

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Centrelink

Budget Estimates 2007-08 - May 2007

Question: HS58

Outcome1, Output 1.1

Topic: Centrelink - Breaches

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written Question on Notice

SENATOR SIEWERT asked on 24/05/2007:

1. How many people have received 8 week non-payment periods since 1st July 2006? How many by area breakdown?
2. How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have received 8 week non-payment periods and how many by area breakdown?
3. Are there any strategies to address the large numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people receiving 8 week non-payment periods? If so, what are those strategies?
4. How successful have those strategies been in reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people receiving 8 week non-payment periods?
5. Are Aboriginal people receiving 8 week non-payment periods against the expressed recommendations of Indigenous service officers under the Indigenous Penalty Strategy? If so how many?

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Answer:

1. Between 1 July 2006 and 30 June 2007, 15,509 job seekers have received an eight-week non-payment period. The Area breakdown is provided below.

South Metropolitan New South Wales	1259
Pacific Central	1254
South West New South Wales	800
West New South Wales	1266
Hunter	1386
East Coast New South Wales	537
South East Victoria	670
North Central Victoria	1166
West Victoria	1448
Central North Queensland	509
Brisbane	1546
North Australia	369
South Australia	1071
Tasmania	325
Western Australia	1361
No Area ¹	542

¹ No Area – refers to those job seekers who were not attributed to an area.

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2. Between 1 July 2006 and 30 June 2007, 1,644 Indigenous job seekers have received an eight-week non-payment period. The Area breakdown is provided below.

South Metro NSW	53
Pacific Central	135
South West NSW	93
West NSW	94
Hunter	135
East Coast NSW	28
South East Victoria	<20
North Cent Victoria	20
West Victoria	24
Central North Queensland	195
Brisbane	132
North Australia	202
South Australia	98
Tasmania	<20
Western Australia	393
No Area ¹	<20

¹ No Area – refers to those job seekers who were not attributed to an area.

Note: Precise figures are not quoted where there are less than 20 job seekers to prevent any identification of an individual.

3. Between 1 July 2006 and 30 June 2007 Indigenous job seekers accounted for 10.6 per cent of all eight-week non-payment periods, and 11.42 per cent of the job seeker population. Therefore, Indigenous jobseekers are under represented in the jobseeker population who incurred an eight-week non-payment period.

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There are Indigenous employees in the Area Participation Solutions Teams. Their role includes providing 'cultural consultancy' and resource information on Indigenous matters to Customer Service Advisers (CSAs) in these teams. This process ensures Indigenous barriers/issues/factors have been considered and investigated when making a decision about a Participation Failure.

As at 16 October 2007 the number of Indigenous staff in Area Participation Solutions Teams totals 39.

4. These processes enable Centrelink to review the job seeker's circumstances to ensure that their participation requirement or activity test obligation was reasonable. This assessment is made prior to a failure being applied. The processes support the identification of cultural barriers that may have impacted on the job seeker's ability to comply. During the 2006-07 financial year, Indigenous job seekers were less likely than the rest of the job seeker population to have a third or serious failure applied.
5. It is not the role of these specialist staff to recommend whether or not a failure should be applied.