

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES – 1 JUNE 2017 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Single Parenting

Question reference number: HS 55 (SQ17-000136)

Senator: Watt

Type of question: Written

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

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) Will existing recipients be given prior notification of the proposed introduction of the new measure in advance?
- b) How will the department notify these people about their new obligations? Registered mail?
- c) Media reports say that DHS estimates this will catch out at 14,000 people doing the wrong thing – is that figure correct?
- d) If you know these people are doing the wrong thing, why not call the 2 referees they've already provided?
- e) When reference is made to one referee, will there be restrictions on who that referee could be?
- f) Will the referee be required to provide details of their relationship with the recipient? Will the referee be required to provide personal details?
- g) What consideration will be given to women who have left a relationship due to domestic violence, now living alone, in need of financial support, but may not necessarily be able to provide the necessary evidence via one referee?

Answer:

- a) Yes, existing recipients of Parenting Payment (single rate) and Newstart Allowance (single, with a dependent child) will receive written notification of the new measure and the review process, including the time frame within which to verify their relationship status with the Department. These reviews will commence from 1 January 2018.
- b) The recipient will receive written notification via their nominated preferred communication channel with the Department. Registered mail will not be used.
- c) The Department of Social Services provided the data for the media article—this was incorrectly attributed to the Department of Human Services. The Department of Social Services has confirmed that the figure reported in the media was derived using a combination of data sources including Random Sample Surveys and debt data to inform the development of the measure.

- d) This measure will ensure that existing recipients advise the Department of any changes to their relationship status. Referee details provided previously may be outdated. The review process will ensure that referee details are up to date and used for verification as required.
- e) Yes, a recipient/claimant will be advised that a referee should not be a close relative or immediate family member.
- f) Yes, the referee will be required to provide details of their relationship to the recipient/claimant. The form will request some personal information from the referee such as name and contact details.
- g) Recipients/claimants experiencing family and domestic violence will be advised to contact the Department as soon as possible to discuss alternative options for verification. This will also provide an opportunity to offer the recipient/claimant additional support if appropriate.