

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

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

PUBLIC HEARING 30 April 2020

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Deceased Estate Debts - follow up to IQ20-000033

Question reference number: IQ20-000071

Member: Jacqui Lambie

Type of question: Hansard page: 26

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Question:

Senator LAMBIE: Okay. Can you take this on notice too: whether any debt notices have been issued to deceased estates since 3 April.

Ms Musolino: I can take that on notice. I'll just mention that often, where someone does pass away and an executor is seeking to settle an estate, that's some of the priority work that we do deal with—that is, where an executor asks that we complete a person's affairs so that they can settle an estate and administer the estate. That's some of the work we prioritise, but I can come back to you on notice with that information.

Answer:

Following the announcement of the debt pause on 3 April 2020, Services Australia (the Agency) commenced action to implement the debt pause, including advising staff of the temporary suspension of certain debt activities and re-configuring its ICT systems to implement the pause. These changes were rolled out incrementally during April 2020. Prior to all these ICT changes taking effect, there were instances where a debt notice was issued to a deceased estate (consistent with pre-pause arrangements). There were also instances where the debt notice was issued to assist an Executor to finalise the Estate. In these cases Agency staff are instructed to verbally notify the Executor of the estate, where known, that a debt notice will be issued and that all recovery actions are paused.