

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: 258

Topic: DSP

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Fifield asked:

With reference to the 2011-12 budget measure announcing changed participation requirements for DSP customers under 35 years of age who have a work capacity of eight or more hours a week from 1 July 2012:

- a) What is the status of the development of the participation interview policy?
- b) When will the legislation be introduced?
- c) How many additional staff will need to be hired to accommodate the increased workload for Centrelink from the participation interviews?
- d) Will all participation interviews be conducted on Centrelink premises?
- e) What capacity will there be for participation interviews over the telephone?
- f) Does FaHCSIA have an estimate of the number of people who will voluntarily comply with the participation plans developed at the interviews?
- g) What estimates has FaHCSIA done to calculate the number of people that will move off the DSP and move into either:
 - full-time work;
 - part-time work.
- h) What information collected from clients through participation interviews will Centrelink store? How long will Centrelink keep these records?

Answer:

Policy for the participation requirements measure is being developed.

It is anticipated that the legislation will be introduced in the Autumn 2012 sitting of Parliament.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) advises that the workforce requirements for new measures are considered in the context of the overall workloads for the department in any given year. Factors such as increasing or decreasing unemployment levels, funding changes for prior year Budget measures, emergency response activities and specific geographical workforce requirements are taken into account. A new measure may therefore not require additional staff and redeployment of existing, experienced staff is the first option. Recruitment of additional staff would be undertaken if required to ensure successful implementation of the new arrangements.

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FaHCSIA and DHS are working closely together to develop parameters. In line with current practice, requirements and arrangements for conducting interviews will be as flexible as possible, taking into account individual work capacity and circumstances, and will provide options for conducting interviews, including by phone.

FaHCSIA does not have an estimate of DSP recipients who will voluntarily comply with participation plans developed at the interviews. This measure aims to ensure people are aware of the support available to them.

This measure is not aimed at moving people off DSP. It aims to ensure people are supported and encouraged to participate in the employment or training where they have some capacity to do so.

FaHCSIA and DHS are working together to agree the management information to be collected. Information will be stored in line with DHS' records management policy and Centrelink's master program records authority.