

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: HS39

Agency: Centrelink

Outcome 1, Output 1.1

Topic: Disability Support Pension

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

SENATOR WEBBER asked on 16/02/2007:

- (1) What are the requirements for informing an applicant that they are not eligible for DSP?
- (2) What is the "form approved by the Minister"? Does this vary often?
- (3) What information must be provided by the applicant?
- (4) What guidelines are there for explaining why Centrelink's decision is in opposition to the treating doctor's recommendations?

ANSWER:

1. Disability Support Pension applicants who have their claim rejected are notified in writing of the decision.
2. Sub-section 16(2) of the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* says that a claim for a social security payment must be in accordance with a form approved by the Secretary (not the Minister). The claim form for Disability Support Pension that is approved by the Secretary is known as the *Claim for Payments for people with disabilities, illnesses or injuries* (Form SA317(b).0701). This form was last updated in January 2007.
3. An applicant for Disability Support Pension must lodge a completed *Claim for Payments for people with disabilities, illnesses or injuries* form. Generally the applicant must also provide a Treating Doctor's Report from their doctor. There are some exceptions. For example, a Treating Doctor's Report is not required if the applicant provides:
 - a detailed report from a specialist that contains the same information as a Treating Doctor's Report; or
 - documentation that shows the applicant has an intellectual disability that would qualify them for Disability Support Pension; or
 - documentation that certifies the applicant is permanently blind.
4. Doctors are asked to provide information on an applicant's medical conditions, but are not asked to provide an opinion on whether the applicant can work or details of how the applicant's medical conditions affect their capacity to work. Centrelink does not diagnose medical conditions or overrule diagnoses made by treating doctors.

Most Disability Support Pension applicants have Job Capacity Assessments conducted by organisations contracted by the Department of Human Services. These assessments provide the information required to assist Centrelink in determining payment eligibility such as an impairment rating and the applicant's capacity to work.

Once Centrelink has the required information, including a Job Capacity Assessment, its officers are able to make a determination of the applicant's payment entitlement using the qualification criteria stipulated by law.

If a claim for Disability Support Pension is rejected the applicant has the right of review and appeal.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 5 hours and 41 minutes at an estimated cost of \$305.