

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 - Written Questions from Senator Gallagher - Question 3

Question reference number: SQ20-000485

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 10 July 2020

Question:

How many people are accessing JobSeeker Payment because of the temporary reduction to the partner income test taper rate (from 60 cents to 25 cents), who would not otherwise be eligible? i.e. how many people receiving JobSeeker Payment have a partner earning over the old partner income cut-out of \$1,858.50 per fortnight or \$48,321 per annum.

- a. Break down the data by state/territory and gender
- b. Break down the data by age

Answer:

The number of people accessing JobSeeker Payment because of the temporary reduction to the partner income test taper rate broken down by state/territory and gender is provided at Table 1 and broken down by age is provided at Table 2.

Table 1. Jobseeker Payment recipients with partner earnings in excess of \$1858.50 per fortnight, by State/Territory and Gender – 26 June 2020

State/Territory	Female	Male	Total
Australian Capital Territory	329	212	541
New South Wales	8,259	4,899	13,158
Northern Territory	181	150	331
Queensland	6,687	4,192	10,879
South Australia	2,218	1,427	3,645
Tasmania	747	417	1,164
Victoria	8,143	4,548	12,691
Western Australia	2,910	1,813	4,723
Unknown	18	7	25
Total	29,492	17,665	47,157

Note: State/Territory is based on the state/territory recorded in the recipient's address. 'Unknown' includes those recipients with an invalid or incomplete address and those living outside Australia.

Table 2. Jobseeker Payment recipients with partner earnings in excess of \$1858.50 per fortnight, by age group – 26 June 2020

Age Group	Recipients
Aged 22 to 24	1,836
Aged 25 to 34	14,369
Aged 35 to 44	13,142
Aged 45 to 54	9,810
Aged 55 to 64	7,473
Aged 65+	527
Total	47,157

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 - Written Questions from Senator Gallagher - Question 7

Question reference number: SQ20-000489

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 10 July 2020

Question:

7. In relation to men's behaviour change programs and family violence support services:
- a. Has there been an increase in calls to No To Violence, Mensline and other services since the beginning of the Coronavirus crisis – what is the change?
 - i. Has there been an increase since the Government's latest awareness campaign commenced – what is the change?
 - ii. What percentage of calls are from men for whom English is a second language?
 - b. How many frontline men's behaviour change services are funded by the Commonwealth – provide a list of those that receive Commonwealth funding?
 - c. Are there waiting lists for men's behaviour change programs? Where are the waiting lists? What is the average waiting time in each area?
 - d. How many men's behaviour change programs are available in languages other than English? What languages and where are these services?
 - e. What support does a man receive when they call No To Violence or Mensline?
 - i. Are all people who answer phones trained counsellors? What are the qualification requirements?
 - ii. What is the referral process – and what follow up is undertaken after calls are made?

Answer:

7a). Has there been an increase in calls to No To Violence, Mensline and other services since the beginning of the Coronavirus crisis – what is the change?

No to Violence

No to Violence national call volume data from the beginning of the coronavirus crisis is not yet available.

MensLine Australia

Compared to the same period in 2019, the number of calls to Mensline Australia increased by 12.1 per cent in February 2020 and 6.4 per cent in March 2020. The call numbers for April and May 2020 have remained consistent with the same period last year (1.8 per cent and 0.69 per cent increases respectively).

1800RESPECT

1800RESPECT has experienced a 25 per cent increase in contacts since the start of the pandemic. There has also been a shift in how and when people make contact with more calls in the very late hours, and an increase in people making contact via webchat – which was up 20 per cent in April. The proportion of contacts referring to COVID as the reason for calling is around two per cent.

7a) i. Has there been an increase since the Government’s latest awareness campaign commenced – what is the change?

The *Help is Here* campaign launched 3 May 2020 and refers viewers to 1800RESPECT and MensLine Australia.

The number of calls to MensLine Australia has remained steady since the start of the campaign.

1800RESPECT experienced a 20 per cent increase in contacts in one week in May and 21 per cent growth in calls for the month of May.

7a) ii. What percentage of calls are from men for whom English is a second language?

In 2019-20, 9.1 per cent of MensLine Australia callers reported English as a second language.

In the same period, **1800RESPECT** recorded **17** or **0.006 per cent** contacts who were male and had their language recorded as something other than English.

7b). How many frontline men’s behaviour change services are funded by the Commonwealth – provide a list of those that receive Commonwealth funding?

Organisation	Program name	Activity
No to Violence	Rural and Remote Perpetrator program	Deliver place-based early intervention strategies to local community service professionals and Aboriginal elders to address family violence in Aboriginal communities and training to local community service professionals and Aboriginal elders to safely engage with male perpetrators of family violence.
No to Violence	National Perpetrator Intervention and Referral Service	As part of the time-limited Commonwealth Funding under the Domestic Violence Support Package, No to Violence will develop and deliver a Brief Intervention Service to men who are unable to immediately access a men’s behaviour change program.

