

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace  
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Additional Estimates 2010–2011**

**Outcome 4 - Employment & Participation Policy**

**DEEWR Question No.EW0922\_11**

**Senator Siewert provided in writing.**

**Question**

**THE SCHOOL ENROLMENT AND ATTENDANCE MEASURE (SEAM)**

What is the follow up process: a. Once a notification is given? b. Once suspension takes place? c. Once payment is reinstated?

**Answer**

Processes can vary between the enrolment and attendance components. Where relevant, both processes have been described.

**(a) Follow up process once a notification is given**

*Enrolment component.* Once a parent is issued with an enrolment (compliance) notice, they have 14 days in which to provide Centrelink with information confirming their child's enrolment at school. A parent can provide this information to Centrelink via a written or oral statement, either themselves or through a person nominated by the parent capable of confirming the information (e.g. school teacher).

Where enrolment information hasnot been provided by the parent after the 14 day period, Centrelink will contact the parent to determine whether there is a reasonable excuse or special circumstance that has prevented the parent from providing this information. Where these circumstances apply, additional time may be granted to the parent and, where appropriate, social work support will be provided. If there are no special circumstances or reasonable excuses, a suspension letter will be issued and the parent's income support payment will be suspended.

*Attendance component.* Once a parent is issued with an attendance (compliance) notice, they have 28 days in which to prove that they are taking reasonable steps to ensure that their child is attending school regularly. After issuing an attendance notice, a Centrelink social worker will also contact the parent within seven business days to discuss the requirements of the notice and determine whether support is required to assist the parent in complying. The 28 day period within which a parent is required to comply can be extended in situations where Centrelink determines that there is a reasonable excuse or special circumstance that is preventing the parent from complying. If there are no special circumstances or reasonable excuses, a suspension letter will be issued and the parent's income support payment will be suspended.

(b) Follow up process once a suspension takes place

Under both the enrolment and attendance component, after a parent has their payment suspended, a review of the parent's circumstances by a Centrelink Education Liaison Officer (ELO) will take place at 2, 6, 10 and 13 weeks. Centrelink social work support is also offered to the parent at the 2 and 10 week reviews and as requested by the parent.

After 13 weeks of suspension (either cumulative or continuous), Centrelink reviews the parent's circumstances to determine whether cancellation is appropriate. If a parent has been suspended under SEAM for a continuous period of 13 weeks, their payment will be automatically cancelled.

Where the suspension period is not continuous but cumulative, Centrelink will conduct a review of the parent's circumstances every 4 weeks of a suspension period after the 13 week point. At any of these reviews, Centrelink can make a decision to cancel a parent's payment for non-compliance if the parent's circumstances so warrant.

(c) Follow up process once a payment is re-instated

Under both the enrolment and attendance component, where a parent's payment is restored after being suspended for less than 13 weeks in total, arrears are paid for the whole of the suspension period.

By re-instating the parent's payments, Centrelink acknowledges that the parent is now capable of managing their child's attendance and in most cases additional Centrelink intervention is not required. However, individual circumstances may require that additional Centrelink Social Work support is provided.

There will normally be no back payments when a suspension is lifted after the 13 week threshold.