

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

BUDGET ESTIMATES - 2 JUNE 2011 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Grandparent Advisors

Question reference number: HS 29

Senator: Fierravanti-Wells

Type of question: Hansard pages 97-98

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 22 July 2011

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) **Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS:** I want to follow up on my questioning this morning about grandparents advisers. I was told that I would have to come here to ask questions. In Budget Paper No. 2, page 197, there is provision for grandparents peer support groups, \$1.2 million over four years to establish 25 MyTime for Grandparents, and also it says 'establish dedicated grandparents advisers in selected Centrelink offices'. Can you provide for me the definition and job description of what a grandparent adviser is, and what they do at the moment? Will that vary with the establishment of the 25 MyTime for Grandparents peer groups and will there be interaction between the two of them?

Mr Tidswell: Since November 2010 we have been trialling this approach. This is something we have been doing in an ad hoc way across the country for many years. It is a very tricky issue for grandparents who are carers for children. I think you know the issue well. Since November 2010, we have had staff doing work out of Caboolture, Caringbah, Penrith, Oakley and in Perth, and we also have an existing service operating out of Adelaide. Generally, these are staff working with individuals and groups of grandparents assisting them with the sorts of services we are able to provide. Often this is a tricky issue. The natural parent may not be in good shape—drugs, alcohol, what have you—and so by default the grandparents become the carers but not the custodians. It is a tricky issue for us to work with. It is largely working with grandparents in that area and looking at other ways of connecting them to services and provision and support, so it is a good initiative. What I am not aware of is how it connects in with the, as I understand it, FaHCSIA funded initiative mentioned in the budget papers, but we would be happy to take that on notice to work through how that particular initiative was going to work.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: They do work with community support groups now. There was some evidence given this morning which led me to think there might be some interaction between the two. Perhaps if you might look at that evidence and I am happy for you to elaborate, if you want, on notice.

Mr Tidswell: Yes.

- b) **Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS:** Are these six grandparent advisers full time or part time?
- Mr Tidswell:** Most of them are full time and some are part time. We have been trialling this as an approach and we would like to do more of it, but there is a limited amount of resources that we can provide.
- Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS:** Could you just take on notice which ones are part time and which are full time?
- Mr Tidswell:** Absolutely.
- c) **Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS:** Do they have defined areas that they cover or they are just located in that Centrelink office and whoever can access them from around does so?
- Mr Tidswell:** Generally how we operate our service model is that, whilst they might be located in an office, as I have outlined in those particular offices, they generally try to provide a footprint across a regional area, and that would be the norm when we have specialist staff doing this work. So, they might do outreach to places where—
- Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS:** Like Penrith might do outreach out past the Blue Mountains and those sorts of surrounding areas?
- Mr Tidswell:** Correct, yes. I will get some further information to give a sense of the extent of where they go.
- Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS:** This morning we had evidence that we are working off ABS 2006 statistics.
- Mr Tidswell:** That is my understanding of where we located the workers.
- Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS:** So, you use that data to decide where you put the officers?
- Mr Tidswell:** That is my understanding, but I will take that on notice for you and confirm that.

Answer:

- a) The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has advised that grandparents attending My Time for Grandparents peer support groups will be linked with the Centrelink Grandparent Advisor to assist them with accessing information about benefits, services and other assistance that may be available to them.
- b) All Grandparent Advisors are full-time with the exception of the Grandparent Advisor position in Adelaide, which is part-time.
- c) The locations in which the Grandparent Advisors are located were determined on the number of Grandparent Carers in the community as identified from Centrelink data.