

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

Question No. 32

Senator Humphries asked the following question at the hearing on 14 February 2012:

AGDRP Fraud

What role does the AFP play in any allegations of fraud surrounding the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payments (AGDRP)?

Have any allegations of fraud been referred to the AFP since January 2011 to the current date? If so, how many?

How many officers are tasked with the investigation of disaster assistance claims? Were any of these allegations escalated by the AFP?

How many charges have been laid?

What communication has the AFP had with the Attorney-General's Department regarding allegations of fraud surrounding AGDRP claims?

What communication has the AFP had with Centrelink regarding allegations of fraud surrounding AGDRP claims?

Were any AFP members posted to the Centrelink taskforce investigating fraudulent claims during 2011 and 2012? If so, how many?

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

The AFP investigates serious or complex crimes against Commonwealth laws, its revenue, expenditure and property, which can include both internal fraud and external fraud committed in relation to Commonwealth programs. When requested, the AFP may conduct Quality Assurance Reviews of agency fraud investigations and is able to provide advice and in some instances other forms of assistance to agencies conducting fraud investigations, including recovery action under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

The AFP has received one referral of an alleged fraud against the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payments (AGDRP) fund from the Department of Human Services (DHS) since January 2011. The referral was made in January 2012.

The AFP was briefed by representatives of DHS in February 2012 in relation to the referral. The AFP has not communicated with the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department in relation to the referral.

The referral involves allegations of identity crime and is being investigated by the AFP's Identity Security Strike Teams (ISST) which are regional multi-agency teams dedicated to the investigation of identity related crime. Regionally, the ISST's comprise a total of 19 AFP officers permanently undertaking identity crime related investigations. These figures do not include staffing figures from other agencies forming the multi-agency teams.

The AFP employs a fluid investigations model which has the ability to deploy investigators around Australia according to operational priorities.

The AFP has 10 members out-posted to the Department of Human Services - Centrelink offices throughout Australia. Out-posted members provide training and advice to enhance Centrelink's fraud detection capabilities and investigative practices, assist with the preparation, swearing and execution of search warrants, facilitate the referral of matters to the AFP and facilitate the use of other AFP services, such as forensics and international assistance.