

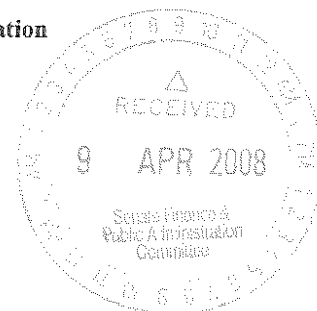
Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Department of Human Services

Additional Estimates 2007-08 – February 2008



Question: HS85

Outcome 1, Output 1.1

Topic: Centrelink - Fraud - Cash Economy

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

SENATOR COONAN asked on 22/02/2008:

Please provide particulars of the role of out posted Centrelink officers in the Australian Taxation Office, Interagency Cash Economy Fraud Investigation Teams and optical surveillance procedures.

Answer:

Out posted Centrelink officers in the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) are known as Centrelink ATO Special Project Officers (CASPO). The CASPO role is to:

- obtain and assess ATO information about Centrelink customers that would otherwise not have been received through data matching in order to identify Centrelink customers who may not be receiving their correct entitlement;
- undertake community activities in association with ATO staff in order to identify non-compliance and to encourage voluntary compliance. This involves attendance with ATO staff at audits, site visits, and other educational activities; and
- provide a direct link for the ATO when seeking information on Centrelink customers where it has implications for the ATO.

Centrelink has established dedicated Fraud Investigation Teams in each State and Territory. Cash economy investigations are only one aspect of investigations undertaken by these teams. The role of the Cash Economy Investigation staff includes the detection and investigation of fraud associated with the cash economy and involves a substantial focus on inter-agency coordination, both at the national and local level.

Optical surveillance is a form of investigation available to Centrelink in situations where all other avenues of investigation have been exhausted or would be inappropriate. It is used to collect visual evidence for cases of suspected welfare fraud. Centrelink uses the services of optical surveillance providers to assist Centrelink investigators to gather this information and evidence.