

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: Outcome 2: Indigenous
Topic: Centrepay system - fines

Senator: Kakoschke-Moore, Skye

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Question:

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: Just returning to the discussions that you are having around the use of the Centrepay system for payment of fines, you said the discussions are quite well advanced. Would there be some sort of announcement forthcoming from the government about these discussions? When will I know that there is more information available about this?

Senator Scullion: Perhaps the department can give an update on the details of that.

Ms Saastamoinen: As the minister said, there have been discussions happening with a number of the jurisdictions including New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia. They are fairly well advanced. Western Australia, being in caretaker government at the moment, obviously we will need to wait until after the government is settled there. The Department of Social Services, because of its responsibility broadly for the welfare system, has been working with us on the discussions on how to particularly include consideration of Indigenous issues. So the discussions they are having are focused on the whole population; they do not just focus on Indigenous, but we are working with them to make sure that Indigenous Australians are very much front and centre of the discussions.

I would have to go back to DSS to work out the latest in terms of how close we are to being able to talk about progress much more specifically. I am happy to go back to DSS and talk to them.

Answer:

The Department of Social Services (DSS) is considering mechanisms that could provide for outstanding court imposed fines to be deducted from ongoing welfare payments. In September 2016, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion, wrote to all states foreshadowing this, and all states have expressed an interest in the policy.

Any announcements about this proposal are dependent on government processes and agreement being reached with states.