

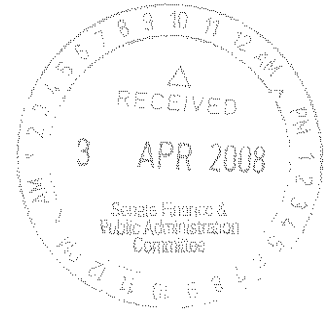
Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Department of Human Services

Additional Estimates 2007-08 – February 2008



Question: HS146

Outcome 1, Output 1.1

Topic: Centrelink – Income Management issues

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

SENATOR COONAN asked on 22/02/2008:

- (a) What is the process involved in notifying someone their payments are going to be quarantined? Specifically, when are they notified?
- (b) What is the process involved in notifying someone their payments are going to be quarantined? Specifically, how much notice are they given?
- (c) What is the process involved in notifying someone their payments are going to be quarantined? Specifically, what right of appeal do they have?

Answer:

- (a) Eight weeks prior to the date a community is scheduled to be subject to Income Management, teams from the Northern Territory Emergency Response Taskforce, including Centrelink staff, commence visits within that community.

This process is accompanied by radio announcements in relevant languages and posters in community buildings as well as discussions with community councils and other groups.

During a six-week visiting period, the Centrelink teams attempt to meet with all affected customers within the community, engaging in one to one discussions regarding Income Management.

During the early stages of the visits, letters are distributed to customers alerting them to the fact that the community is about to become subject to Income Management and that they need to talk to Centrelink employees about their payments. Once the identified customers have had an interview with Centrelink, further written advice is provided as to the Income Management arrangements stemming from that interview.

For those customers who are unable to be contacted by Centrelink in the six-week period, payments will be income managed from the date determined by the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs for their community. At this point they are sent a letter notifying them of this action and asking them to contact Centrelink to discuss their payments.

- (b) See HS146(a). As a general rule, customers are given up to six weeks notice that their payments will be income managed. This may be less where the customer is unable to be contacted.

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(c) The notification process is undertaken during community visits and one to one interviews with customers, both before and after the declaration of a prescribed community as being subject to Income Management. Customers can:

- seek a review from a Centrelink Authorised Review Officer (ARO);
- seek review under the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977*;
- appeal on a question of Law to the Federal Court; or
- raise the matter with the Commonwealth Ombudsman.