

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Human Services Portfolio**

**Department of Human Services**

Additional Estimates February 2005

**Question: HS36**

**Outcome 1, Output 1.1 - Effective delivery of Australian Government services to eligible customers**

**Topic: Debt analysis**

**Hansard Page/Written** Question on Notice: Written

Senator Evans asked on 15 February 2005:

- (1) Will any research under the Debt Analysis program (referred to on page 50 of the Centrelink Annual Report 2003-04) be made publicly available?
- (2) As a result of this analysis why was it decided to target recipients of age pension, disability support pension, sickness allowance and indigenous customers?
- (3) Does Centrelink plan to undertake similar studies to determine common characteristics of people who are still attracting FTB debts? If not, why not?
- (4) Has any internal analysis of the socio-economic status of families who are overpaid FTB been conducted?
- (5) If so, is any of this analysis publicly available? If not, why not?
- (6) Does Centrelink accept that such an analysis would be a useful starting point for developing strategies to help these people eliminate their debts/overpayments?
- (7) Is it fair to say that those families in greatest need of FTB are the most likely to be overpaid (and therefore receive an FTB debt at the end of the year)?

Answer:

- (1) No. These are internal working documents that informed further targeted analysis. They are not produced in forms that are appropriate for public release.
- (2) The analysis identified those groups most at risk of accumulating debt and was used to develop program specific debt prevention strategies, with the aim of reducing the incidence of debt.
- (3) No, because the analysis outlined on page 50 of the Centrelink Annual Report 2003-04 is not relevant to of the Family Tax Benefit program.
- (4) Yes.
- (5) No. The analysis referred to at part four above involved analysis of a sample of actual customer records and cannot be publicly released as they are internal documents and have not been produced in forms that are appropriate for release.
- (6) Yes.
- (7) No. Most low income and income support customers are entitled to the maximum rate of Family Tax Benefit and up to 31 December 2004 only about one percent had received an overpayment.