available to them when dealing with clients on TPVs or other humanitarian visas whose housing is at risk? Please provide a copy of that advice, if it exists.
7. Do Centrelink offices have a direct relationship with Commonwealth-funded settlement services to support clients who are eligible for settlement support?

Answer:

1. The following are a range of services and programs that Centrelink can provide to Temporary Protection Visa holders:
 - Registration and referral to the Job Network;
 - Health Care Card including a Low Income Health Care Card;
 - Temporary Protection Visa holders may be listed as a dependant on another person's Pensioner Concession Card or Health Care Card;
 - Double Orphan Pension;
 - Pharmaceutical Allowance;
 - Rent Assistance;
 - Utilities Allowance; and
 - Remote Area Allowance.
2. Yes. There are two activity tests. These are:

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1. **Legislative Special Benefit Nominated Visa Holder Activity Test** that can apply to those Temporary Protection Visa holders (Nominated Visa Holders) on Special Benefit.

Definitions of Temporary Protection Visa holders who are subject to a legislative Special Benefit Nominated Visa Holder Activity Test are contained in the *Social Security Act 1991*. Temporary Protection Visa holders or Nominated Visa holders are defined as:

- of work force age; and
- are capable of undertaking work; and
- who claim or have claimed Special Benefit on or after 1 January 2003; or
- who were receiving Special Benefit before 1 January 2003 but reached workforce age after that date.

2. **Policy based Special Benefit Activity Test** that can apply to others who are paid Special Benefit under Newstart conditions. These include:

- other Special Benefit customers who are of work force age and are capable of undertaking work; and
- Temporary Protection Visa holders or nominated visa holders granted prior to 1 January 2003.

Details of the policy based Special Benefit Activity Test is contained in the *Guide to Social Security Law*.

3. Temporary Protection Visa holders are eligible for some but not the full range of Job Network Services. They are eligible for Job Search Support Only – this means the person is registered with a Job Network Member and is provided with job search facilities such as newspapers, computers, touch screen Kiosks, telephones, fax machines and photocopiers.

Those entitled to Job Search Support Only receive assistance from Job Network Members in the following areas:

- advice on job search techniques, career options and employment programs;
- guidance in using job search facilities, including resume preparation;
- feedback on any job interviews arranged for the job seeker; and
- help to meet the responsibilities they have while looking for work.

He or she will have a vocational profile recorded on the Job Search database, which can enable daily matching to available job vacancies, giving them fast access to information on suitable vacancies.

Temporary Protection Visa holders are eligible for referral to Language Literacy and Numeracy programs.

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4. Centrelink may provide this information directly through its Social Workers or Multicultural Service Officers. Centrelink works closely with the community sector and will make referral to agencies which are able to provide specific assistance.
5. Centrelink Social Workers and Multicultural Service Officers are in regular contact with local service providers so that they remain aware of local housing options and referral arrangements. They attend local interagencies of service providers.
6. The advice provided to customers is tailored to meet individuals and local needs.

Centrelink has a service strategy for people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. It can involve referral to a Centrelink Social Worker, Community Officer or Multicultural Service Officer. The customer may also be referred to the relevant State or Territory Department of Housing (and other community agencies) for assistance with rental bonds and accommodation. They may be provided with an urgent payment.

7. Yes, they have regular contact.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 3 hours and 31 minutes at an estimated cost of \$200.