

## **Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee**

### **ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 11 FEBRUARY 2016 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

#### **Department of Human Services**

**Topic:** Age Pension – Tasmania – proof of identity

**Question reference number:** HS 8

**Senator:** Polley

**Type of question:** Hansard pages 118-119

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 4 April 2016

**Number of pages:** 2

#### **Question:**

Senator POLLEY: Recently I was contacted because an application was made to get the age pension, but Centrelink would not accept a pre-1970 Tasmanian birth certificate as proof of identity, and that made it very difficult then for this particular gentleman to be able to prove his identity. Is this general practice? Is it something that you are aware of? There was no indication on the appropriate forms to suggest that there may be a problem with accepting pre-1970s birth certificates, and the statement was made that those records were corrupt.

Ms Campbell: I have had a number of officers join me at the table, and I am hoping that one of them knows more about pre-1970s Tasmanian birth certificates than I do. I will hand over to them, starting with Mr Withnell.

Mr Withnell: My understanding is we accept official Tasmanian birth certificates—not extracts—the ones that have the number from Births, Deaths and Marriages. If there is a problem there are also alternate proof of identity options that are available to people if they do not have a genuine birth certificate or they are unable to get one.

Senator POLLEY: This was a genuine birth certificate, but I was advised that the Tasmanian births and deaths records prior to 1950 are considered to be corrupt. But that is what he was advised and if that is the case then that should be on the appropriate form so people are prepared. Sometimes people do not have a driver's licence or things like that. I still really want to get to the bottom of: if the records are considered to be corrupt why has Centrelink made that decision?

Mr Withnell: I am happy to take that on notice and look into it for you.

#### **Answer:**

In 2015 the department commenced using the Document Verification Service (DVS) to verify identity credentials provided by customers.

While the DVS can electronically verify a wide range of identity documents, there are specific limits on birth certificate verification where records at the relevant Births, Deaths and Marriages Registrar are not held in digital format:

- ACT – birth certificates can be verified back to 1930;

- NSW - birth certificates can be verified back to 1914;
- NT - birth certificates can be verified back to 1870;
- QLD - birth certificates can be verified back to 1 January 1974;
- SA - birth certificates can be verified back to 1944;
- TAS - birth certificates can be verified back to 1970;
- VIC - birth certificates can be verified back to 1929; and
- WA - birth certificates can be verified back to 1930.

Where a customer's birth certificate cannot be verified through the DVS, the department offers the customer an alternative arrangement to establish their identity so they can access welfare services. These alternative arrangements are in line with the Attorney-General's Department's National Identity Proofing Guidelines.