

**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: HS4**

**Outcome 1, Output 1**

**Topic: Department of Human Services - Sanctions for poor performance of JCA providers**

**Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: F&PA 123**

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

**Senator WONG**—I will be up-front with you. We understand that, for example, in Ceduna there has been some concern raised about JCAs being conducted in relation to people who reside in Ceduna because the cost of the flight in fact exceeds the contractual fee for the JCA.

**Mr Dolan**—I would have to take that question on notice and follow up with the providers. No-one has raised that issue with me.

**Senator WONG**—Providers or individuals have not raised with the department a concern about not being able to get a JCA done because it would involve a plane fare?

**Mr Dolan**—I have had no complaints raised with me.

**Senator WONG**—Does anyone in the department have any knowledge of this?

**Answer:**

- A JCA provider has raised a concern with the department about the cost of a plane fare to a remote area to conduct an assessment.
- JCA providers are paid an additional loading for assessments in remote localities. This additional loading on the assessment fee compensates for the additional cost typically incurred in servicing customers living in remote areas.
- JCA providers are also able to request reimbursement on an ad hoc basis for unanticipated, additional expenses associated with JCA service delivery. These requests for reimbursement are considered on a case by case basis.
- DHS does not specify how providers should conduct remote area assessments – other than to require they meet timeliness standards and be undertaken face to face where possible. JCA providers have a range of ways through which they service customers in remote areas – some operate a visiting service to conduct assessments, others conduct assessments at a permanent site, some transport assessors to conduct assessments in a block booking. The cost of such activities is considered to be covered by the additional loading for assessments in remote areas.
- In the Ceduna case in question, the JCA provider flew an assessor to undertake a single assessment where the client did not attend. This was an exceptional circumstance as the client was deaf (making phone assessment inappropriate).
- In this instance the ad hoc claim was assessed on its merits and was subsequently paid.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 1 hour at an estimated cost of \$63.