



12 May 2010

Ms Carolyn Hogg
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Senate F&PA Committee

Tabled Document

Inquiry: Budget estimates 2010-11
Date/Time: 24 May 2010, 11:25am
Witness Name: Ms. Missingham
Organisation: Parl. Library.

Dear Ms Hogg,

Parliamentary Library requests for Centrelink data

1 I am writing about an issue that has arisen concerning requests made to Centrelink by Parliamentary Library research staff for statistical data needed for responses to requests from members of parliament.

2 Over recent weeks one of our researchers has been attempting to place a request to Centrelink for some specific data about family tax benefits. The result of discussions with Mr David Carmichael in the Centrelink statistical area and with Ms Sue Kercher in Minister Bowen's office is that our researcher has been advised that data cannot be supplied unless the Library discloses the name of the member of parliament making the request and the reason for that request.

3 Such disclosure would be contrary to the legislative requirements set down in the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*, subsection 38 (2) which directs the Library's services to be performed :

- (a) in a timely, impartial and confidential manner;...and
- (d) having regard to the independence of the Parliament from the Executive government of the commonwealth.

4 In order to be able to respond quickly and effectively to individual requests and to prepare briefings on emerging issues our researchers rely on access to a wide range of sources of information, including data only accessible through Centrelink. While we understand that there are processes to be followed in order to request such data, we must operate in accordance with the legislative requirements to preserve the confidentiality of our clients.

5 I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the matter further with you either by phone or in person at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely

Roxanne Missingham
Parliamentary Librarian