

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights

Public Hearing – 29 July 2024

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Inquiry into Compulsory Income Management

Question reference number: IQ24-000148

Question asked by: Josh Burns

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 19

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 05 August 2024

Question:

CHAIR: If someone has been put on compulsory income management without an individual assessment of their circumstances, is there any way in which someone can seek a review for that?

Mr Boneham: We'll take that on notice, again, because I will need to confirm with Services Australia what their approaches are to review processes.

Answer:

Income Management (IM) participants can request an explanation about a decision Services Australia (the Agency) has made at any time.

IM participants can apply for a formal review of a decision the Agency has made. During a formal review, an Authorised Review Officer (ARO) will review the decision. The ARO will:

- speak to the participant about the decision, where possible
- look at the facts, the law, and the policy involved in the decision
- change the decision if it's wrong
- contact the participant to let them know the outcome of the formal review.

Additionally, a compulsory IM participant may also apply for an exemption. Please refer to DSS IQ24-000118 for details on the exemption process.

Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry on Compulsory Income Management

Public Hearing – 5 July 2024

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Seeking an exemption from income management

Question reference number: IQ24-000118

Question asked by: Graham Perrett

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 53

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 July 2024

Question:

Mr Perrett: Lastly, how in practice can a person seek an exemption from income management? What supporting evidence would they need? You've already touched on this with Ms Tink's 20 hours—which is a lot of work for a lawyer, I can tell you. Any comment on that? I think we are just about done.

Answer:

Participants on Compulsory Income Management (IM) or enhanced Income Management (enhanced IM) can seek an exemption by contacting Services Australia in person or by phone.

Services Australia staff assess exemption requests and may ask participants for evidence, for example school attendance records.

The Department of Social Services Guide provides further information about exemptions:

[enhanced IM - Exempt welfare payment recipient](#)

[IM - Overview of exemptions from income management](#)

Exemptions Process

1. Customer with a dependent child
 - A parent/principal carer of a school age child or younger, who is on Compulsory IM or enhanced IM under the Disengaged Youth (DEY) or Long Term Welfare Payment Recipient (LTWPR) measure, may contact the agency seeking an exemption from the program.
 - A Service Officer will speak with the customer about the exemption process, gather information (i.e. immunisation record, day care attendance, playgroup participation etc) and discuss documentation (i.e. school attendance records) required.

- A Service Officer will conduct a financial vulnerability assessment interview. If the interview is unable to be completed, the work item will be placed on hold for up to 28 days pending the customer providing additional supporting documentation.
- A Service Officer will make a determination and code the exemption as either granted or rejected.
- A letter is sent to the customer to advise the outcome.

2. Customer without a dependent child

- A customer on Compulsory IM or enhanced IM under the DEY or LTWPR measure who has received less than 25% of their maximum basic rate of payment for at least 4 out of the last 6 fortnights may be identified for an exemption automatically by the agency for IM, or following review of a weekly system generated report for enhanced IM.
- If the agency identifies that a customer may be eligible for an exemption because of their payment rate, the exemption will be processed.
- If the agency has not initiated the exemption, a customer can request to be assessed for one if they believe they meet the above criteria or are a full-time student or an Australian apprentice in receipt of Youth Allowance (student or apprentice payment).
- If the exemption request is customer initiated, the Service Officer will conduct an eligibility check based on records maintained in agency systems. No further evidence is required. The exemption is coded as either granted or rejected.
- A letter is sent to the customer to advise the outcome.

3. Customer receiving a Special Benefit

- A customer who receives a Special Benefit may contact the agency seeking an exemption if they:
 - are not the principal carer of a child under 6 years of age, and
 - are aged 16 years or older.
- A Service Officer will speak with the customer about the exemption, assess their circumstances and make a determination. They will advise the customer of the outcome.
- A letter is sent to the customer to advise the outcome.