

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: IQ24-000141

Question asked by: Graham Perrett

Type of Question: Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 13

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

Question:

Mr PERRETT: I want to go further to Senator Shoebridge's question. I'm particularly interested in decisions where compulsory income management was made without that individualised assessment. Is that a decision where the person could seek to have their circumstances reviewed? This is just sort of winding back a bit.

Mrs Hope: Mr Perrett, are you after the policy premise of how that came about? Is that your question?

Mr PERRETT: As to whether it can be reviewed, and I'm interested in the actual process. What would Joe Blow or Mary Smith actually do to have their circumstances considered? This is not at the exemption stage yet.

Mr Boneham: We can take that on notice and ask Services Australia. My understanding is that all review rights are applicable to the decision from Services Australia. But we can confirm that.

Mr PERRETT: As public servants not attending your first rodeo, what's the actual process for a person on the ground in Ceduna, Bundaberg or wherever to say they want to be able to buy some second-hand goods rather than paying the soviet style prices at the shop for something new when they know they can get it for half the price second-hand down the road?

Mr Boneham: Under CDC, participants had the ability to request a release of funds from their CDC account into their normal account.

Mr PERRETT: I understand theory. I'm interested in what the practice would be. If you're in whoop-whoop, what do you do? Do they ring you up?

Mr Boneham: They'd have to call up Services Australia. They would have to provide them reasons they need the cash. They can say, 'I need this for this', provide evidence of that, and then the money could be transferred from their CDC account to their normal account, which they could then take out as cash.

Mr PERRETT: Call contact time for Services Australia was running at about an hour or so over the last 10 years. So, you'd be on the line—

Mr Boneham: I think they had a dedicated line for CDC participants. We could take on notice what that rate was.

Mr PERRETT: So, someone at Services Australia picks up the phone and says, 'John or Mary, why do you want to buy this'?

Mr Boneham: Yes.

Mr PERRETT: Is that a decision that is being reviewed?

Mr Boneham: I would need to take that on notice from Services Australia.

Answer:

The Cashless Debit Card program closed on 6 March 2023. Please refer to IQ24-000148 for details on the process for Income Management (IM) reviews.

For the month of July 2024, the average speed of answer to the SmartCard enhanced IM hotline was six minutes and thirty-six seconds.

IM participants can access the unquarantined portion of their Income Support Payment via their personal bank account to access cash. In addition, if cash is the only option of payment, IM participants may request funds be transferred from their income managed account to their personal account. These requests are assessed on a case-by-case basis.