

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 2 MARCH 2017 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Crisis payments

Question reference number: 19 (HS 19)

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Hansard page 38

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Question:

a) Senator SIEWERT: Could you provide on notice what the definition of crisis is and where exceptional payments are made? Does that make sense?

Ms Brill: We are happy to provide those categories, yes.

b) Senator SIEWERT: Could you provide the difference between the categories and whether the exceptional circumstances payments are made as quickly as the crisis payments?

Ms Brill: Yes.

c) Senator SIEWERT: Are they the same time frames, or different?

Ms Brill: I think you are probably referring to urgent and crisis payments. They are different, and I am happy to provide that on notice.

Senator SIEWERT: If you could that would be appreciated. Are the urgent payments longer?

Ms Brill: It depends on our workload on the day, but we prioritise the crisis payments, and the urgent payments are normally done within a day or two as well.

Answer:

a) A Crisis Payment provides immediate financial assistance to a person who is eligible for a social security pension or benefit, who is in severe financial hardship and who:

- is forced to leave their home and establish a new home due to an extreme circumstance, such as domestic and family violence or house fire or flood; or
- is remaining in their home after the removal of a family member due to domestic or family violence; or
- is released from prison or psychiatric confinement, as a result of being charged with committing an offence; or
- entered Australia for the first time on a qualifying humanitarian visa on or after 1 January 2008.

An urgent payment (the exceptional circumstances payment) is made to assist recipients who are in severe financial hardship due to exceptional and unforeseen circumstance, or the recipient's payment has been delayed. To clarify:

- Exceptional means extremely unusual or extraordinary. A circumstance that is not part of the recipient's usual expectations. These circumstances occur infrequently and are unlikely to occur again.
- Unforeseen means unexpected and could not possibly have been known by the recipient in advance.

- b) A Crisis Payment, being a one-off lump sum, is designed to help with the costs of establishing a new home or to assist with the cost of securing the person's home through changing locks or other related expenses, and by providing immediate assistance to persons who are already in receipt of, or who qualify for, a social security benefit. Due to the sensitive nature of Crisis Payment claims, all attempts are made to confirm qualification and payability as quickly as possible, ideally within 24 hours.

An urgent payment (the exceptional circumstances payment) is an advance of part of a recipient's eligible Social Security entitlement and is paid prior to the usual payment date, and processed on the same day.

- c) As noted above in (b), in relation to Crisis Payments, all attempts are made to confirm qualification and payability as quickly as possible, ideally within 24 hours. Ninety per cent of all Crisis Payment claims are processed within two days of the claim being received.

An urgent payment request is processed on the same day it is made. When the recipient makes the request over the phone or in person at a Service Centre, based on the information and evidence provided, a decision is made and the recipient is advised of the outcome.