

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Department of Human Services and agencies

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2005-2006, 1 November 2005

Question: HS45

Outcome 1, Output 1.1

Topic: Centrelink - Appeals

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

SENATOR EVANS asked the Minister for Human Services, upon written notice:

1. Please provide a breakdown of appeals by Indigenous customers to AROs, the Social Security Appeals Tribunal and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, by payment type and state and territory. Please also indicate the outcome of these appeals (affirmed/rejected).
2. Can you outline what steps are being taken by Centrelink to increase appeal rates amongst Indigenous customers?

Answer:

1. Please see the attached table. The figures were compiled from Centrelink's records, however the actual figures may be higher. All Centrelink customers are invited to identify themselves as Indigenous, but some choose to not do so.

There are differences in the received and finalised figures as not all reviews are finalised in the same period that they are received.

2. Recent changes to Centrelink's internal review process have made it more accessible for Indigenous customers. One change was to broaden the definition of what constitutes a request for review, so that customers are more readily recognised as seeking a review. Another was to streamline the process so ABSTUDY customers need to ask for review only once for a matter to go to an Authorised Review Officer (ARO), rather than twice under previous arrangements.

Indigenous Customer Service Officers (ICSOs) in many Centrelink offices play an important role. They have individual contact with indigenous customers who are unhappy with, or disagree with a Centrelink decision. By facilitating communication between the customer and other Centrelink staff, ICSOs often resolve matters outside the review and appeals process. Otherwise, the ICSOs will advise the customers of their rights and, if necessary, assist them through the process. ICSOs are also heavily involved in outreach activities described below.

Both Centrelink staff and agents are trained to encourage and support customers to exercise their full appeal rights. There are currently 374 Agents, including 185 Indigenous Agents.

Information about breach decisions and penalties appealed to AROs, the SSAT and the AAT will be answered in the answer to Question HS35.

SSAT - Received

State/Territory	Payment	2004-05
New South Wales	ABSTUDY Pensioner Education Supplement	1
	Abstudy	5
	Age Pension	0
	Carer Payment	4
	Disability Support Pension	15
	Employment Entry Payment	0
	Family Tax Benefit	11
	Family Allowance - pre 1 July 2000	0
	Maternity Immunisation Allowance	1
	Newstart Allowance	14
	Other	1
	Parenting Payment Partnered	1
	Parenting Payment Single	5
	Rent Assistance	0
	Special Benefit	2
	Carer Allowance	3
	Youth Allowance	3
Total	84	
Northern Territory	Family Tax Benefit	1
	Newstart Allowance	1
	Parenting Payment Partnered	1
Total	3	
Queensland	Abstudy	1
	Age Pension	1
	Austudy	1
	Carer Payment	1
	Disability Support Pension	8
	Family Tax Benefit	6
	Mobility Allowance	0
	Newstart Allowance	3
	Other	1
	Parenting Payment Partnered	1
	Parenting Payment Single	1
	Carer Allowance	3
	Maternity Payment	0
	Youth Allowance	1
Total	28	
South Australia	Disability Support Pension	4
	Family Tax Benefit	2
	Maternity Allowance	2
	Newstart Allowance	4
	Carer Allowance	1
	Youth Allowance	1
Total	14	
Tasmania	Disability Support Pension	2
	Family Tax Benefit	2
	Newstart Allowance	6
	Parenting Payment Partnered	2
	Parenting Payment Single	1
	Youth Allowance	1
Total	14	

State/Territory	Payment	2004-05
Unknown	Family Tax Benefit	1
	Total	
Victoria	Carer Payment	2
	Disability Support Pension	3
	Family Tax Benefit	4
	Newstart Allowance	3
	Parenting Payment Single	0
	Special Benefit	1
	Total	
Western Australia	Austudy	1
	Carer Payment	1
	Disability Support Pension	2
	Family Tax Benefit	5
	Newstart Allowance	1
	Parenting Payment Partnered	1
	Parenting Payment Single	1
	Schooling A Student	1
Total		
Total		152

SSAT - Finalised

State/Territory	Payment	Outcome	2004-05
Australian Capital Territory	Other	Set Aside	1
New South Wales	ABSTUDY Pensioner Education Supplement	Affirmed	1
	Abstudy	Affirmed	1
		Set Aside	3
	Carer Payment	Affirmed	3
		Set Aside	0
	Disability Support Pension	Affirmed	8
		Dismissed	1
		S1275 Dismissed	0
		Set Aside	3
		Withdrawn	1
	Family Tax Benefit	Affirmed	3
		Dismissed	1
		Set Aside	7
	Maternity Immunisation Allowance	Set Aside	1
	Newstart Allowance	Affirmed	4
		Dismissed	2
		Set Aside	2
		Transferred Interstate	1
		Varied	1
	Other	Affirmed	1
	Parenting Payment Partnered	Withdrawn	1
	Parenting Payment Single	Affirmed	3
		Dismissed	1
		Set Aside	2
	Special Benefit	Set Aside	2
	Carer Allowance	Affirmed	1
		Set Aside	1
Widow Allowance	Affirmed	1	
Youth Allowance	Dismissed	0	
	Set Aside	1	
Northern Territory	Disability Support Pension	Affirmed	1
	Family Tax Benefit	Affirmed	1
		Set Aside	0
	Newstart Allowance	Affirmed	1
	Parenting Payment Partnered	Affirmed	0
	Wife Pension	Affirmed	1
Queensland	Abstudy	Affirmed	3
	Austudy	Set Aside	1
	Carer Payment	Set Aside	1
	Disability Support Pension	Affirmed	5
		S1275 Dismissed	1
		Set Aside	1
		Withdrawn	1
	Family Tax Benefit	Affirmed	5
		Set Aside	2
	Mobility Allowance	S1275 Dismissed	0
	Newstart Allowance	Dismissed	1
Set Aside		1	
Other	Dismissed	1	
Parenting Payment Partnered	Affirmed	1	

