

**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: HS 29**

**Outcome 1, Output 1.1**

**Topic: Centrelink - Dual/foreign pension overpayments**

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

**SENATOR EVANS** asked on 31/10/2006:

1. Please provide data on Centrelink customers who receive social security payments from Australia and payments from countries that Australia has a Social Security Agreement with, including:
  - a. number of customers who receive dual payments
  - b. breakdown on dual payments by country
2. In the last 12 months, how many cases have there been of alleged overpayments of dual pension/payment recipients? Please provide:
  - a. number of customers affected by over-payments
  - b. breakdown by country
  - c. total amount of alleged overpayments
3. Can the information for question 2 be provided for each federal electorate?
4. Does Centrelink monitor the amount paid for social security payments from countries that Australia has a Social Security Agreement with? If so please provide details. If not, why not?

**Answer:**

1. The following table sets out the number of Centrelink customers receiving payments from both Australia and countries with which Australia has social security agreements in place. The table includes 6,014 customers with a non- (Australian) pensioner spouse receiving a payment from another country.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of Customers</b>
Austria	7,457
Belgium	815
Canada	7,042
Chile	1,431
Croatia	4,326
Cyprus	2,217
Denmark	1,314
Germany	27,580

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Ireland	2,060
Italy	74,447
Malta	6,222
Netherlands	14,638
New Zealand	10,010
Portugal	1,843
Slovenia	1,289
Spain	5,888
USA	3,939

2. a. b. and c.

a. During the financial year 2005-06 Centrelink identified 16,118 dual pension payment recipients with an overpayment.

b. The detailed information required to answer the question is not readily available. To obtain this information would be highly resource intensive and I cannot justify the level of expenditure that would be required to obtain it.

c. The overpayments totalled \$16,285,484.

3. The detailed information required to answer the question is not readily available. To obtain this information would be highly resource intensive and I cannot justify the level of expenditure that would be required to obtain it.

4. Centrelink relies on customers to comply with their obligations to notify of variations to the amounts of any income received, including foreign income.

In implementing the 2005-06 Budget measure "The detection and prevention of incorrect payments due to the receipt of foreign income", Centrelink has negotiated with fourteen of the seventeen countries with which Australia has a Social Security Agreement, for those countries to provide updated payment information about mutual customers on a regular basis.

To date, data files have been received from Malta, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. Centrelink intends to negotiate with the remaining three countries early in 2007.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 7 hours and 1 minute at an estimated cost of \$372.