

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 2 MARCH 2017 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Information release - frequency

Question reference number: 11 (HS 11)

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Hansard page 24

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

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: What makes you decide when you release information to the public instead of just doing the service recovery and fixing it?

Mr Hutson: Senator, what we said was that, in this particular case, the instigation from our perspective was where a journalist asked us questions, and that is how we made the disclosure that we did.

Senator SIEWERT: So if any journalist ever asks you questions about somebody then you will release their information. Is that right?

Mr Hutson: No, Senator. If any journalist asks us questions about a matter, then we will take into account the circumstances of the case and make a decision about what we will release.

Senator SIEWERT: Can you take on notice how often that has happened in the last six months?

Ms Campbell: We will take that on notice, Senator.

Answer:

Searches identified seven instances from 2 September 2016 to 2 March 2017 where the Department initiated action to consider the disclosure of limited customer information to a journalist to correct the record in the media under subsection 202(2) of the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* and/or subsection 162(2) of the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Administration Act 1999*.