

# Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

## ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES – 9 FEBRUARY 2010 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

### Human Services Portfolio

**Topic:** Member of a Couple Compliance Activity, Same-sex Couples

**Question reference number:** HS19

**Senator:** BOYCE

**Type of question:** Hansard F&PA page 98, 9 February 2010

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 26 March 2010

**Number of pages:** 2

#### **Question:**

**Senator BOYCE**—We were talking earlier about child support agencies and about visual inspections of houses, workplaces and that sort of thing to verify people's income information and the like. Are you conducting any checks of any sort on people that you suspect are same-sex couples but are not saying so?

**Ms Beath**—That is part of our general compliance activities, so I might ask one of my colleagues to discuss it with you.

**Mr Withnell**—We have a standard procedure for members-of-a-couple assessments. It is largely a desk based activity where we look at a range of issues around whether there is interdependence or co-dependency, either financially or in terms of residence.

**Senator BOYCE**—So you have broadened this oversight now to include single individuals of the same gender who may be a same-sex couple?

**Mr Withnell**—That is correct.

**Senator BOYCE**—Could you tell me a little more about what you have done there. Have you found people who are not complying? What has been the next action?

**Mr Withnell**—I do not have the exact figures on that breakdown with me.

**Senator BOYCE**—Would you be able to provide those on notice, perhaps just from July to 31 December or 31 January, depending on what is convenient.

**Mr Withnell**—Yes, we can do that.

#### **Answer:**

Centrelink is not able to provide the exact number of individuals identified, following a compliance review, as a member of a same-sex couple. This is because Centrelink compliance IT systems do not capture this information.

Centrelink records the outcome of all compliance reviews in terms of the impact on the individual's Centrelink payment, such as a decrease in payment or a debt. From 1 July 2009 to 31 January 2010, Centrelink completed more than 350,000 compliance reviews.

Centrelink would need to manually inspect the records for all 'member of a couple' compliance reviews to determine if the reason for the review outcome was that an individual was identified as being a member of a couple, either same-sex or opposite-sex. From 1 July 2009 to 31 January 2010, Centrelink completed more than 6,500 'member of a couple' compliance reviews.