

## **Senate Select Committee on COVID-19**

### **INQUIRY INTO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**PUBLIC HEARING 18 AUGUST 2020**

**ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Services Australia

**Topic:** Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment - Employment

**Question reference number:** IQ20-000138

**Member:** Katy Gallagher

**Type of question:** Spoken. Hansard page: 59

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 1 September 2020

**Number of pages:** 1

#### **Question:**

CHAIR: When you say you collect employment data, that's more on where they were employed rather than what they were doing.

Mr Egan: Exactly—details of the employer.

CHAIR: Are you collecting information on casual, full-time and part-time workers?

Mr Egan: I would have to take that on notice. I'm not sure about that.

#### **Answer:**

Employer details are collected to enable Services Australia (the Agency) to determine a customer's eligibility for the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment, including employer business name, address and ABN.

Eligibility for the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment includes that the person is likely to have worked during the period of self-isolation or quarantine.

The Agency does not collect details about a customer's employment status (i.e.: full-time, part-time, casual) because it is not required to determine eligibility.

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**ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Services Australia**

**Topic:** Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment – Data fields

**Question reference number:** IQ20-000139

**Member:** Katy Gallagher

**Type of question:** Spoken. Hansard page: 59

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 1 September 2020

**Number of pages:** 2

#### **Question:**

CHAIR: This might be to do with the three-month mark: are you able to provide an update to the committee along the lines of the information you're collecting?

Ms Skinner: We can take that on notice and provide that to you quite readily—what fields we are requesting of people as part of the application

#### **Answer:**

Services Australia asks customers to provide the following information, during the claiming process for the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment, to determine payment eligibility.

Personal information	Full name, date of birth, residential address, phone number, email address and Australian bank details.
Residency information	Country of birth, citizenship, visa details and dates (only for visa holders), Passport number (only for non-Australian residents).
Employer details	Business name, location of employer and ABN.
Employment details	Date the customer last worked for the employer, the date the customer would have worked if they were likely to have worked during the period they are claiming for, and whether the customer has exhausted all sick leave or pandemic leave entitlements from the employer.
COVID-19 impact information	Information about who advised the customer to isolate, how they were notified (SMS/Phone/Letter) and date they were notified.  Information about the period of isolation, as instructed by Victoria Department Health and Human Services, and information on how COVID-19 has affected the customer, including:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they were unable to work as they have tested positive or been in close contact of a positive case; or</li> <li>• they were unable to work as a child in their care aged 16 years or under has tested positive or has been in close contact of a positive case.</li> </ul> <p>For those caring, the name/s of the person/s they are caring for.</p>
Information about other support	Has the customer received the Victorian Coronavirus (COVID-19) Worker Support Payment for the same period, or an Australian Government income support payment for the same 14-day period, for example JobSeeker Payment or JobKeeper Payment.

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**ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Services Australia**

**Topic:** Mutual Obligation Penalties

**Question reference number:** IQ20-000140

**Member:** Rachel Siewert

**Type of question:** Spoken. Hansard page: 62

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 1 September 2020

**Number of pages:** 1

**Question:**

Senator SIEWERT: Yes. I want to move to the return of mutual obligations. Last time we spoke was just after the reintroduction of mutual obligations. Are you able to tell me now how many people have received some sort of penalty for not accepting a suitable job?

Ms Campbell: And you're of course aware that the policy belongs to Education, Skills and Employment. We'll just see whether Services Australia has anything in regard to their interactions with the jobseekers.

Senator SIEWERT: Yes.

Ms Skinner: I don't have any data that can help with that. I can take that on notice or I will look around and see if any of my colleagues have it—no.

Senator SIEWERT: Then perhaps you could take it on notice.

Ms Skinner: Yes, we'll take it on notice

**Answer:**

Between 4 August and 18 August, Services Australia applied 39 Work Refusal failures to job seekers who did not accept or commence in a suitable job.

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#### **ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Services Australia**

**Topic:** Liquid Asset Test Waiting Period

**Question reference number:** IQ20-000141

**Member:** Katy Gallagher

**Type of question:** Hansard page: 65

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 1 September 2020

**Number of pages:** 1

#### **Question:**

CHAIR: In terms of introducing the liquid asset waiting period, the government has extended the coronavirus supplement, doubled the partner income test and waived the one-week waiting period. What is different about the liquid asset waiting period?

Ms Campbell: There are applicants with large amounts of liquid assets. I think we've got some examples of people we might be able to look at who are currently on payment, who, in the early days before we changed the form, identified what sort of assets they had, such as money in the bank. We have discovered that there are people who have large amounts of liquid asset waiting period who are now on payment.

Ms Skinner: We can take that on notice—to the extent that, one day, I was nearby someone processing one, and there were certainly exceptionally large six-figure sums of cash.

#### **Answer:**

The Australian Government expanded eligibility for income support payments as part of its response to the Coronavirus pandemic. This included changes to income and asset tests and waiving of the Liquid Assets Waiting Period (LAWP) so businesses and individuals significantly impacted by the Coronavirus could rapidly access financial support and reduce the financial impact of business shutdowns.

While the LAWP was waived, some claimants still provided information on their liquid assets as part of the claiming process. Claimants have indicated ownership of bank accounts containing funds in excess of \$100,000.