

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Social Services Portfolio
2014-15 Budget Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 1

Question No: 417

Topic: Apply the One-Week ordinary waiting period to all working age payments

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Brown asked:

In the last financial year, how many new applicants were there for Sickness Allowance?

- a. Of these, how many were required to wait the OWP before receiving their payment?
- b. How many people were found to be exempt from the OWP?
- c. Under what circumstances might the OWP be waived for new Sickness Allowance applicants?
- d. How many Sickness Allowance recipients had the OWP waived?

Answer:

The answers to (a), (b) and (d) are contained in the following table. The table provides the total number of new recipients of Sickness Allowance (SKA) in 2012-13 and the number of these new recipients who had an Ordinary Waiting Period (OWP) applied, were exempt from the OWP or had their OWP waived

New recipients of SKA in 2012-13			
Total	OWP applied (a)	Exempt from OWP (b)	OWP waived (d)
19 154	5 418	2 816	10 745

Source: Department of Human Services Administrative Data – Rectangular RED dataset (DSS extract).

Note: new recipients include people who have transferred to SKA from another payment type, have not been on income support recently or are new to income support.

In the above table, exempt from the OWP refers to people who were not required to serve an OWP because they:

- received an income support payment at some time in the 13 weeks immediately prior to their start date for SKA; or
- were receiving Partner Allowance immediately prior to their partner's death and subsequently claimed SKA within four weeks; or
- were undertaking an activity specified by the Secretary by legislative instrument.

In relation to (c), under current legislation, a person may have their OWP waived if they are in severe financial hardship.