

## Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

### BUDGET ESTIMATES – 1 JUNE 2017 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

#### Department of Human Services

**Topic:** Child Support Agency

**Question reference number:** HS 39 (SQ17-000120)

**Senator:** Lambie

**Type of question:** Written

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

**Number of pages:** 3

#### **Question:**

Since the parliamentary review into the child support agency there has been very little in the way of changes with many payers outlining very troubling issues as they deal with the agency.

- a) Does the child support keep records of the deaths of child support payers?
- b) Why does the Child Support Agency not publish statistics of the death of payers?
- c) Please provide payer death statistics from 2000 to 2017.
- d) Please provide any historical data on the deaths of payers from the commencement of the child support system in Australia.

#### **Answer:**

- a) Yes. The Department currently records the date of death for active cases (parents with an ongoing liability) and ended cases with outstanding child support payable (paying parent has no ongoing assessment but still has an outstanding child support debt).  
The Department does not record reasons of death.
- b) There is no requirement for the Department to publish data on the death of any parent or other recipient.
- c) The number of payer deaths recorded from 2000 to 2017 is displayed in Table 1.  
These are categorised by the year of death notification.
- d) Historical data recorded for payer deaths since the commencement of the child support scheme is recorded in Table 2. These are categorised by year of death notification.

**Table 1 – Child Support payer death statistics 2000 – 2017 (as at 16 June 2017)**

Year	Paying parent role	Paying and receiving parent role	Total
2000 <sup>1</sup>	1,289	285	1,574
2001	1,293	286	1,579
2002	1,522	440	1,962
2003	1,510	459	1,969
2004	1,887	547	2,434
2005	2,147	649	2,796
2006	2,229	704	2,933
2007	2,435	859	3,294
2008	2,626	995	3,621
2009	2,937	1,214	4,151
2010	2,440	1,079	3,519
2011	1,764	891	2,655
2012	1,716	939	2,655
2013	1,971	1,019	2,990
2014 <sup>2</sup>	3,085	1,519	4,604
2015	4,479	1,972	6,451
2016 <sup>3</sup>	1,928	1,250	3,178
2017	763	476	1,239

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<sup>1</sup> Deaths recorded includes parents/carers of all cases (includes active cases, ended cases with debt outstanding and ended cases with no debt outstanding).

<sup>2</sup> Prior to February 2014, the Department solely relied on families or relatives to advise the Department of the passing of paying or receiving parents. Since February 2014 the Child Support Program commenced receiving reports of deceased persons from Births, Deaths and Marriages. These reports generated work items for staff to update case records.

<sup>3</sup> From January 2016, the work items created from the Births, Deaths and Marriages report were refined to exclude parents/carers with cases that had ended, and had no child support debt.

As a result the data provided in Table 1 indicates an increase in the number of Child Support Paying parent deaths for the 2014 and 2015 calendar years.

**Table 2 – Historical Child Support payer death statistics 1988 – 1999**

Year	Paying parent role	Paying and Receiving parent role	Total
1988 <sup>4</sup>	6	0	6
1989	50	0	50
1990	148	2	150
1991	208	3	211
1992	353	7	360
1993	491	19	510
1994	618	49	667
1995	817	71	888
1996	936	93	1,029
1997	1,110	165	1,275
1998	1,244	191	1,435
1999	1,233	257	1,490

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<sup>4</sup> Deaths recorded include parents/carers of all cases (includes active cases, ended cases with debt outstanding and ended cases with no debt outstanding).