

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Public Hearing – 30 July 2020
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 - Question 8

Question reference number: SQ20-000535

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 66

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 13 August 2020

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: I take the point. Can I go to the additional data that you provided today. You gave us a lot of data today; thank you. I'm interested in the DSP payments. In terms of the DSP payments and earnings, there has been a significant drop in earnings declared for people on the disability support pension. I'm wondering whether you've had a look at that, done any analysis and provided any advice to government, and whether there's any consideration of a further stimulus payment given that people on the DSP didn't receive the supplement.

Mr Williamson: On the last part of your question: any consideration of a further economic support payment is a question for government. They have announced two—

Senator SIEWERT: You've provided them the advice?

Mr Williamson: and that's their current position. In terms of the earnings for the DSP, let us go to the question.

Senator SIEWERT: It's 226, I think.

Mr Bennett: Sorry, Senator. You're talking about a question on notice?

Senator SIEWERT: Yes, sorry, it is. It is question on notice 226, which talks about the earnings for people on DSP and comparing it to last year.

Mr Williamson: Sorry, Senator. We just don't have that question on notice in front of us, and I'm struggling to get it.

Ms Campbell: Can we take that one on notice.

Mr Williamson: Yes, can we take that on notice and get back to you.

Ms Campbell: We hear your point. I get that your question is about what consideration has been given. We'll take that on notice.

Senator SIEWERT: Yes, okay. I understand you can't tell me the nature of the advice, but have you provided any advice to government on this?

CHAIR: Well, they might be able to. Advice to government isn't a public harm reason that's allowable under the Senate order. Anyway, go on.

Senator SIEWERT: Have you been asked by government to provide advice, or have you done any analysis of this and provided advice to government on this issue?

Mr Williamson: Sorry, Senator. Just to be clear, analysis of what issue?

Senator SIEWERT: The fact that the amount of earnings for people on DSP has dropped

significantly over the last 12 months, particularly for June this year compared to June last year. I put to you that that's a significant impact of COVID. They didn't receive the supplement, and they've only received the two stimulus payments. I won't rehash the arguments we've already had on this, but the fact is that they have been significantly affected by COVID, which I'd suggest this evidence indicates. Has there been any analysis of this data or any policy advice provided to government on this matter?

Mr Williamson: I'm not aware of any analysis of that data.

Ms Campbell: I can't recall any, but we'll take it on notice to provide you with complete information.

Answer:

As at 28 June 2019, approximately 7.8% of Disability Support Pension recipients reported earnings. As at 26 June 2020, approximately 6.9% of Disability Support Pension recipients reported earnings.

The Department of Social Services has not provided any specific analysis of the Disability Support Pension data contained in Question on Notice 226. to the Government.