

**SENATE EMPLOYMENT, WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND EDUCATION
LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

**2007-2008 BUDGET SENATE ESTIMATES HEARING
28 and 29 MAY 2007**

EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS PORTFOLIO

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Outcome 3: Increased workforce participation

Output Group 3.1: Working age policy

Output 3.1.1: Working age policy and legislation

Question Number: W256-08

Question:

Senator Wong asked in writing:

What definition of 'homelessness' does DEWR use when administering income support payments? How many individuals receiving DEWR payments are homeless, according to DEWR's definition? What is the breakdown by different payment type?

Answer:

DEWR does not directly administer income support payments. DEWR oversees Centrelink's administration of income support payments. Centrelink administers income support payments in accordance with legislation and DEWR policy.

Centrelink's on-line guidelines include the following definition of homelessness:

For Centrelink's purposes, homelessness and risk of homelessness are experienced when an individual or family has inadequate access to safe and secure housing which meets community standards. For example:

- Is without conventional accommodation (for example sleeping rough, squatting, living in a car), or
- Lives in, or moves frequently between, temporary accommodation arrangements (for example with friend's or extended family, emergency accommodation, youth refuges), or
- Lives medium to long term in a boarding house, caravan park or hotel, where accommodation is not covered by a lease, or
- Lives in accommodation which falls below general community standards which surround health and well-being, such as access to personal amenities, security against threat, privacy and autonomy, or

- Is facing eviction, or
- Lives in accommodation not of an appropriate standard which may be detrimental to their physical and mental well-being, and/or where they have no sense of belonging or connection (for example Indigenous Australians living in crowded conditions and/or disconnected from their land, family/kin, spiritual and cultural beliefs and practices).

Note: The individual's own perception about the suitability of their accommodation needs to be considered when applying these indicators.

However, in the context of activity testing, this should be read in conjunction with the following direction from the Guide to Social Security Law:

Homelessness

In determining whether to grant an exemption for homelessness, the primary consideration should be whether a person's living circumstances are stable enough to allow them to meet their activity test obligations. A person may not be able to do this if they are living on the streets, in a hostel or refuge or moving from house to house every few days. On the other hand, a person who is living or residing temporarily with relatives or friends may be able to meet their obligations.

Before granting an exemption on the grounds of unstable accommodation, consideration should be given to the person's individual circumstances and whether it would be more appropriate to reduce a person's requirements to a level that they are able to meet. Consideration should be given to whether the person would benefit from a program such as [JPET](#) or [PSP \(1.1.P.237\)](#).

If an exemption is granted, it should be limited to the time required to arrange stable accommodation.

With regard to the second part of the question, the requested information is not readily ascertainable, and to provide the requested answers would require an unreasonable diversion of portfolio resources.

Estimated cost: Using the FOI calculator, to prepare this answer it has taken approximately half an hour at an estimated cost of \$10.