

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Department of Human Services

Additional Estimates February 2005

Question: HS56

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

Topic: Overseas portability for DSP recipients

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

Senator Wong asked on 15 February 2005:

I would like to ask about the changes introduced on 1 July 2004 to overseas portability for DSP recipients assessed as severely disabled, where a 13 week limit was introduced. When the changes were legislated for in December 2003, what steps did Centrelink take to notify people who had flagged an intention with Centrelink to travel overseas, who had an assessment to be treated as severely disabled, or an assessment pending to be classified as severely disabled, so as to obtain unlimited DSP portability under the old provisions?

Answer:

Centrelink took the following action to notify customers of the changes:

- Over a six week period starting in mid March 2004, a letter was issued to approximately 8000 disability support pension customers who were assessed as severely disabled who were overseas with indefinite portability prior to 1 July 2004. The letter informed them of the impending changes and emphasised the importance of contacting Centrelink if they planned to undertake any travel after 1 July 2004. This advice was also issued if a customer had recently returned to Australia and seemed likely to travel again.
- From mid-March 2004 any customers who advised Centrelink of any travel planned for prior to 1 July 2004 were advised in writing that the rules would be changing from 1 July 2004 and that they would need to contact Centrelink for a new decision if their date of departure changed.

As well as specific advice to the above customer groups general publicity was made available, to individuals and community groups, via Multicultural Service Officers, SBS radio, a Centrelink factsheet and the Centrelink website.