

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: HS18

Agency: Centrelink

Outcome 1, Output 1.1

Topic: Optical Surveillance – process and procedures

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Hansard Page F&PA 33

SENATOR MOORE asked on 16/02/2007:

Senator MOORE—Yes. Dr Browne, can you take on notice the question about the guidelines that lead to someone being selected for this process? Can we get some information about what processes your branch goes through to stimulate the process? Is optical surveillance always done by outside contractors? Are any Centrelink staff involved in this process?

Dr Browne—No, it is done by outside bodies.

ANSWER:

Centrelink optical surveillance guidelines state that it should only be used:

- where there is a reasonable suspicion that an offence or an unlawful activity is being committed or has been committed.
- where other forms of investigation have been considered and have been assessed to be unsuitable, or other forms of investigation have been tried and been found to be inconclusive or unsuitable.

Requests for optical surveillance must be made in writing to senior optical surveillance officers. These officers are experienced in optical surveillance practices and Centrelink investigations, and are part of the Fraud Investigations Team for their particular area. Approval of surveillance must be on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the guidelines.

Centrelink always uses outside contractors for optical surveillance services.

Centrelink staff are involved in the approval of the activity in accordance with guidelines, but staff are not involved in the surveillance activity itself.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 2 hours and 26 minutes at an estimated cost of \$144.