

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2011-12 Supplementary Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 5

Question No: 223

Topic: Engaging with People with a Mental Illness

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Wright asked:

I refer to the recommendations of the Commonwealth Ombudsman report 'Falling Through the Cracks. Centrelink, DEEWR and FAHCSIA: Engaging with Customers with a Mental Illness in the Social Security System' and note in particular, Part 5.3 that the Ombudsman asks each agency provide a status report on the implementation of relevant recommendations six months after publication of the report.

1. Given the report was published in September 2010, please advise which recommendations have been implemented, or will be implemented and whether FaHCSIA have provided status reports.
2. If status reports have yet to be provided, please advise when we would likely expect these status reports.

Answer:

Centrelink and FaHCSIA had joint responsibility for one recommendation (incorrectly attributed to Centrelink and DEEWR in the Ombudsman's report).

Recommendation 4

Centrelink and DEEWR should coordinate the updating of the Guide to Social Security Law to ensure that it appropriately supports the special procedure for assessing customers who are unwilling or unable to provide medical evidence.

In July 2010, Centrelink worked with FaHCSIA to update the *Guide to Social Security Law 3.6.2.10 - Medical Evidence for DSP* outlining where eligibility for DSP can be assessed based on a Centrelink registered psychologist's diagnosis of a mental health condition.

In July 2011, FaHCSIA made additional updates to the *Guide to Social Security Law 3.6.2.10 - Medical Evidence for DSP* to allow Job Capacity Assessors to verify details of a person's medical conditions without written medical evidence, based on documented conversations with the customer's treating doctor for vulnerable customers with suspected mental health conditions who are unable or unwilling to access medical evidence for DSP purposes.

DHS has advised that a written status report outlining Centrelink's progress against each recommendation was submitted to the Ombudsman's Office on 24 June 2011.