

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 11 FEBRUARY 2016 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Cheques

Question reference number: HS 162

Senator: Cameron

Type of question: Written

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

Number of pages: 1

Question:

I refer to the statement made by DHS spokesperson Mr Hank Jongen of ABC radio on February 17, 2016 that only a couple of dozen Centrelink clients are still using cheques to receive payment. If this is the case, can people who have a conscientious objection to using banks, or would prefer to use cheques for other reasons, be accommodated so they can continue to use cheques?

Answer:

Efficiencies announced in the 2015-16 Budget for the Department of Human Services noted the issuing of cheques would cease from 1 January 2016.

The measure was partially implemented on 1 January 2016, with some customers receiving payment by cheque after 1 January 2016 to:

- reduce the impact of holiday processing arrangements over the Christmas/New Year period;
- allow additional time for customers in remote communities across Service Zone Northern Australia to receive final letters about the change; or
- allow an individual assessment of a customer's circumstances when receiving payment by cheque prior to payments being suspended for failing to provide bank account details.

The alternative method of payment available to customers is payment into the bank account of a payment nominee. A payment nominee can be a trusted individual or a third party organisation.