

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2012-13 Additional Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 5

Question No: 144

Topic: Disability Support Pension

Hansard Page: 14/02/2013 CA79

Senator Siewert asked:

Aside from the implementation of the impairment tables, what factors have impacted upon the decrease in eligibility for the DSP?

Answer:

Over recent Budgets, the Government has introduced a series of reforms that are improving and modernising key aspects of the administration of DSP. The reforms are aimed at improving the quality of DSP assessments and better supporting people with disability who have some capacity to work to find and keep a job.

Only one of the measures has changed the eligibility requirements for DSP. From 3 September 2011, DSP claimants who do not have a severe impairment are required to demonstrate that they are unable to work independently, even with employment assistance and support.

While the majority of measures do not change the eligibility rules for DSP they do have an impact on the claims of people who are applying for DSP. In combination the measures to improve assessments, and better support people with some work capacity to find and keep a job, appear to have been effective in improving the quality and consistency of DSP assessments and in slowing the DSP growth rate.

These reforms include the:

- introduction of more thorough assessments of DSP claims by Senior Job Capacity Assessors using updated guidelines (1 July 2010);
- establishment of the Health Professional Advisory Unit (HPAU) within DHS to provide DSP assessors independent advice on medical issues in DSP assessments (1 July 2010);
- conduct of all DSP assessments by medical, health and allied health professionals employed by DHS to provide greater consistency (1 July 2011);
- transition of Job Capacity Assessment policy from DEEWR to FaHCSIA (1 July 2011);
- streamlining of assessment processes by introducing faster and simpler assessments for employment service referrals and retaining more thorough assessments for DSP (1 July 2011);

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- requirement for DSP claimants who do not have a severe impairment to demonstrate they are unable to work independently, even with employment assistance and support (3 September 2011); and
- introduction of revised Impairment Tables that have a greater focus on a person's abilities, rather than what they cannot do (1 January 2012).