

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

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-2011**

Outcome 4 - Employment & Participation Policy

DEEWR Question No.EW0589_11

Senator Siewert asked on 20/10/2010, Hansard page 93.

Question

EIGHT-WEEK NON-PAYMENT PERIODS AND THE NO-SHOW PENALTIES

Suggested Question wording – Further to the response to DEEWR Question on Notice EW0319_11, the following data is requested:

- eight week non payment periods and No Show No Pay penalties for job seekers with a mental health condition
- eight week non payment periods and No Show No Pay penalties for job seekers experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness
- eight week non payment periods and No Show No Pay penalties by Centrelink Area Office
- eight week non payment periods and No Show No Pay penalties for the newly unemployed (i.e. within three months of new claim)

Actual Question - Senator SIEWERT—I asked about the eight-week non-payment periods and the no-show penalties, I specifically asked for some breakdown of figures, as I frequently do, on the numbers around mental health and people with mental illness and also homelessness and those at risk of homelessness. The answer I got, I have got to say, was not satisfactory in terms of information being made available with a breakdown of a whole range of areas. Also, there was a response around some regional breakdown that I asked for as well. You basically did not provide that information. I asked specifically for that information because I am concerned about the impacts of these measures on those who are homeless and those at risk of homelessness and those who are impacted by some mental condition. I was interested in the impacts on those two sections of the community. Given the government's social inclusion agenda, I would have thought the government and the department would have been interested in that information. I am wondering if you have it. If you do, can you go back and get it for me, please?
Ms Paul—I am absolutely happy to take that on notice and try to get that information.

—That leads me to my next question. I appreciate that some of that information may not be available and, therefore, you will not be able to provide it. My supplementary question is: could you look at whether there is a way of collecting that information?
Ms Paul—Yes. Senator SIEWERT—We have a lot of focus on mental health and we have a lot of focus on homelessness, and it seems to me that they are two key focus areas for which we need that sort of information. Ms Paul—Yes, I agree with you. As an example, as I said before, there is a growing recognition of exactly that. For

example, homelessness is a reasonably recent flag in the administrative data. So, yes, we will certainly look at that. For example, we will look at not only what is available generically, which is the approach we clearly were taking in this answer, but also whether there have been any samples or pilots, where we can give some sense of it, even if every income support recipient is not flagged. We will look at the whole box and dice for you. Senator SIEWERT—That is much appreciated. Thank you.

Answer

Job seekers with a mental health condition or who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

A Vulnerability Indicator is included by Centrelink on a job seeker's record if appropriate evidence suggests that the vulnerability could potentially impact on the job seeker's ability to comply with their requirements. Reasons for recording a Vulnerability Indicator include psychiatric problems or mental illness in the last six months, or homelessness;

A Vulnerability Indicator does not exempt a job seeker from compliance action but it must be considered when deciding whether an activity is appropriate for the job seeker given their individual circumstances.

From 1 July 2009 to 31 August 2010, for those job seekers identified through a Vulnerability Indicator as having a mental health condition:

- 109 job seekers received an eight week non-payment period
- 857 job seekers received one or more No Show No Pay penalties.

From 1 July 2009 to 31 August 2010, for those job seekers identified through a Vulnerability Indicator as being homeless (including those at risk of becoming homeless):

- 52 job seekers received an eight week non-payment period
- 244 job seekers received one or more No Show No Pay penalties.

Financial penalties according to Centrelink Area

From 1 July 2009 – 31 August 2010, the following financial penalties were applied according to the job seeker's location:

Centrelink Area (according to job seeker location)	No Show No Pay penalties	Eight week penalties
Central North Queensland	1101	859
Hunter	1597	791
Nth Aust	291	265
Nth Cent Vic	1477	989
Pacific Central	1284	599
South Aust	1733	1087
South East Qld	1478	1198
South East Vic	1331	951
South West NSW	789	695
South West Qld	1410	1518
Sydney East	2097	927
Sydney West	3997	1130
Tasmania	435	298
West Aust	1241	886
West Vic	1519	1129
Total	21 780	13 322

Financial penalties for the newly unemployed with activity test requirements

From 1 July 2009 – 31 August 2010, the following financial penalties were applied against job seekers in receipt of income support with activity test requirements within their first three months of receiving payment:

- 987 eight week non-payment penalties
- 2586 No Show No Pay penalties.

Note – eight week non-payment penalties include penalties for serious failures, unemployment non-payment penalties and penalties arising from Comprehensive Compliance Assessments due to persistent non-compliance.