Western Sydney Local Health District	New Street Program	Deliver community engagement workshops focussing on harmful sexual behaviour in Wilcannia, and to develop a range of resources for community members and service providers to assist in early responses to children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours.
University of Newcastle	Youth Perpetrators research project	To address the issue of interpersonal violence in the lives of young people (10-17 years of age).
On the Line	MensLine Australia and Changing for Good program	The Australian Government funds On the Line to deliver its general MensLine Australia support services via a national telephone and online support, information and referral service for men with emotional health and relationship concerns. Under the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan, On the Line received funding for its Changing for Good program, which helps men to recognise their abusive behaviours, end their use of violence and make sustained changes in their behaviours and attitudes.
Specialised Family Violence Services*	Men's behaviour change program	Specialised Family Violence Services (SFVS) are delivered by 31 providers from 108 outlets across Australia. Fifteen of these providers deliver a men's behaviour change program under their Commonwealth funded SFVS activity. These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anglican Community Services • Anglicare SA Ltd. • Anglicare WA Inc. • Bethany Community Support Inc. • Centacare New England North West • Communicare (Inc) • Family Life Limited • Relationships Australia (Victoria) Limited • Relationships Australia Canberra and Region Inc • Relationships Australia South Australia Limited • Relationships Australia (NSW) Limited • Relationships Australia Queensland • Roman Catholic Trust Corporation for the Diocese of Townsville (trading as CentaCare NQ) • The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (Q.) (trading as UnitingCare Communities) • Uniting Communities Incorporated

7c). Are there waiting lists for men’s behaviour change programs? Where are the waiting lists? What is the average waiting time in each area?

In relation to men’s behaviour change programs funded by the Commonwealth:

No to Violence and Western Sydney Local Health District

There are no waiting lists for the Rural and Remote Perpetrator or New Street programs.

MensLine Australia – Changing for Good program

As at 30 June 2020, MensLine Australia’s *Changing for Good* program has a waitlist of approximately 50 potential participants. The current wait time is two to three months. Current wait lists are predominantly in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Service providers generally maintain contact with clients while they are on wait lists.

Specialised Family Violence Service

Of the 15 Specialised Family Violence Services providers that deliver a men’s behaviour change program, 11 currently have a waiting list. The majority of providers report wait times of between four and eight weeks. Wait list numbers and timeframes have been impacted by physical distancing measures where providers have been unable to offer face-to-face group work during coronavirus. Services work with clients one on one while they are waiting to join a men’s behaviour change program and support the client to access other supports as appropriate.

7d). How many men’s behaviour change programs are available in languages other than English? What languages and where are these services?

In relation to men’s behaviour change services funded by the Commonwealth:

MensLine Australia – Changing for Good program

MensLine Australia offers interpreter services for clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and can deliver the *Changing for Good* program in most languages.

Specialised Family Violence Services

Five Specialised Family Violence Services providers deliver a men’s behaviour change program in languages other than English (languages including Arabic, Tamil, Vietnamese and Hazaragi) with some providers also using interpreter services as appropriate.

7e) What support does a man receive when they call No To Violence or Mensline?

No to Violence

No to Violence operates the Men’s Referral Service which is an anonymous and confidential inbound telephone counselling, information and referral service for men who use or are at risk of using violence, and those impacted around them. The Men’s Referral Service is staffed by qualified counsellors whose purpose is to listen and identify suitable referrals to local services to help men address their violent and/or controlling behaviour. Callers are provided with service details to contact directly.

MensLine Australia

MensLine Australia is a national telephone and online support, information and referral service for men with family and relationship concerns. The service is available from anywhere in Australia and is staffed by professional counsellors, experienced in men’s issues. Callers can

speak to counsellors about issues including relationships, loss and grief, loneliness, depression, anxiety, trauma, mental illness, parenting concerns, wellbeing and more. MensLine Australia also offers a men's behaviour change program, *Changing for Good*, which helps men to recognise their abusive behaviours, end their use of violence and make sustained changes in their behaviours and attitudes. Support is available via telephone counselling and video counselling or via online chat.

7e) i. Are all people who answer phones trained counsellors? What are the qualification requirements?

No to Violence

The Men's Referral Service operated by No to Violence is staffed by qualified counsellors. Qualifications include Social Work, Counselling, Psychology or equivalent, or a diploma in similar with extensive experience in the family violence sector or closely related field.

