

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Department of Human Services

Additional Estimates February 2005

Question: HS42

Outcome 1, Output 1.1: Effective delivery of Australian Government Services to eligible customers

Topic: Disability Support Pension customer referrals to Job Network

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

Senator Evans asked on 15 February 2005:

- (1) In what circumstances does Centrelink refer Disability Support Pension recipients to Job Network providers?
- (2) Has there been any new advice (in the last six months) about the circumstances in which this should occur?
- (3) Please provide a copy of that advice?
- (4) Does Centrelink keep a record of occasions on which Disability Support Pension recipients are provided with incorrect advice?
- (5) What steps in Centrelink undertaking to ensure that customers are provided with accurate information regarding their obligations?

Answer:

(1) Disability Support Pension customers can either volunteer for employment assistance, or be identified as potentially suitable for assistance as part of the new claim or review process or at any other time of contact. They are interviewed by skilled staff who assess their employment assistance needs, discuss available options and encourage the customer to accept a referral to the most appropriate assistance.

This may be Job Network Member including specialist disability providers or Disability Employment Assistance or vocational rehabilitation.

(2) Participation in assistance programs is completely voluntary for Disability Support Pension customers. There has been an increased focus on referrals by Centrelink in line with Government directions.

On 14 December 2004 a nationally endorsed script was issued for Customer Service Officers to follow. A copy of the script is attached. The script was also tabled at the Additional Estimates hearing on 15 February 2005.

On 14 December 2004 a national instruction was issued to Centrelink network staff reinforcing the process to be followed when discussing employment assistance with Disability Support Pension customers.

The instruction was accompanied by detailed task cards which stressed the care and consideration required to determine if the customer could benefit from referral to Job Network, or if there were more beneficial options.

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(3) A copy of the instruction is attached.

(4) Centrelink staff do not knowingly give customers incorrect advice and therefore do not record occasions on which this may accidentally occur. Customers have the opportunity to express their opinion of Centrelink service delivery via Customer Satisfaction Surveys.

(5) Centrelink customers receive information regarding their obligations at interviews, in letters and in Centrelink publications.