

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Department of Human Services and agencies

Budget Estimates 2006-2007, 25 May 2006

Question: HS15

Outcome 1, Output 1.1

Topic: Centrelink – Youth Allowance Debts

Hansard Page or Written Question on Notice: F&PA 97

SENATOR WONG asked on 25/5/2006:

Mr Whalan—With these SAS programs you could rerun it but you would have to change its slightly. It ought to be easier. You would have to change it slightly but you could rerun it. In terms of the first issue, that is why it took so long, and it will take a fair time again this time. We gave it last time; we should give it again this time, and we will.

Senator WONG—Can you explain to me why the policy decision was made? What is the limit? It took you 14 hours and 30 minutes on the last occasion and you assert that is because you wrote a program to extract the information. You have indicated today that you could probably use the same program although it might require some amendment. Presumably, it would not require the full 14 hours. Why is it that 14 hours previously, if that is what your evidence is, was considered to be a reasonable request and then something less than 14 hours is now considered not to be reasonable?

Mr Whalan—I think it was an error. There is no new threshold, as such. I think we ought to have provided it and we will.

Note: the information Mr Whalan indicated Centrelink would provide is the answer to part 3 of HS53, which was asked at Centrelink's Additional Estimates hearing on 14 February 2006.

Answer:

For the 2004-05 financial year 501 cases were referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions, where the largest debt involved Youth Allowance. For 2005-06 to 30 April, 229 referrals were made to the Director of Public Prosecutions where the largest debt involved Youth Allowance.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 3 hours and 20 minutes at an estimated cost of \$189.