

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2012-13 Supplementary Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: Cross

Question No: 252

Topic: Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT)

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

How many people come to the SSAT with a legal representative, or have been able to access advice from a legal adviser? What is this as a percentage of the total people who appear before the SSAT? Are the outcomes any difference for clients, does this help clients who may be vulnerable or stressed, in having a support person there?

Answer:

The SSAT is unable to answer this question. The SSAT can say that it is rare for a party to a review to be legally represented at a hearing. However, the SSAT cannot give a figure for legal representatives who come to a hearing because the SSAT would incur the cost of a contractor producing a report from the SSAT's case management system for a particular period plus the cost of staff checking the decision of the SSAT in each review listed in the report to confirm whether a nominated legal representative attended the hearing.

The SSAT does not collect data on how many people have accessed advice from a legal adviser.

The SSAT is unable to answer this question.

The SSAT does not consider that legal representation produces a different outcome (but has no research on the issue). The SSAT is not able to say whether legally represented parties to reviews consider that legal representation helped them.

In reviews of decisions made by officers in Centrelink, the SSAT allows an applicant to bring a support person to the hearing. Persons who are not lawyers also make submissions on behalf of applicants.