

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 2 MARCH 2017 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Information release – use of section 202

Question reference number: 4 (HS 4)

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Hansard page 15

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 21 April 2017

Number of pages: 1

Question:

- a) Senator SIEWERT: How many times has information been released by either you or by the minister under section 202?

Ms Campbell: Is this in recent times or over many years? I do not know whether we have got that information with us, but you will see that we have many occasions—for example, when media outlets do stories alleging something, and we provide advice back when we are asked to provide comment on that.

Senator SIEWERT: How many times since the beginning of this financial year have you initiated it—and we have been down this road before when some of these stories have been initiated; for example, people on DSP? How many times since 1 July?

Ms Campbell: Can I just clarify that you are asking when the department has initiated something?

- b) Senator SIEWERT: How many times has the department provided information that the minister has released under section 202?

Ms Campbell: We would need to take that one on notice and we would not be able to answer that today. We would have to do research on it.

Answer:

- a) and b) Section 202 of the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* authorises the disclosure of protected information in various circumstances. This includes, for example, where that disclosure is for the purposes of the social security law, or with the express or implied authorisation of the person to whom the information relates.

Such disclosures are made very frequently and in a range of different circumstances. For example, the Department provides protected information to the Minister to enable the Minister to respond to representations made by Members of Parliament (either directly in correspondence or in Parliament). Given this, it is not possible for the Department to quantify the number of disclosures which have been authorised under section 202 during a particular period of time.