

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 11 FEBRUARY 2016 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Disability Support Pension – processing of claims

Question reference number: HS 45

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Written

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

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Given reports (*Canberra Times*, ‘Disabled lost in benefits limbo amid Centrelink pension crack down’, 15 February 2016) of a significant backlog in relation to DSP claims:

- a) How many DSP claims are currently waiting for assessment?
- b) What is the expected processing time for new DSP claims?
- c) How many doctors/ hours/DMA's is Medicare Health providing under the contract?

Answer:

a) and b)

The article referred to reports that “claimants are being told there are not enough doctors on Centrelink’s books to perform all the Disability Medical Assessments.”

Since the introduction of Disability Medical Assessments (DMAs) from 1 January 2015, Government-contracted doctors have been available to conduct DMAs in a timely manner.

The number of DMAs that will be completed each year is a function of demand.

That is, all Disability Support Pension (DSP) claims that are required to undergo a DMA will be subject to an assessment. Claims where it is determined that a person is manifestly eligible for DSP are not required to undergo a DMA.

- c) The department contracted Medibank Health Solutions (MHS) to deliver DMAs by Government-contracted doctors. MHS is required to deliver DMA services on a national basis to meet demand and provide appropriate access to facilities. They are not required to provide a finite number of doctors or hours.