

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2018–19 – 21 FEBRUARY 2019 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Online Compliance Intervention – Deceased People

Question reference number: HS 3 (SQ19-000008)

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Hansard pages 112-113

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 29 March 2019

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) Senator SIEWERT: I want to go to the issue related to deceased people, the answer to the question of online compliance intervention, the number of deaths of recipients of various notifications related to online compliance and the answer to my question HS 28 SQ-18000176.

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Senator SIEWERT: I understand and appreciate that you can't necessarily allocate causation. However, the fact remains that there have been people whose families think there is an association. So my question is, as it relates to those particular circumstances: have you had contact from family members of people who consider that there is an association with the online compliance system?

Ms Leon: As far as I'm aware, there haven't been any online compliance initiative matters about which families have contacted us to assert that they think that the person's suicide was precipitated by the receipt of a debt notice. I'm happy to take on notice as to whether there were, but, in the knowledge of the officers at the table, we're not aware of any.

- b) Senator SIEWERT: There's been some public commentary by some families. Has the department investigated those particular circumstances or looked into or contacted those families? Some families obviously haven't publicised their names.

Ms Leon: I'd probably have to take that on notice to the extent it goes to individual cases because we wouldn't necessarily have those at the table. But I'm happy to take on notice—

Senator SIEWERT: Could you take on notice—

Ms Leon: whether there have been individual cases and what action the department has taken, to the extent we can do so without compromising the privacy of individuals.

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you. That would be appreciated.

Answer:

a) and b) The Department is not aware of any specific customer cases that have been linked to the receipt of a debt notice as a result of an online income data matching review.

The Department is aware of reports of suicide cases relating to departmental customers. In those cases, where sufficient identifying information was available, the Department reviewed those cases and confirmed that they do not relate to an online income data matching review.