MensLine Australia

MensLine Australia is staffed by professional counsellors who have demonstrated a minimum of 456 post-qualification face-to-face hours of counselling experience prior to joining. All counsellors hold a tertiary degree of minimum three-year duration in a relevant discipline of psychology, social work, counselling and social science or welfare studies

7e) ii. What is the referral process – and what follow up is undertaken after calls are made?

No to Violence

The Men's Referral Service provides the caller with details of relevant local support services. This includes but is not limited to men's behaviour change programs, drug and alcohol support, accommodation services, counselling, fathering, health services, legal services, mental health services, relationship services, sexual health services and services for women and children.

As part of the time-limited Commonwealth Funding under the Domestic Violence Support Package (mentioned above), No to Violence will provide a Brief Intervention Service to men who are unable to immediately access a men's behaviour change program. Men who access this Brief Intervention Service will be referred on to a men's behaviour change program or appropriate alternative when available, including providing client or case history and contact details.

MensLine Australia

Clients can self-refer to the *Changing for Good* program via the website or be referred by a health professional. MensLine Australia initiates contact to conduct an intake and assessment. If a referral is deemed not appropriate (i.e. applicant is actively using violence) the counsellor refers them to other more appropriate supports. Once accepted into the *Changing for Good* program, men are contacted fortnightly by a counsellor to step through a counselling structure designed to assist men to understand different types of violence, their motivations for using violence and to develop strategies to stop using violence.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 - Written Questions from Senator Siewert - Question 1

Question reference number: SQ20-000490

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 10 July 2020

Question:

We know many community members have (and continue to) experience heightened levels of anxiety, instability and financial stress. We also know that people who are socially isolated are more vulnerable to gambling harm.

What advice did the government receive in relation to possible increases in harm from online gambling, its propensity to exacerbate other matters of public health concern such as mental health and family violence, and how it should manage and resource any expected increases during the COVID-19 crisis?

Answer:

The Department of Social Services (DSS) continues to work closely with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (DITRDC), the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and with representatives from the relevant agencies in each state and territory on possible changes in people's gambling habits during the coronavirus pandemic.

Advice has been consistent that there has not been a significant increase in overall gambling activity. Online gambling activity has increased, however other activity has decreased due to the closure of land-based establishments. States and Territories are monitoring this over the next few months as venues start to open to see if the trend is temporary or ongoing.

To address concerns that the temporary closure of land-based establishments such as pubs, clubs and casinos has potentially pushed more people to gamble on illegal offshore sites, the ACMA is re-running their recent campaign aimed at raising awareness of the risks of using illegal offshore gambling sites and the lack of consumer protections available to users. The campaign uses the tag lines - 'even if you win you might lose' and 'offshore gambling – don't bet on it'. The ACMA continues to investigate illegal online gambling activity and complaints.

The Government has provided a range of supports that respond to public health concerns such as mental health and family violence. These include:

Mental Health Support

On 29 March 2020, the Prime Minister, the Hon. Scott Morrison MP, announced an initial \$74 million to support the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians during the COVID-19 pandemic. More information on these mental health measures can be found at <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-national-health-plan-supporting-the-mental-health-of-australians-through-the-coronavirus-pandemic>.

On 15 May 2020, the Prime Minister announced \$48.1 million to support the three immediate priorities outlined in the *National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan* (The Plan). The plan was developed by the National Mental Health Commission in conjunction with states and territories and in consultation with stakeholders.

The announcement and factsheet can be found here:

- <https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-greg-hunt-mp/media/covid-19-481-million-for-national-mental-health-and-wellbeing-pandemic-response-plan>
- <https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-greg-hunt-mp/media/covid-19-481-million-for-national-mental-health-and-wellbeing-pandemic-response-plan>

Domestic Violence Support

On 29 March 2020, the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, announced a \$150 million emergency response to address the expected impact of the coronavirus pandemic on women and children experiencing, or at risk of, domestic, family and sexual violence, and the specialist service providers that support them.

Relief Services for Vulnerable Australians

Under the Government's \$200 million Community Support Package, \$20 million has been provided for financial counselling services and supports, with over \$1.8 million to 33 Problem Gambling Financial counselling services. This is in addition to the \$76 million in regular funding over 4 ½ years to 30 June 2023 the Government already provides for financial counselling support and services, including the National Debt Helpline.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 - Written Questions from Senator Siewert - Question 2

Question reference number: SQ20-000491

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 10 July 2020

Question:

We've seen weekly reports of extraordinary increases in expenditure in online gambling since the closure of physical venues. This data has largely been derived from credit reports and it is unclear the extent to which this expenditure occurred with Australian-licensed bookmakers or illegal offshore gambling sites.

What evidence or research has the government sought to understand the nature and distribution of this increase in order to effectively implement policy measures to reduce harm?

Answer:

Refer to response to SQ20-000490