

**Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration**

**ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Human Services Portfolio**

**Department of Human Services**

Budget Estimates 2007-08 - May 2007

**Question: HS17**

**Outcome 1, Output 1**

**Topic: Department of Human Services – Access Card**

**Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Hansard Page F&PA 89**

**SENATOR NETTLE asked on 24/05/2007:**

**Senator NETTLE**—I am interested in what small businesses you have consulted with and what kinds of organisations. I do not know to what extent you can give me that information now; maybe I need to wait for that.

**Ms Hartland**—We might get some specific information—

**Senator Ellison**—I think we can add to that...

**Senator Ellison**—Buy readers for business—no. The cost of those readers that has been put to me is in the region of \$5 to \$10.

**Ms Hartland**—The small readers are, as the Minister said—

**Senator NETTLE**—With the technology to read off the chip just the bits—

**Ms Hartland**—That is correct.

**Senator Ellison**—Just concession.

**Senator NETTLE**—I would be interested in more information that you could provide on that. Can you give me a sense of the response that you have had from small business to what is being proposed in them buying the readers? Without going through who you have met with et cetera, can you give me a sense of what the response has been from small business on that issue?

**Senator Ellison**—We will have to take that on notice because we have spoken to a variety of people. I think that is something we would have to look at in more detail.

**Answer:**

The Government has decided not to proceed with the Access Card Program. Details of funding to be returned to the Budget will be provided as part of the forthcoming Budgetary processes. With respect to the specific questions asked by the Senator, the answers are as follow:

The Department of Human Services held several meetings with retail/small business associations. These meetings were directed at hearing the views, issues and concerns of the retail sector regarding the Access Card initiative. Their areas of interest were, in general, how they could access concession status on the chip of the access card and interest in ensuring that their members would not be in breach of legislation when they checked concession status on the chip.

On the issue of small businesses buying card readers, the retail association representatives expressed no apparent concern over the issue, noting the likely relative low cost of some card readers and timeframe before registration was to commence.