

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Additional Estimates 2006-2007, 13th and 16th February, 2007

Question: HS15

Agency: Centrelink

Outcome 1, Output 1.1

Topic: Optical Surveillance - savings

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SENATOR MOORE asked on 16/02/2007:

Mr Whalan—In 2005-06, those 2,348 people who were subject to optical surveillance resulted in a raising of \$24.1 million in debts or subsequent savings.

Senator MOORE—That is the global figure?

Mr Whalan—Yes.

Senator MOORE—Can we get it payment based?

Mr Whalan—We will take that on notice.

Senator MOORE—Because there has been much made of the successful processes of raising debt and the methodologies to obtain that, it would be good to refine the information to see what has been most effective. It seems to me there must be something in the database that would give us the global figure of the savings from all of them and the figures of the people who were under surveillance. You can take that on notice.

ANSWER:

The following table gives a breakdown by payment type, of people who were the subject of optical surveillance in financial year 2005-06:

Payment Name	Optical Surveillance Occurrences	Total Debts and Savings
Age Pension	103	2,226,026
Carer Payment	45	341,949
Disability Support Pension	328	4,220,680
Newstart Allowance	850	5,643,799
Parenting Payment - Partnered	107	749,149
Parenting Payment - Single	682	9,035,979
Special Benefit	27	222,256
Youth Allowance Job Seeker	94	352,502
Other	112	1,355,230
Total	2348	\$24,147,570

Notes: Centrelink, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Department of Education, Science and Training and the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs signed a Protocol for the Release of Social Security Information on 22 September 2006. The Protocol stipulates that cells containing customer numbers between 0 and 19 inclusive will show the value '<20'

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The following table gives a breakdown by 'investigation type' of people who were the subject of optical surveillance in financial year 2005-06:

Investigation Type	Optical Surveillance Occurrences	Total Debts and Savings
Cash Economy	1442	\$7,684,588
Identity Fraud	224	\$7,907,257
Tip-offs	677	\$8,532,191
Other	<20	\$23,534
Total	2348	\$24,147,570

Notes: Centrelink, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Department of Education, Science and Training and the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs signed a Protocol for the Release of Social Security Information on 22 September 2006. The Protocol stipulates that cells containing customer numbers between 0 and 19 inclusive will show the value '<20'

For 2005-06 financial year, Centrelink recorded \$100.2 million in debts and savings related to fraud. Optical surveillance was used in the detection of almost a quarter of this money.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 3 hours and 11 minutes at an estimated cost of \$181.