State/Territory	Payment	Outcome	2004-05
Queensland cont.	Parenting Payment Single	Affirmed	0
		Set Aside	1
	Carer Allowance	S1275 Dismissed	1
		Varied	1
	Maternity Payment	Affirmed	0
	Youth Allowance	Affirmed	1
South Australia	Disability Support Pension	Set Aside	2
		Varied	1
		Withdrawn	1
	Family Tax Benefit	Affirmed	0
		Set Aside	1
	Maternity Allowance	Affirmed	1
		Set Aside	1
	Newstart Allowance	Affirmed	3
	Carer Allowance	Affirmed	1
Youth Allowance	Set Aside	0	
Tasmania	Disability Support Pension	Affirmed	1
		Set Aside	1
	Family Tax Benefit	Set Aside	1
		Varied	1
	Newstart Allowance	Affirmed	1
		Set Aside	1
	Parenting Payment Partnered	Affirmed	0
	Parenting Payment Single	Set Aside	1
	Youth Allowance	Affirmed	0
Set Aside		0	
Victoria	Abstudy	Set Aside	1
	Age Pension	Dismissed	1
	Carer Payment	Affirmed	1
		Set Aside	1
	Disability Support Pension	Affirmed	2
	Family Tax Benefit	Dismissed	1
		Set Aside	2
		Withdrawn	1
	Newstart Allowance	Affirmed	1
		Dismissed	1
	Parenting Payment Single	Affirmed	1
		Dismissed	0
		Set Aside	2
Transferred Interstate		0	
Special Benefit	Affirmed	1	
Western Australia	Austudy	Set Aside	1
	Carer Payment	Varied	1
	Disability Support Pension	Affirmed	2
		Set Aside	1
	Family Tax Benefit	Affirmed	5
		Dismissed	1
		Set Aside	0
		Withdrawn	1
	Newstart Allowance	Varied	1
	Parenting Payment Partnered	Affirmed	1
Parenting Payment Single	Set Aside	1	
Schooling A Student	Affirmed	1	
Total			140

Note: Although 152 appeals were recorded as being lodged during 2004-05, 140 appeals were finalised during this same period. The reason for the difference in the figures is that not all appeals lodged in 2004-05 were finalised in the same period, and some maters which were finalised in 2004-05 were lodged before that period.

AAT - Received

State/Territory	Payment	2004-05
New South Wales	ABSTUDY Pensioner Education Supplement	0
	Abstudy	1
	Carer Payment	0
	Disability Support Pension	2
	Newstart Allowance	3
	Parenting Payment Single	1
	Carer Allowance	1
	Total	8
Northern Territory	Parenting Payment Single	1
Total	1	
South Australia	Maternity Allowance	1
	Newstart Allowance	1
	Carer Allowance	0
	Total	2
Tasmania	Family Tax Benefit	1
	Newstart Allowance	1
	Parenting Payment Partnered	0
	Total	2
Victoria	Disability Support Pension	0
	Newstart Allowance	0
	Total	0
Western Australia	Disability Support Pension	1
	Newstart Allowance	1
	Total	2
Geographic state		15

AAT - Finalised

State/Territory	Payment	Outcome	2004-05
New South Wales	ABSTUDY Pensioner Education Supplement	Settled	0
	Abstudy	Settled	1
	Age Pension	Set Aside	1
	Disability Support Pension	Dismissed	2
	Newstart Allowance	Settled	0
	Parenting Payment Partnered	Dismissed	1
	Parenting Payment Single	Dismissed	1
		Set Aside	1
Total			
Northern Territory	Carer Payment	Withdrawn	0
	Total		
Queensland	Abstudy	Set Aside	1
	Austudy	Affirmed	1
	Disability Support Pension	Dismissed	2
	Family Allowance - pre 1 July 2000	Settled	1
	Total		
South Australia	Disability Support Pension	Set Aside	1
	Maternity Allowance	Settled	0
	Newstart Allowance	Settled	1
	Carer Allowance	Dismissed	0
	Youth Allowance	Set Aside	1
Total			
Tasmania	Family Tax Benefit	Withdrawn	1
	Newstart Allowance	Set Aside	0
	Total		
Unknown	Age Pension	Dismissed	1
	Total		
Victoria	Disability Support Pension	Dismissed	1
	Total		
Western Australia	Disability Support Pension	Dismissed	1
	Newstart Allowance	Set Aside	0
	Parenting Payment Single	Settled	1
	Rent Assistance	Conceded	1
Total			
Total			21

Note: Although 15 appeals were recorded as being lodged during 2004-05, 21 appeals were finalised during this same period. The reason for the difference in the figures is that not all appeals lodged in 2004-05 were finalised in the same period and some matters which were finalised in 2004-05 were lodged before that period.