

## Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

### SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 23-24 OCTOBER 2014 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

#### Department of Human Services

**Topic:** Member of a Couple Tip-offs

**Question reference number:** HS 142

**Senator:** Siewert

**Type of question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 12 December 2014

**Number of pages:** 3

#### **Question:**

In the financial year of 2013-14 in relation to Member of a Couple” (MOC) (by same-sex and opposite sex) relationships:

- a) How many reviews by each payment combination?
- b) How many investigations undertaken by Centrelink’s Business Integrity Unit?
- c) How many “tip-offs” were received? What were the outcomes of these “tip-offs”? (For example, in relation to MOC tip-offs”, how many led to criminal prosecutions, how many led to how much debt, no action being taken, etc.)
- d) How many debts were raised, what was the total value of debts raised and provide a breakdown of the range of debts raised? (Provide data by payment type and other payments e.g. Family Tax Benefit, Rent Assistance).
- e) How many payments were cancelled?
- f) How many MOC debts led to prosecutions?

#### **Answer:**

- a) The information requested is not available split by same-sex and opposite sex relationships.

Member of a Couple Reviews/Investigations Completed in 2013-14:

<b>Payment Type</b>	<b>No. Completed Reviews</b>
ABSTUDY Payment	52
Age Pension	1,308
Austudy Payment	210
Carer Allowance	196
Carer Payment	1,663
Child Care Benefit	81
Family Tax Benefit	3,165

<b>Payment Type</b>	<b>No. Completed Reviews</b>
Newstart Allowance	9,850
Sickness Allowance	62
Widow Allowance	90
Youth Allowance Student	325
Disability Support Pension	5,486
Parenting Payment Partnered	137
Parenting Payment Single	18,860
Youth Allowance Job Seeker	1,041
Other	97
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42,623</b>

b) In 2013-14 financial year, the department conducted 120 investigations relating to Member of a Couple.

c) In 2013-14:

- o 51,827 tip-offs received related to alleged Member of a Couple allegations;
- o 31,621 reviews/investigations completed did not result in a debt or reduction in payment;
- o 1,249 reviews/investigations completed resulted in a debt and/or a reduction in payment; and
- o 335 debts were raised totalling \$1,867,388

Note: a single review/investigation can result in more than one debt.

The remaining 18,957 cases were either assessed as not warranting further action (such as duplicate and incomplete tip-offs) or were still undergoing assessment as at 30 June 2014.

The department referred five alleged Member of a Couple cases resulting from tip-offs to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration.

d) The total number of debts raised in 2013-14 in relation to Member of a Couple Relationships was 634. The value of these debts raised was \$7,043,950.

<b>Payment Type</b>	<b>Number of Debts</b>	<b>Debt (\$)</b>
Age Pension	<20	\$137,033
Austudy Payment	<20	\$34,315
Carer Payment	24	\$192,640
Child Care Benefit	<20	\$24,925
Family Tax Benefit	<20	\$15,499
Newstart Allowance	184	\$887,589
Sickness Allowance	<20	\$1,362
Widow Allowance	<20	\$117,878
Youth Allowance Student	<20	\$35,369
Disability Support Pension	80	\$848,635
Parenting Payment Partnered	<20	\$6,992
Parenting Payment Single	291	\$4,741,228
Youth Allowance Job Seeker	<20	\$225
Other	<20	\$262
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>\$7,043,950</b>

- e) The number of payment cancellations was 374.
- f) The department does not hold prosecution data. This is held by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP). In 2013-14 financial year, the department referred 16 Member of a Couple cases resulting from all sources, including tip-offs, to the CDPP for prosecution consideration.