

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Department of Human Services and Agencies

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2006-2007, 31 October, 2006

Question: HS28

Outcome 1, Output 1

Topic: Centrelink - Covert Optical Surveillance

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

SENATOR EVANS asked on 31/10/2006:

Regarding the covert optical surveillance used by Centrelink on behalf of the Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (see answer to question on notice 166, Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Portfolio, Budget Estimates, May-June 2006):

1. What payment recipients are covert optical surveillance methods used on?
2. Provide details of the methods used, i.e. video camera or still camera, etc
3. Separately for the years 2004-05 and 2005-06 how many people in receipt of the Age pension were the subject of covert optical surveillance?
4. In 2005-06 how many people in receipt of the Carers payment were the subject of covert optical surveillance?
5. In 2005-06 how many people in receipt of Newstart were the subject of covert optical surveillance?
6. In 2005-06 how many people in receipt of the sole parent payment were the subject of covert optical surveillance?
7. In 2005-06 how many people in receipt of the parent payment partnered were the subject of covert optical surveillance?
8. In 2005-06 how many people in receipt of the Disability Support Payment were the subject of covert optical surveillance?
9. Separately for the years 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06 indicate how many people have been the subject of covert optical surveillance?
10. Separately for the years 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06 indicate how many cases of fraud were detected through the use of covert optical surveillance?
11. Which firms have been contracted to do the surveillance? In 2005-06 how much was spent in total on this type of activity?

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Answer:

1. Optical surveillance can be used in relation to all payments administered by Centrelink.
2. Video and still photography, as well as visual observations.
3. In 2004-05, 122 people in receipt of Age Pension were the subject of optical surveillance.
In 2005-06, 118 people in receipt of Age Pension were the subject of optical surveillance.
4. In 2005-06, 45 people in receipt of Carers payment were the subject of optical surveillance.
5. In 2005-06, 861 people in receipt of Newstart were the subject of optical surveillance.
6. In 2005-06, 684 people in receipt of Parenting Payment Single were the subject of optical surveillance.
7. In 2005-06, 110 people in receipt of Parenting Payment Partnered were the subject of optical surveillance.
8. In 2005-06, 328 people in receipt of Disability Support Payments were the subject of optical surveillance.
9. In 2003-04, 3,363 people were the subject of optical surveillance.
In 2004-05, 2,577 people were the subject of optical surveillance.
In 2005-06, 2,348 people were the subject of optical surveillance.
10. Optical surveillance is an evidence gathering tool and not a means of detection.
11. The following firms are contracted to provide optical surveillance services to Centrelink;
 - M G Baker Investigation Services
 - Verifact
 - Executive Security & Investigations
 - Far North Investigations
 - M & A Investigations
 - IAA Industrial Accident Assessors
 - Jendate
 - Kingswood Investigations
 - Maurice J Kerrigan & Associates
 - Network Investigations
 - Panther Investigations
 - Probe Investigations
 - Warner & Associates
 - Weston & Associates

In 2005-2006, Centrelink spent \$1,251,696 on optical surveillance services.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 11 hours and 46 minutes at an estimated cost of \$608.