

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2015-16 Additional Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: Cross Outcome - Across Programmes **Question No: SQ16-000047**

Topic: Grants

Hansard page: Written

Senator Joe Ludwig asked:

Since the change of Prime Minister on 14 September, 2015:

1. What guidelines are in place to administer grants?
2. How are grants applied for?
3. Are there any restrictions on who can apply for a grant? If yes, please detail.
 - a. Can these restrictions be waved? If yes, please detail the process for waving them and list any grants where the restrictions were waved.
4. What is the procedure for selecting who will be awarded a grant?
5. Who is involved in this selection process?
6. Does the minister or the minister's office play any role in awarding grants? If yes, please detail.
 - a. Has the minister or the minister's office exercised or attempted to exercise any influence over the awarding of any grants? If yes, please detail.
7. Provide a list of all grants, including ad hoc, one-off discretionary grants awarded to date. Provide the recipients, amount, intended use of the grants, what locations have benefited from the grants and the electorate and state of those locations.
8. Update the status of each grant that was approved prior to the specified period, but did not have financial contracts in place at that time. Provide details of the recipients, the amount, the intended use of the grants, what locations have benefited from the grants and the electorate and state of those grants.

Answer:

1. The Department conducts its grants administration processes in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines. These have been in place since 1 July 2014, and were not affected by the September 2015 changes to parliamentary arrangements.

Best practice guides, such as the Australian National Audit Office's Implementing Better Practice Grants Administration, are also taken into consideration when developing and conducting grants processes.

2. All information on applying for the Department's grant programmes can be found on <https://www.dss.gov.au/grants/applying-for-grants>. Grant application processes have not been affected by the September 2015 changes to parliamentary arrangements.
3. Eligibility requirements differ across programme activities. The specific eligibility requirements are outlined in the activity's Programme Guidelines which are available on the DSS website under each individual activity's webpage. The Department is unable to fund an organisation if it does not meet the eligibility criteria.

4. All grant applications are subject to assessment against a set of selection criteria, to ensure grant recipients are able to deliver services in accordance to expectations of the Government and the Department. Grant applicants are assessed against these selection criteria.
5. Relevant areas of the Department assess grant applications to determine whether the applicant is best positioned to deliver services inline with the programme's aims and desired outcomes.

The Department's senior executives are, in most instances, the delegate for approving the nominated grant recipients. The Minister may be the delegate in particular circumstances.

These processes were established in 2014, when the *Public Governance Performance and Accountability Act 2013* came into effect.

6. In accordance with section 71 of the *Public Governance Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, the final approval for grants recipients is determined between the Minister and the Department when agreeing on a selection strategy.

When the Minister has the final approval, the Department provides formal advice on whether an organisation is suitable for grants funding. If the Minister disagrees with the Department's advice, it must be reported to the Finance Minister, as per section 4.13 of the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines.

a) No.

7. The Department publishes information on its grant funding on its website at <https://www.dss.gov.au/about-the-department/overview/grants-funding>. The grants report is an accurate and complete representation of the Department's grants funding at a given point in time.

The grants report is regularly updated, and information on individual grants is published no later than fourteen working days after the grant agreement takes effect. Grant information is retained on the website for at least two years after the expiry of the grant agreement.

The Grants Report provides each organisation's office location, but not electorate. To provide this information would require an unreasonable diversion of resources.

8. The Department does not capture this information in its records management systems. Fulfilling this request would require a considerable analysis from all affected areas of the Department, which would be an unreasonable diversion of resources.