

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES – 1 JUNE 2017 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Parenting Payment – Transfer to Other Payments

Question reference number: HS 16 (SQ17-000097)

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Hansard page 117

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Question:

- a) Senator SIEWERT: Can I go to single parents. I asked the DSS yesterday about the process of transferring from PPS to Newstart when your youngest child turns eight, and they said to ask you. What is the process? Do they have to reapply, or apply for Newstart?

Ms Campbell: I think we will check to see whether we have anyone with the details. My recollection is that we start contacting these people about when their child turns six, alerting them and telling them what is going to happen—

Senator SIEWERT: I know there is mutual—

Ms Campbell: so we have a progressive period of, 'Hey, this is about to change.' They may get a job, which is what the goal is—that, as their child turns eight, they have commenced employment, that they are able to move into a full-time position or into employment. If that were not the case then I understand we would work with them. We might have to take the actual process on notice.

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- b) Senator SIEWERT: I understand that. Is it seamless? Do they have to wait?

Dr Charker: Except for recipients who live in a remote area, my advice is that the system will automatically book all briefing interviews, and those interviews are conducted within a Centrelink service centre. If a recipient is remote, an activity—a tasking, if you like—is generated and sent to an appropriate service centre for them to book the briefing interview. Folks who are remote do not require that appointment to be face-to-face, for obvious reasons.

If a recipient does not attend the appointment and there are no exceptional circumstances—for example, if they have had something like a recent experience of family domestic violence or bereavement or a significant mental health issue—if none of that has occurred and they do not attend the appointment then their parenting payment could be suspended from that point.

Senator SIEWERT: If they do all that then it is seamless through to Newstart and there is no waiting period?

Ms Campbell: That is why I think there is the three months to make sure that that is in place in order to do that. I am not sure that we know whether or not they fill in another form—

Dr Charker: No; they do not.

Ms Campbell: or that they have their details. They will have had proof of identity. We will know who they are. I think we would have to take on notice the actual mechanism for getting that payment.

- c) Senator SIEWERT: Yes, if you could. I particularly want to know if they do not have to do the ordinary waiting period.

Ms Campbell: Okay. We will take that on notice.

Answer:

- a) Parenting Payment Single recipients will be invited to attend an interview with the Department up to 13 weeks prior to cancellation of their payment when their child turns eight. At this appointment the impacts of cancellation will be explained and the recipient invited to submit an online claim for Newstart Allowance on the date they become qualified. The Department is unable to receive an early claim for Newstart Allowance because the system does not allow two primary payments to be active at the same time. The Newstart Allowance online claim will pre-populate with information currently held by the Department and the recipient will only be required to check the information for accuracy.
- b) Recipients will be required to book a Participation Interview with the Department once they submit their online claim. The recipient will be asked to select an appointment available in the next four working days. As these recipients are already connected to an employment services provider, this interview is used to confirm their mutual obligation requirements and finalise their claim for Newstart Allowance. Eligibility to their concession card is maintained during the transfer period.
- c) As the recipient is transferring between income support payments they are not required to serve an Ordinary Waiting Period. The recipient will not experience any loss in payment unless they delay submitting a claim for Newstart Allowance by more than 14 days.