

# Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

## BUDGET ESTIMATES – 27 MAY 2010 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

### Human Services Portfolio

**Topic:** Optical Surveillance

**Question reference number:** HS12 (a-b)

**Senator:** KROGER

**Type of question:** Hansard, F&PA page 96-97

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 9 July 2010

**Number of pages:** 1

**Question:**

**Senator KROGER**—Do you contract out the services of people to conduct optical surveillance or is that conducted in house by the Special Investigation Unit?

**Mr Lodge**—No, they are contracted out through a panel of optical surveillance people through the Centrelink contract.

**Senator KROGER**—So they are detectives and detective agencies—is that what you are saying?

**Mr Lodge**—I would have to take that on notice and see exactly who makes up that panel.

**Senator KROGER**—I am just trying to get my head around the process. If the Special Investigation Unit believes that there is reason to further investigate and it requires optical surveillance, who makes that judgment call?

**Mr Lodge**—The decision to make optical surveillance is done in the compliance area through the Special Investigation Unit. As to the actual delegate who signs the authority, I would have to check on whether it is the national manager for compliance or one of the directors in that area.

**Ms Godwin**—But I would add that it is taken at a senior level. We only conduct optical surveillance in a very small number of cases where other quite extensive investigations have not necessarily proven to be successful but we think optical surveillance may add to the information which is available to us. That decision, as you can imagine, because it is a small number and it is something we only do when we think it is a serious case, is taken at a senior level. As Mr Lodge says, we can take on notice who the exact delegate is, but it is taken at a senior level.

**Answer:**

- a) Optical surveillance services are provided by Private Investigation firms selected from the Centrelink panel of providers.
- b) The decision to undertake optical surveillance is made by the National Manager, Non Compliance.