

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: CDP – Job Seeker Complaints

Senator: Dodson, Patrick

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Question:

Senator DODSON: What I was trying to get at is, how many of those people, as opposed to the departmental officers, exercise that facility in calling to lodge a complaint or register their concern?

Ms Williams: That tends to happen automatically. I can certainly investigate the number of times that a jobseeker actually made a complaint around the process, which is perhaps a piece of information that we do not have on us at the moment.

Senator DODSON: I know there is a fair degree of frustration both on the officers' side and on the recipients' side in relation to the use of technology in trying to respond and deal with concerns that people have. I am really trying to get to, what is the incidence of all of this and whether there is a way to remedy it.

Ms WILLIAMS: It is important to note that DHS investigates every penalty. That is the role of DHS as opposed to the provider, to make a decision around the penalty, essentially, and then they also obviously run that CCA process, that comprehensive compliance assessment process. I understand the point that you are making and I will look to provide further information on that.

Answer:

While the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) administers the Community Development Programme (CDP), the Department of Human Services (DHS) is responsible for managing the application of penalties and addressing any associated job seeker complaints and appeals.

DHS has advised that based on analysis of its social media accounts and Customer Feedback Tool, they have received one complaint and three suggestions related to the CDP in 2016-17.

While DHS manages a number of other complaints channels, such as its in person or written complaints, the reason for a job seeker's complaints are largely categorised based on the job

seeker's payments rather than their employment service. A full breakdown of potential complaints CDP job seekers have made to DHS is unavailable at this time.

CDP job seekers can also contact the National Customer Service line which is managed by the Department of Employment (DoE). Between 1 September 2016 and 24 March 2017, the National Customer Service line received 173 general complaints from CDP sources. DoE has advised that there is no easy way to disaggregate these complaints by topic without individually reviewing each record.

Job seekers can appeal their financial penalties to Centrelink if they believe that it has been unfairly imposed. Centrelink also has provisions to take into account financial hardship when making these decisions. Job seekers have access to formal mechanisms to appeal decisions if they are unhappy with Centrelink's decision, including the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Courts.